

Women Living Under Muslim Laws Annual Report

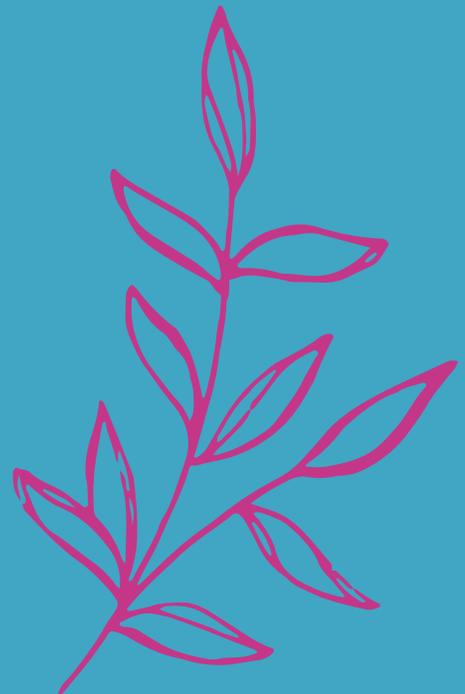
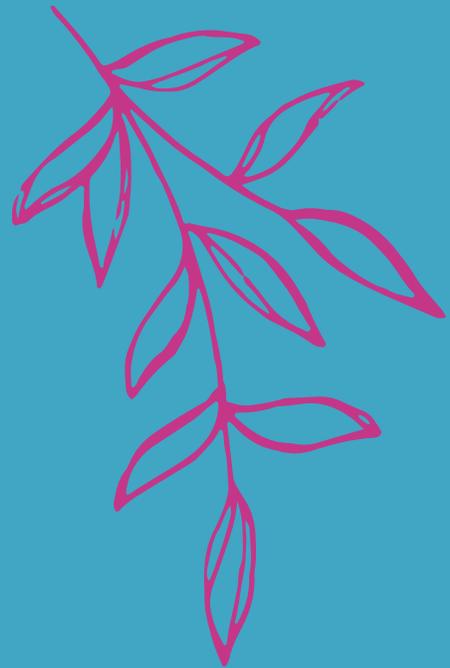
2021

WLUML Annual Report 2021

Written and compiled by Dana Kamour with contributions from WLUML networkers.

wluml@wluml.org

www.wluml.org





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Letter to Networkers

Dear friends,

A central principle, since WLUMML's inception in 1984, has been to be an independent movement for the promotion of women's human rights. Over the years our network has grown as many more women have joined us donating their time, resources, and expertise, as well as the support of funders whose mission and vision aligned with our own for the promotion of the women's movement.

The late 2010s was a significant period of reflection for our network. Debates on the 'ngo-isation' of the women's movement and generational differences in approaches to activism, to name but two examples, meant we engaged in a deliberate period of discussion. These debates took a new vibrancy when I was arrested and imprisoned in Iran under the charges of dabbling in feminism and being part of WLUMML, and questions of safety and security of our networkers took on greater significance for the network. After an impressive and worldwide campaigning by WLUMML and the transnational women's movement, from Indonesia to Senegal, Brazil, and Canada, we celebrated my freedom. We also knew it was time to come together and reassess WLUMML's heart, soul, and future.

In this context, in 2017, a general meeting, 'The Future of Women's Rights as Human Rights in Muslim Contexts', was organised in Montreal. During this meeting the WLUMML International Council made the decision that, for five years, WLUMML would operate almost entirely without seeking external funding, rely on the donated time and resources of its members, and the research our academic members could undertake. This was to, once again, establish WLUMML as an independent women's movement. Despite being challenging at times, we are confident this decision has enabled us to strengthen our commitment to prioritise women's interests. Our continuous presence in the public sphere in support of women's human rights has demonstrated to old and new networkers alike that we are an effective and independent force for the promotion of gender equality. Having established that we can be self-sufficient we are ready to join our allies and obtain funds to expand our research in support of the women's movement in these tumultuous times.



Montreal, 2017



Indeed, the start of 2022 marks the end of this five year period, and we are so proud and grateful to our networkers for all we have collectively achieved during this time. In 2021 alone, we published some 15 op-eds and articles through influential platforms and concluded our eight-part webinar series in support of Afghan women (see our [No Peace Without Women's Rights Campaign](#)). We began our new programme in earnest, [Constitutionalising Women's Rights](#), looking at the role of constitutions in post-conflict societies with the immediate focus on Afghanistan, Sudan, and Syria. As part of our 'Bodily Autonomy, Integrity, and Sexual Rights' programme, we have conducted exciting new research on the relationship between [love and politics](#) in Muslim context that examines the control of women's sexuality both physically and emotionally. Celebrating women rappers, and the influence of art in feminist struggles, we published Hilal Işık's [Rebel with Rhythm, Shatter with Words](#) which explores how Muslim women have used rap music to voice their objections to sexism and racism. Indeed this very successful research followed our earlier research based publication [Chic Resistance](#) by Shirin Abdmolaei that looked into the unconventional area of collective public resistance to various forms of oppression by politicising various cultural fields that hitherto were considered apolitical.

Needless to say, 2020 and 2021 were difficult and testing years for the transnational women's movement. Women had to deal with the reality of COVID-19 which threw into light many different forms of inequality, not least gender inequality. We also had to face the reality of diverse forms of cultural and legal violence reported world-wide. Afghan women strove for meaningful inclusion and the consideration of women's rights during the ill-fated peace talks, but the Taliban were still allowed to return to power. Afghan women now face an uncertain future as we witness the progressive roll back of their legal and social advancements. This is largely because the field of international relations has failed to consider gender equality as an integral part of their policy, despite having passed the 1325 resolution that recognizes the role of women and peacemaking. It is time for the transnational movements to focus on making the concerns of gender and women's human rights an integral part of their states' foreign policies, simply claiming to have feminist development or international polices will not be effective.

Yet, despite the devastating development and mishaps that brought the Taliban back to power in 2021, the women of Afghanistan have not given up. They have mobilised to resist and are pushing boundaries demanding justice, plural democracy, and gender equality. WLUML stands by the women and their quest, and we will do all we can to strengthen their voices internationally. This year WLUML continues the development of its Transformative Feminist Leadership Institute with a revised curriculum. We launched our Human Rights And Women-Centred Islamic Perspectives program, supporting women's rights, inclusive institutions, freedoms of thought and promotion of peace. And, we will continue to celebrate the power of the arts in the struggle for gender equality.

In peace and sisterhood,



Dr Homa Hoodfar
WLUML Board of Directors





About WLUMML

WLUMML

Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUMML) is a transnational women's rights & feminist network. We promote gender justice and equality for women whose lives are shaped, conditioned, or governed by laws or customs said to derive from Islam. The transnational network provides information, solidarity, and support for women acting in their local contexts to advance gender equality. In doing so, WLUMML acts as a solidarity network, a think tank, and a lobbying force for local feminist struggles.

For more than 35 years WLUMML has connected individual women and feminist organisations. We now connect women from Indonesia to Turkey, Kenya to Afghanistan, and Egypt to Germany. WLUMML holds a unique position as a transnational movement and has maintained an acute awareness of the unique political contexts that surround women of Muslim heritage.

Our History

WLUMML was formed in 1984 in response to the adoption of laws denying women's rights. It was in response to three urgent cases, across different countries and communities, where women were being denied rights by reference to laws justified under patriarchal or authoritarian interpretations of Islam. Nine women from Algeria, Morocco, Sudan, Iran, Mauritius, Tanzania, Bangladesh, and Pakistan came together to take urgent action. They realised the necessity to share their struggles and to connect transnationally. Today, WLUMML is still led by women from a Muslim heritage. The history and development of WLUMML is closely linked to attempts to mobilise international support for the just treatment of individuals, particularly women, by governments, non-state actors or other political groups. For a longer history, please see our [Annual Report 2019-2020](#).

WLUMML Recommends...

To find out more about WLUMML's history and purpose, here are a few recommended readings:

[WLUMML "Heart & Soul"](#)
(1997), by Marieme Hélie-Lucas

[Building Civil Societies: A Guide for Social and Political Action \(2000\)](#), by Homa Hoodfar & Nelofar Pazira

[Controlled or Autonomous: Identity and the Experience of the Network WLUMML \(1994\)](#), by Farida Shaheed





Our Work

Mission & Vision

Our mission is to strengthen women's individual and collective struggles for equality and rights within diverse Muslim contexts, and support local feminist and transnational struggles for individual and collective autonomy.

Our vision is for the global realisation of human rights and gender justice, where people's lives are free from patriarchal and/or authoritarian interpretations.

How We Do This

(i) By breaking the isolation of women struggling for gender equality through the facilitation of transnational solidarity – furthering communication, linkages, and the sharing of experiences between women in Muslim contexts, and with global feminist groups;

(ii) By building knowledge and sharing information – producing independent research that helps demystify the diverse sources of control over women's lives, and the strategies and experiences of challenging these means of control.

How We Work

- Collective Projects -

Collective projects are topic-specific initiatives that arise from the shared needs and interests of networkers and sister organisations. Networking groups and individuals participate in the programmes' coordination and implementation according to their needs, expertise, and capacity. Collective projects often include training sessions, workshops, research for advocacy, and meetings and exchanges around specialised topics.

- Networking & Information Services -

WLUML directly connects women and feminist groups to facilitate a non-hierarchical exchange of information, expertise, strategies, and experience. We document trends, generate new analysis, and support networker's participation in international events.

- Capacity Building -

WLUML is consciously engaged in building the capacity of network groups and individuals. Our internships are designed to engage young networkers in the fields of research and advocacy. We also facilitate exchanges, training sessions, and leadership workshops.

- Publications -

WLUML as feminist think tank collects, analyses and circulates information regarding women's diverse experiences and strategies used to further gender equality and justice. Our publications are mainly in English with translation to other languages, including French and Arabic, where possible. Locally generated information is published in those respective languages.





Critical Issues Informing Our Work, 2017-2022 (Plan of Action, Montreal 2017)

-  The continuing rise in fundamentalisms and armed conflicts which has had a negative impact on women's right in the public and private domain, including the exclusion of women from peace negotiations and peace-building efforts by national and international forces which leads to the overlooking of women's concerns and security in society.
-  The control of women's bodies (sexual and reproductive rights) including women's lack of basic bodily (and mind) autonomy, as well as women's insecurity both in the home and public spaces. Especially through the lens of violence against women and the cultural and religious justifications for the discrimination based on gender.
-  Women's legal status particularly as it relates to family law (personal status law).
-  Access to power structures and law-making processes where women's political participation is seen as key to women's empowerment, including legal and cultural obstacles to women's political participation both at the national and local level.





Our Network

Our Network

Since our inception in 1984, WLUML's programmes and research have been designed to reflect the expressed needs of our diverse networkers. WLUML programmes have been supported by funding from generous donors but we also rely heavily on our networkers' given time, skills, and material contributions. In 2017 (Plan of Action, Montreal 2017), the WLUML International Council made the decision to, for five years, operate without external funding except for academic funds raised by members of the board and council for research topics relevant to our programmes. This followed the completion of a very successful funded programme, [Women's Empowerment and Leadership Development for Democratisation \(WELDD\)](#) and the release of Homa Hoodfar from Iranian prison for her feminist research and activism (see our [Annual Report 2016](#)). This decision was made to ensure that our network remains driven by our feminist and human rights commitments, and so that we can continue the prioritisation of women's interests by following the wishes of the women within our network. We are therefore ever grateful to all the women who have given their time, knowledge, and commitment since 2017 to make our programmes and outreach possible.

International Council

Thank you to our Board and Council who continued to steer and guide WLUML's activities throughout the year.

Board

Zarqa Yaftali
Alexandria McCarthy
Amal Elmohandes
Vrinda Narain
Mona Tajali
Naureen Shameem
Homa Hoodfar
Najia Haneefi

Council

Haddy Jatou Jonga
Isabel Marler
Mahboubeh Abbasgholizadeh
Setenay Mutlu Adisönmez
Zana Salam
Ifra Asad
Humaira Saqib
Najla Raheel
Saira K Zuberi
Suzanna Eddyono
Fahima Hashim

Fellows and Interns

And, thank you to our 2021 interns who joined us to support our campaign 'No Peace Without Women's Rights in Afghanistan', we are indebted to your hardwork and dedication.

Elena Cornaro
Amanda Bowie-Edwards
Madelyn Evans
Lynn Wanjiru Njeri

Anniesa Hussain
Dana Kamour
Sara López





Solidarity Statements

Our Statements

Support and solidarity is a major pillar of WLUML's activity and an important reason for our creation. Previously, human rights organisations did not recognise women advocates who were arrested or harassed by the state or non-state actors, nor did they recognise them as political actors and prisoners of conscience. WLUML saw the necessity to support women endeavouring for gender equality. Today WLUML is happy to know that defending women advocates is very much part of all human rights organisations. We continue our mission to promote women's human rights and gender equality by mobilising our network in support of women advocates.

Assassinations of Afghanistan's Supreme Court Judges - January 2021

WLUML strongly condemns assassinations of Supreme Court Judges, Zakieh Herawi and Qadria Yasini in Kabul, as well as many other activists and civil society members. We extend our condolences to the families of the victims, and hope for a speedy recovery for those that have been injured... [continued here](#)

Sharp Rise in Attacks on Activists and Journalists in Afghanistan - February 2021

WLUML and partners strongly condemn the recent escalating campaign of attacks and assassinations of women's rights and human rights activists and journalists in Afghanistan, and stand in solidarity with all those affected. While ostensibly participating in peace talks, the Taliban have not only refused a ceasefire, but have instead increased their reign of violence. These cowardly attacks are not only an assault against the women, girls and voices on the front lines - they are also a direct affront on Afghanistan's legal and democratic gains over the last 20 years... [continued here](#)

Solidarity with the women of Afghanistan on International Women's Day - March 2021

On International Women's Day, WLUML calls on governments to uphold the rights of women in Afghanistan. The people of Afghanistan are determined to ensure peace, however, this should not come at the cost of women's constitutional rights and the reversal of gains made in law and civil society by women since the fall of the Taliban in 2001... [continued here](#)





Postponed Afghan Peace Talks – April 2021

WLUML stands in solidarity with women's rights and feminist groups and networks in Afghanistan to express our deep concern about the fragile conditions of the Afghanistan peace process. The Istanbul peace conference, scheduled for April, was recently postponed indefinitely due to the Taliban's non-participation, following the announcement of an unconditional withdrawal by the United States and NATO by September 11, 2021... [continued here](#)

Solidarity with Women's Rights and Feminist Groups in Turkey – July 2021

The transnational solidarity network WLUML is deeply concerned about the government of Turkey's unilateral withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention – the Council of Europe's Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence. Turkey was the first nation to sign the Convention, in 2012. The Istanbul Convention is the world's first comprehensive and binding treaty intended to prevent and prosecute all forms of violence against women and gender-based violence including domestic violence, sexual harassment, sexual violence, forced marriages, and forced abortions and sterilizations... [continued here](#)

Stop the Taliban's Plan to Force Women Into Sexual Slavery – July 2021

Since the withdrawal of the USA and NATO forces from Afghanistan, the Taliban have advanced to seize control of new districts while making a significant demand for peace negotiations. Yet rather than negotiating peace in good faith with Afghanistan's government, the Taliban have intensified their targeted killing, bombing, and war against the people... The Taliban leaders who have taken over Badakhshan and Takhar have issued an order to the local leaders to provide them with a list of girls over the age of 15 and widows under the age of 45 for "marriage" with Taliban fighters... [continued here](#)

Afghanistan's Fall to the Taliban – August 2021

As violence and injustice continue to escalate in the wake of the Taliban seizing control of the country, WLUML stands in solidarity with the people of Afghanistan and urges the international community to support and protect women human rights defenders, civil society actors, journalists, women leaders including judges and politicians, as well as religious, ethnic, sexual and social minorities, and those who face reprisals by the Taliban. In recent times, the world has witnessed the Taliban systematically targeting women and girls, particularly those who are active in Afghan society... [continued here](#)





WLUML Publications

Our Research for Advocacy & Publications

WLUML publications provide information about the lives, struggles, and strategies of women living in diverse Muslim communities and countries. Our publications aim to support the struggle for women's equality and autonomy and the promotion of women's human rights worldwide. We aspire to provide a collective, transnational, and intergenerational space to share experiences, strategies, analyses, and initiatives. WLUML, as a feminist think tank, hopes to contribute to future projects and activist works by making the knowledge and experience gained in the field of women's rights accessible.

WLUML has regular and occasional publications based either on collective research projects or developed for training purposes. We also produce publications to support networkers' research and advocacy. WLUML invites researchers and communications experts to join us as research fellows, in this way, our research division acts as an open feminist think tank.

Recent Publications...

Here are our most recent publications, for a complete index please see the [publications section](#) of the WLUML website:



Rebel with Rhythm, Shatter with Words: Female Rappers Smashing the Prescribed Image of the 'Muslim Woman' (2021), by Hilal Işık



"Men Make War and Women Make Peace": Conversations with Afghanistan's Women Striving for a Lasting Peace (2021), by Homa Hoodfar & Dana Kamour

Chic Resistance: Women, Fashion and Politics in Iran (2019), by Shirin Abdmolaei





Global Women's Rights Campaigns

Every year WLUM participates in the following global women's rights events:

International Women's Day, 8th March

WLUML released a statement as part of our 'No Peace Without Women's Rights Campaigns'

→ See [Solidarity Statements](#)

Commission on the Status of Women, CSW65

WLUML held a joint webinar with Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan on the return of the Taliban and its implications for women and global security

→ See [No Peace Without Women's Rights Campaign](#)

16 Days of Activism

WLUML networkers filled WLUML's social media with inspiring women musicians and rappers using music as an activism tool in Muslim contexts

→ See [Feminism & Art in Muslim Contexts Programme](#)





No Peace Without Women's Rights in Afghanistan

The Campaign

The campaign 'No Peace without Women's Rights in Afghanistan' 2020-21 was born from conversations between the WLUML and 15 Afghan women leaders with long-standing and new connections to WLUML. The women leaders were concerned by the US-Taliban peace agreement, an agreement by the US to withdraw international forces and to release Taliban prisoners. In the subsequent Inter-Afghan peace talks, the Taliban were elevated to equal negotiators with the Afghan government. The same Taliban whose regime 1996-2001 deprived Afghan citizens, particularly women, of their basic human rights. Before August 2021, and the military fall of Afghanistan to the Taliban, Afghan women were determined to maintain their seat at negotiations and defend their hard-fought rights. It was with great sadness that we watched as Afghanistan fell and took with it the aspirations and freedoms of many women.

During 2021 WLUML's efforts were focused on supporting Afghan women's demands, as part of our campaign we delivered:

- An eight-part webinar series on the Afghan peace-process and women in peacemaking
- A global-level and several national level lobbying campaigns
- Multiple publications and interviews supporting Afghan women in the defence of their rights
- Multiple media appearances and the facilitation of media appearances for women activists
- Internal and external events building transnational solidarity
- Research projects on Taliban ideology and online propaganda, constitution making and constitutionalising women's rights

For our 2020 activities under this campaign, please see our [Annual Report 2019-2020](#).

Webinar Series

Throughout 2021, WLUML continued its eight-part webinar series reflecting on women's participation in the peace negotiations, their role in constitution making, and the implications of a Taliban's return on women's rights in Afghanistan and globally. The discussion areas were informed by the requests of Afghan women leaders. Six of the webinars were held in collaboration with the McGill Centre for Human Rights and Legal Pluralism, one in collaboration with Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan, and the final webinar, with an audience of 139, jointly with United Nations Human Rights Special Procedures, AWID, Regional Coalition of Women Human Rights Defenders, Femena, Musawah, and Harvard Law School.

Some webinar recordings can be found here → [Peace in Afghanistan](#)

For details on speakers → please see the event posters included in this report

For details on the two webinars held in 2020 → please see our [Annual Report 2019-2020](#)



The Centre for Human Rights & Legal Pluralism & Women Living Under Muslim Laws present:

Centering Women

Negotiating Peace in Afghanistan



Shukria Barakzai
former Member, Wolesi Jirga, lower National Assembly of Afghanistan



H.E. Roya Rahmani
Afghanistan's ambassador to the US



Dr. Sima Samar
women's rights and human rights advocate



Homa Hoodfar
Professor, Concordia University
Opening remarks



Vrinda Narain
Professor, McGill Faculty of Law
Moderator

March 10 | 10-11:30 ET | [Zoom](#)

The Centre for Human Rights & Legal Pluralism & Women Living Under Muslim Laws present:

Entrenching Women's Rights

The Promise and Potential of the Constitution of Afghanistan



Ghizaal Haress
Ombudsperson for the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan



Hamid M. Saboori
Constitutional Expert & Human Rights Advocate



Palwasha L. Kakar
Interim Director, Religion & Inclusive Societies
U.S. Institute of Peace



Homa Hoodfar
Professor, Concordia University
Opening remarks



Vrinda Narain
Professor, McGill Faculty of Law
Moderator

March 24 | 10-11:30 ET | [Zoom](#)



Evolution & Potential of Jihad

From Violence to Peace Building

Zoom link: <https://mcgill.zoom.us/j/82347489625>



Naureen Shameem
Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUML)



Ayse Kadayifci-Orellana
Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security



Rumea Ahmed
Department of Asian Studies
University of British Columbia



Homa Hoodfar
Professor, Concordia University
Discussant



Vrinda Narain
Professor, McGill Faculty of Law
Moderator

March 31 | 10-11:30 ET | [Zoom link](#)



Breathing Life into the Constitution of Afghanistan

The Role of Judges

Zoom: <https://mcgill.zoom.us/j/82082039841>



Belquis Ahmadi
Senior Programme Officer
United States Institute of Peace



Najla Ayoubi
Chief Operations Officer
Every Woman Treaty



Zarizana Abdul Azizi
Director
Due Diligence Project



Naureen Shameem
Women Living Under Muslim Laws
Respondent



Vrinda Narain
Professor, McGill Faculty of Law
Moderator

April 12 | 10-11:30 ET | [Zoom link](#)

Afghan Women Human Rights Defenders Demand Justice & Accountability

48th Session of the Human Rights Council

Tuesday, October 5
4-5.30pm CEST / 10-11:30am EST

Farida Shaheed, Shirkat Gah & former UN Special Rapporteur on Cultural Rights
Zarqa Yaftali, Women & Children Legal Research Foundation
Humaira Saqib, Afghan Women's News Agency
Humaira Rasuli, Afghan WHRD & lawyer
Zubaida Akbar, Afghan WHRD
Intervention from Dorothy Estrada-Tanck,
UN Working Group on DAWG
Moderated by Karima Bennoune,
UN Special Rapporteur on Cultural Rights



awid

REGIONAL COALITION
OF WHRDs in the
Middle East
and
North Africa



PROGRAM ON LAW & SOCIETY
IN THE MUSLIM WORLD



Taliban Return: Implications for Women's Rights and Global Security

A virtual parallel event to the 65th Commission on the Status of Women, hosted by the NGO CSW65 Virtual Forum.

Hosted by



Friday | March 26 | 12:30PM - 2:00PM ET

[Register here](#) >>

<https://bit.ly/38Uz1v>



Commission on the Status of Women

Featuring:



Moderator H.E. Ambassador **Sheikha Alya Ahmed bin Saif Al-Thani**, Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations.



Farida Shaheed, Executive Director, Shirkat Gah-Women's Resource Centre in Pakistan



H.E. **Adela Raz**, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan to the United Nations.



Zarqa Yaftali, Co-Chair of Women, Peace and Security Working Group, and Member of the High Council for National Reconciliation



Nargis Nehan, Acting Minister of Mines and Petroleum, Government of Afghanistan



Advocacy Campaigns

WLUML built advocacy campaigns around the demands of the Afghan women. Our international petition was translated into Arabic, French, Spanish, Farsi/Dari, and German. The English version alone reached 5,668 signatures. Dr Homa Hoodfar, WLUML Board member, met with Jacqueline O'Neill, Ambassador for Women, Peace and Security Canada to confirm Canada's support and influence for the meaningful participation of women in the Afghan peace negotiations. Our letters to national governments and international organisations were supported by respected human rights organisations, activists, individual academics and institutions of learning. The recipients included:

<i>Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)</i>	<i>UN Security Council President</i>
<i>Grand Imam of Al-Azhar</i>	<i>The G7</i>
<i>Canadian Government</i>	<i>German Government</i>
<i>French Government</i>	<i>UK Government</i>
<i>Global Affairs Canada</i>	<i>Spanish Government</i>
	<i>And more...</i>

For other official statements → please see the [Solidarity Statements](#) section of this report.
For more on the national advocacy campaigns → please see our [Annual Report 2019-2020](#)

Solidarity Building Events

WLUML members attended several events, in solidarity with Afghan women, and to promote the campaign's demands. Board members Zarqa Yaftali and Homa Hoodfar took part in the 'Together Stronger Network' meetings, and Homa Hoodfar in the group 'Advocacy Stronger Together', both solidarity groups for Afghan women. In the UK, WLUML presented at two local Amnesty International group meetings, in Ely and Taunton. WLUML was invited to participate in two Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan events, the panel discussion following the screening of the documentary Parlika, and the CW4WAfghan Annual Symposium.

Our Research

Early discussions with Afghan women leaders made clear a desire for accessible information and new research. WLUML, as an organisation with strong academic connections and history of producing accessible publications, was well placed to respond to this request. Meetra Qutb, researcher on Afghanistan and consultant, and Dana Kamour, WLUML research intern, delivered a research project into Taliban propaganda and use of online platforms. Their research focused on the Taliban's framing of women's rights and education. An article related to their research can be read here: [LSE South Asia Centre](#). They were also invited to present at the [CW4WAfghan Annual Symposium: Women's Rights and Education under the Taliban](#). WLUML's programme [Constitutionalising Women's Rights](#) also responded, please see this section of the report. In 2021, WLUML also created a fellowship for Islamic scholars and invited scholars to begin research into human rights and women-centred Islamic perspectives in support of women's rights and freedoms.





Publications & Media Engagement

WLUML mobilised its network of academics and writers to raise awareness of developments in Afghanistan, support the campaign demands, and offer constructive commentary. Eleven articles were published by respected publications. WLUML board members Vrinda Narain, Mona Tajali, and Homa Hoodfar accepted invitations for a number of interviews, emphasising the concerns of Afghan women and fears for their rights with the threat of a Taliban return. WLUML used its connections to both international media and Afghan women networks to pass on press opportunities and keep events in Afghanistan and women's demands in the public consciousness. One article alone, [‘The World Must Not Look Away as the Taliban Sexually Enslaves Women and Girls’](#) by Vrinda Narain in The Conversation, was translated into French and Spanish and shared over 10,000 times.

Published Articles



- ★ [‘The World Must Not Look Away as the Taliban Sexually Enslaves Women and Girls’](#) - Vrinda Narain, The Conversation - Also in [French](#) & [Spanish](#) - Reprinted in several media sources across the world including the National Post, Canada, Outlook India, Huffington Post and The Wire
 - ★ [‘Taliban ‘Has Not Changed,’ Say Women Facing Subjugation in Areas of Afghanistan Under its Extremist Rule’](#) - Mona Tajali & Homa Hoodfar, The Conversation - Also in [French](#)
 - ★ [“‘Hear Our Cries’: What Terrifies an Afghan Women’s Rights Activist’](#) - Mona Tajali, The Nation
 - ★ [‘Less Theory, More Practice: Why the Re-emergence of the Taliban Should Concern Britain’](#) - Anniesa Hussain, Uncommon Ground Media
 - ★ [‘Women’s Rights and Education under the Taliban’](#) - Dana Kamour & Meetra Qutb, LSE South Asia Centre
 - ★ [‘Protecting Education Should Be at the Centre of Peace Negotiations in Afghanistan’](#), - Lauryn Oates & Homa Hoodfar, The Conversation
 - ★ [‘Women in Afghanistan Worry Peace Accord with Taliban Extremists Could Cost Them Hard-Won Rights’](#) - Mona Tajali & Homa Hoodfar, The Conversation
 - ★ [‘Violence Delivers: Al-Shabab Rejoice in the Taliban’s Success’](#) - Njeri Linnet Wanjiru, Uncommon Ground Media
 - ★ [‘An Effort to Silence Female Voices is Defeated, but Afghan Women Brace for More’](#) - Mona Tajali, Ms. Magazine
 - ★ [“‘Men Make War and Women Make Peace’: Conversations with Afghanistan’s Women Striving for a Lasting Peace’](#) - Homa Hoodfar & Dana Kamour, WLUML
 - ★ [‘Women Negotiators in Afghan/Taliban Peace Talks Could Spur Global Change’](#) - Vrinda Narain, The Conversation
- 

Interviews



By Homa Hoodfar

- ★ ['Échapper aux talibans'](#), La Presse Canada

By Mona Tajali

- ★ ['Taliban Takeover: Why Afghan Women & Girls Are In Grave Danger'](#), Mamamia Podcasts

By Vrinda Narain

- ★ ['McGill University's Narain on Afghanistan Womens' Rights'](#), BloombergDaybreak Asia, Bloomberg TV (20 August 2021)
- ★ The AM Show, New Zealand (17 August 2021)
- ★ ['The grim reality for single moms in Afghanistan now, and how you can help'](#), Maura Hohman, NBC Daybreak Digital Platform (23 August 2021)
- ★ [Interview with RT Online](#), UK, (19 August 2020)
- ★ [Saturday Morning with Kim Hill](#), New Zealand's public broadcast station RNZ National (20 August 2021)
- ★ CBC Daybreak, - 14 separate interviews, including Montreal, Toronto, Quebec, Vancouver
 - Toronto - Metro Morning
 - Montreal - Daybreak (Ismaila Alfa)
 - Montreal - Daybreak (Sean Henry)
 - Charlottetown - Island Morning
 - Thunder Bay - Superior Morning
 - Kichener/Waterloo - The Morning Edition
 - Ontario - Ontario AM
 - Winnipeg - Information Radio
 - Goose Bay (Labrador) - Labrador Morning
 - Quebec City - Quebec AM
 - Kamloops - Daybreak Kamloops
 - Prince George / Prince Rupert - Daybreak North
 - Fredericton - Information Morning
 - Saint John, New Brunswick
 - Vancouver - The Early Edition
- ★ [TBS eFM This Morning, English Current Affairs Program](#), Seoul, South Korea
- ★ [2SER 107.3FM](#), Sydney Australia Radio (18 August 2021)
- ★ 570 News, Rogers Sports & Media, Kitchener, Ontario (18 August 2021)

'The post-Taliban era demonstrated Afghan women's resilience after a gruelling setback. It also highlighted the public's desire for a more democratic, responsive government...

The Taliban cannot win power at the ballot box... So the Taliban are forcing their authority over the Afghan people using warfare, much as they did in the 1990s. Many women hope what comes next won't repeat that history.'

**– Mona Tajali & Homa Hoodfar,
WLUML Board, The Conversation**



Women Reclaiming Public Spaces:

Confronting Rising Sexual Harassment and Violence

The Programme

Women's presence in public spaces is an indicator of a society's openness, democratisation, and their recognition of a woman's full citizenship. Yet, in many societies, public spaces are assumed as male and, sometimes, intentionally made hostile and unsafe for women. Conservative voices and political Islamists from Algeria to Egypt, Nigeria, and Iran claim religion dictates the exclusion of women from public spaces and the imposition of restrictive gender roles. This is also increasingly true for Indonesia and Malaysia, where women have historically enjoyed significant access to the public sphere.

In response, women have devised strategies to enforce their right to use public transport, to drive or cycle on public roads, to participate in and watch sport, to join political rallies and to run in elections. Women are mobilising to take up space in actual and virtual arenas and to demand the enjoyment of rights promised in law. In 2018 WLUML launched a programme to research and document these initiatives, to understand their successes and setbacks, and to facilitate the sharing of experiences between women taking action to increase safe access to public arenas, free from harassment.

Women, Religion, and Politics in the Middle East: Negotiating Marginalisation and Representation

In early 2021, WLUML & Agnes Scott College organised a joint three-day conference, 'Negotiating Marginalisation and Representation'. The purpose of this event was to highlight the complexities of women's access and marginalisation from key political and religious spheres from a feminist lens, while examining the ways women negotiate and push back against systematic marginalisation. The conference brought together scholars of the Middle East who study women's access to the public and political spheres, including scholars of the recently developed field of Violence Against Women in Politics (VAWP) to highlight how such systemic forms of intimidation keep women out of politics as well as how rights groups can strategize to address this. The papers presented at the conference will be developed into an edited volume for external publication.

Please see here for the [full conference programme](#).





Women, Religion and Politics in the Middle East and Beyond: Negotiating Marginalization and Representation

Public Lecture and Book Talk

- Women and the Holy City: The Struggle Over Jerusalem's Sacred Space – *Lihi Ben Shitrit, University of Georgia*

Resisting Women's Political Participation in Muslim Contexts: An Analysis of Formal and Informal Institutions

- Islamist Women's Responses to Sexual and Gender Based Violence in Egypt – *Erika Biagini, Dublin City University*
- Women and Politics in Saudi Arabia: An Analysis of Formal and Informal Obstacles – *Munirah Eskander, American University of Kurdistan and WLUML & Mona Tajali, Agnes Scott College and WLUML*
- Gendered Persecution; State and Non-State Disinformation in Iranian Online Public Spheres – *Simin Kargar, John Hopkins University*
- Online Violence & Harassment in South Asia – *Zarizana Abdul Aziz, George Washington University and Due Diligence Project*

Women Push Back: Efforts to Enhance Women's Access to the Public and Political Spaces

- Introductory remarks – *Homa Hoodfar, Concordia University and WLUML*
- Amidst Intimidation and Empowerment: Women Reclaiming Public Spaces in Pakistan – *Amna Nasir, Journalist and Women's Rights Defender, Pakistan and WLUML*
- Councils at the Edge: Two Snapshots of Women at Tehran City Council – *Azam Khatam, York University*
- Iran #MeToo: Cultivating new space for women's movement – *Mahboubeh Abosgholizadeh, Women's Rights Defender, Iran and WLUML*

Student Panels

- Violence Against Women in Politics and Public Spaces
 - From Women's Suffrage to Parliamentary Gender Quotas: The Quest to Increase Women's Political Representation
- 



Women & Politics

The Programme

Most states across the globe, including in the Muslim world, recognize women's legal right to participate in politics, or to elect and be elected to political office and other representative bodies. Despite this recognition however, to date, women continue to be underrepresented in most political institutions. Glass ceilings remain firmly in place for political decision-making positions, ranging from ministerial positions, to governors, to heads of states. Such marginalisation of women is systemic and often built into political structures that discriminate based on various identity markers, among them, gender, race, ethnicity, class, or property ownership. It is only as a result of great struggles by diverse groups and constituencies that democracy in practice has expanded to include the demands and rights of marginalised groups.

The programme is the result of several earlier initiatives. WLUML's research into electoral politics and female representation began in 2008 and the work is documented by several of our publications. WLUML recognised that while many women in Muslim contexts now have the legal right to hold positions of power, they face harassment which severely inhibits their ability to safely benefit from these laws. Women and Politics was therefore designed to support feminist activism for greater representation, free from intimidation and harassment, and to develop a comparative study of women's political roles and rights in various Muslim countries.

Violence Against Women in Politics and Elections

In 2020 WLUML Board Member, Mona Tajali, began the supervision of a research project into the forms of violence and harassment experienced by women running for public office. Three research interns began the collection of data in Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh as a preliminary study to determine the direction of a larger transnational project. Tajali and Munirah Eskander also conducted a study analysing the systemic ways that women in Saudi Arabia are marginalised from key formal posts, despite the recent measures to recognise women's political rights. The findings from Mona and Munirah's study were presented at the joint WLUML-Agnes Scott 2021 conference '[Negotiating Marginalisation](#)'.

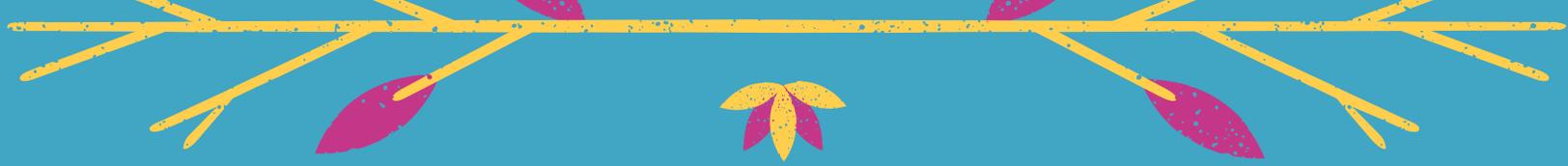
WLUML Recommends...

Our related publications:

[Electoral Politics: Making Quotas Work for Women](#)
(2011), Homa Hoodfar & Mona Tajali

[Mechanisms and Structures to Promote and Protect Women's Human Rights and Gender Equality](#) (2008), WLUML Dossier 29





Constitutionalising Women's Rights

The Programme

This programme continues Rhonda Copeland's mission to re-conceptualise human rights through the integration of gender and the inclusion of women's issues, and to assess constitutional practices used to embolden women's rights and gender equality. Given that many countries in the Middle East and Asia are currently going through political upheaval, civil war and transition, we need to understand and assess the best practices for embedding human rights and equal citizenship generally, and women's status, rights and gender equality specifically.

Taking a comparative approach we examine how constitutions shape and are re-shaped by women's rights advocates, explore the promise and pitfalls of constitutional norms and strategies for promoting gender equality, with a focus on the constitutional contexts of Afghanistan, India, Iran, Yemen, Sudan and Egypt. The aim is to provide a framework for analysing the debates that shape constitutional norms and women's rights; uncover how women's inequality and subordination are constructed and framed in law; reveal the ideological presuppositions of that inequality and understand the effect of other important aspects of a woman's identity; and to develop understandings of justice that will improve the lived lives of women and move them further towards equality. (Adapted from the programme concept note 2020 by Vrinda Narain)

Women and Constitutionalism in Muslim Contexts

The papers delivered for our conference series in 2020, Women and Constitutions in Muslim Contexts, continue to be developed for publication. The series considered what constitutions say about women's equality, rights, and status, as a substantive matter. And, how they shape and are shaped by women's rights. For India, we examined the potential of constitutionalising women's rights, and the mediation of the tension between constitutional rights and religious personal law. For Iran, we evaluated the place of women in constitutional norm-setting and their political participation following the Islamic Revolution. The papers prepared by Mona Tajali, Homa Hoodfar, Fatemeh Sadeghi, Aili Marie Tripp, Palwasha Kakar, and Vrinda Narain, will seek external publication as an edited volume.

Reading the Constitution: In Search of Rights

WLUML began revising the 2004 publication 'Reading the Constitution: In Search of Rights'. The original publication was developed with Shirkat Gah as an accessible guide for non-legal experts on how a constitution can promote and protect citizens' rights. In 2021, Afghanistan once again fell to the Taliban and the progress made under the 2004 Constitution is threatened. It is for this reason WLUML decided to update the booklet for anyone invested in protecting their fundamental rights.





Bodily Autonomy, Integrity, and Sexual Rights

The Programme

Women's bodily as well as mind autonomy has been a central concern for the organisation since WLUML's conception in the 1980s. WLUML co-founder, Farida Shaheed, summarises that the '...imposition of a particular dress code on women is a way of saying to a woman that her body belongs not to her but to her community including state and non-state actors... She is just a carrier of the body but does not own it and cannot claim it' (Women's Sport as Politics, 2015). WLUML understands that how a woman dresses is political, and that the same can be said for how a woman behaves, who she chooses to love, or how she expresses her sexuality.

In the name of religion – be it Islam, Christianity or other religious beliefs – or in the name of cultural purity and tradition, women have been subjected to discriminatory practices, codes of conduct and laws with the ultimate goal of controlling their sexuality and excluding them from public life. These practices and laws constitute and reinforce insidious forms of violence against women. Today, we see several Muslim majority states becoming increasingly conservative, yet, feminist and progressive movements continue to organise and challenge conservative interpretations and the policing of sexual morality. WLUML's Bodily Autonomy programme supports and makes visible feminist narratives, tactics, and demands from across Muslim societies for bodily autonomy.

Love as Politics

Suppression and control of sexuality, particularly that of women and sexual minorities in all its dimensions, often by weaponizing religion, has been a hallmark of patriarchal societies. In recent decades and across Muslim communities and cultures, we have witnessed the rise of campaigns against Westernization targeting, of all things, love. These vitriolic campaigns are directed against 'anti-national' love, for example, Valentine's Day and 'Love Jihad', the crude name given to interfaith marriage. Rarely have such campaigns engaged with issues of social justice or inequality. On the contrary, these debates and interventions by powerholders seek to reinforce state and community patriarchal control over women, youth, and sexual minorities, reinforcing gender roles and stereotypes. This project seeks to interrogate the ways in which power holders have politicized love, demonstrating a conservative gender perspective and ideology which infantilizes women and sexual minorities, disempowers them and characterises them as without agency or autonomy and unable to enter into consensual relationships.

This transnational study will publish its first papers in 2022, and the compiled volume in 2023. The contributions will: analyse how love is political in Muslim contexts; consider 'love jihad' in India; consider the expression of Valentines Day in Malaysia, Pakistan, and Indonesia; and, how women take ownership of their emotional and sexual interests in Iran.



“...love is intimately connected with the politics of the time and place it is manifested in. If this is so, then it means that the experience of love goes beyond simply the private experience of the individual. In being a political entity, love becomes a political act. This act can either be accepted or rejected as a right available to us....”

– Kalin Pak, *Love & Politics* (2021)



Feminism & Art in Muslim Contexts

The Programme

In the struggle to gain recognition and a place in society, women use different strategies and different tools. Art is one of these tools. As in most fields, art is male dominated and women are overlooked, their existence in these spaces in question. With the emergence of the feminist art movement in the late 1960s, female voices have become louder and louder, challenging male domination in the art industry. Today, many female artists reflect their struggles in their work, use art as an activist tool, and oppose roles of 'womanhood' assigned to them by society through their art.

'Feminism and Art in Muslim Contexts' takes a closer look at the work of female artists in diverse Muslim communities and countries. A complex image emerges when attempting to combine consideration of artforms, such as music, painting, and cinema, under the same headings as 'Islam' and 'women'. But, this in itself is a clear indication that the subject deserves greater attention. This programme was developed to discuss how female artists, whose acts are not receiving the attention that they deserve, use art as a powerful tool within the framework of Muslim contexts. The programme will focus on how these artists increase the visibility of women in the field of art, how they transform art, and how they transform with art. They rebel against discriminatory systems trying to control female existence, exclude them from public life, or label them as poor, passive possessions by putting forward arguments under religion, tradition, or morality. This programme aims to inspire new discussions and activism through publications on many different artists and their works in different fields of art.

Rebel with Rhythm, Shatter with Words: Female Rappers Smashing the prescribed image of the 'Muslim woman' (2021)

In June 2021, WLUML published Hilal Işık's *Rebel with Rhythm, Shatter with Words: Female Rappers Smashing the prescribed image of the 'Muslim woman'* as an original WLUML publication. Işık considers Muslim female musicians' use of rap music as a way to rebel against the role prescribed to them. In a man's world, in an industry where male dominance is strong, it takes a lot of energy and courage as female rappers to occupy space and tell their own stories. And, things get even more complicated when Muslim contexts are involved. The book focuses on the motivation of these musicians, the subjects they touch, and the styles they adopt. Işık takes a narrative approach and divides her analysis under two main headings, Muslim majority and Muslim minority countries. Işık writes from a very personal perspective and strengthens her discourse with lyrics from their rap songs and quotations from interviews with the musicians. Designs by İpek Şaylı have transformed the book itself into a work of art.



Rebel with Rhythm, Shatter with Words:

Female Rappers smashing
the prescribed image of the
"Muslim woman"

Hilal Işık

Book Launch

Rebel with Rhythm, Shatter with Words:

Female Rappers smashing the prescribed image of the "Muslim woman"



Hilal Işık

Free Researcher
Author of *Rebel with Rhythm,
Shatter with Words*



Dr. Angela S. Williams

Associate Director
Center for South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign



Amaani

Rapper / Activist



Dr. Mona Tajali

Assistant Professor of IR and World
of Islamic Social Studies at Georgia State University

Download
the Book

Jul 14, 2021 / 12:00 PM ET (US & Canada) 18:00 CET

Zoom Meeting ID: <https://agnesscott.zoom.us/j/96538172085>



“My anger and a little bit of stubbornness made me write this book...

These women are also angry.

They are angry about the prescribed image written for them. They speak up, occupy space, demand change, create change. Just like Mona Haydar says in her song Dog, ‘the woman's voice is revolution’...”

– Hilal Işık, Rebel with Rhythm, Shatter with Words (2021)

Activism Through Music (#16 Days of Activism)

WLUML's contribution to this year's 16 Days of Activism Campaign, an annual United Nations campaign against violence against women and children, celebrated women musicians from a Muslim background who use their art as an activism too .

[Introduction to WLUML's Music & Activism Campaign \(Part 1\)](#)

[Introduction WLUML's Music and Activism Campaign \(part 2\)](#)

For 16 days, WLUML's social media channels were filled with inspiring women musicians and rappers, their mission, and their music. We also recorded interviews with Iranian drummer Shirin Vazei, Egyptian heavy metal pioneer Cherine Amr, and Iranian multi-instrumental player Charuk Ravan.



[Iranian drummer Shirin Vazei's Interview for WLUML](#)



[Egyptian heavy metal pioneer, Cherine Amr's Interview for WLUML](#)



[Iranian multi-instrumental player, Charuk Revan's Interview for WLUML](#)

#ACTIVISMTHROUGHMUSIC
#16DAYSOFACTIVISM

CHARUK REVAN
BLACK METAL MUSICIAN

Charuk Revan is a multi-instrumental player. She started playing black metal after years of training and performing classical music. Charuk resists gender and social constructions with her music which has been historically considered outlawed in Iran.

"The disciplined and extreme form of art expression is a MUST to first destroy YOUR pre-construct mindset and illusionary fears."

CHARUK REVAN

#ACTIVISMTHROUGHMUSIC
#16DAYSOFACTIVISM

MISS RAISA
RAPPER/HUMAN/DREAMER

This fall Miss Raisa shocked Spain's Got Talent with her rap and with her message. She communicates messages that she thinks are necessary she wants to break stereotypes at every step she takes.

*"Tick, tock, time passed and everything changed
Everybody loved her, everybody respected
Her veil, her religion and attentive to her opinion
All prejudice and racism ended."*
(Una Niña)

MISS RAISA

*Translated from Spanish to English

#ACTIVISMTHROUGHMUSIC
#16DAYSOFACTIVISM

Dr Bitch Ray
RAPPER, SCIENTIST, FEMINIST, BITCH

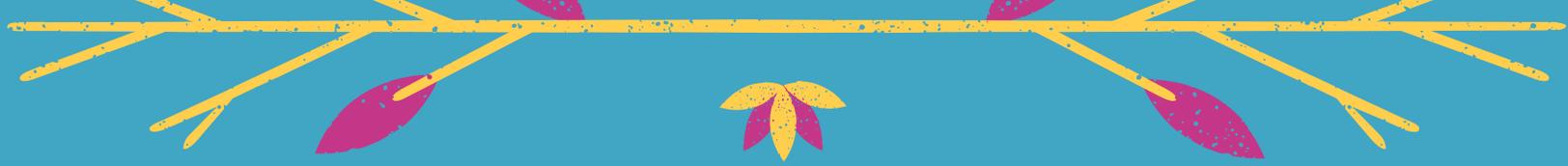
Dr Reyhan Sahin, aka Lady Bitch Ray/Dr. Bitch Ray, occupies her space in the German Hip-Hop scene with rapping about female sexuality and feminism themes and badly affects young generation in Germany, in a way that gangster rappers have not done in years despite rapping about guns, rape, violence, and drugs(!)

'Everyone knows my name; I am a phenomenon. I divide Germany, they say I'm too extreme. She is too strong, she is too blatant, she is too provocative. She is so sexy and also so eloquent.'
(Mein Veg-My Way)

DR BITCH RAY

Feminism & Art Blogs

Throughout 2021 we also explored the relationship between feminism and art in a series of blog posts: [Feminist Art, A Force for Change](#)



Other Programmes

Human Rights and Women Centred Islamic Perspectives

Following the recent fall of Afghanistan to the Taliban, 15 August 2021, WLUMML again consulted Afghanistan's women leaders. They suggested that we adapt our campaign to support Afghan women who will continue to argue for women's rights in Afghanistan against the Taliban's extreme ideology. WLUMML will use its extensive network and expertise to generate arguments in support of women's rights from an Islamic lens. We will develop accessible educational materials, workshops, and training pedagogy modules improving the understanding of women's rights and constitution-making. These are designed to support education on women's rights and women's involvement in constitution-building. And, to support typically secular arguments for women's rights using Islamic discourses, bridging the gap between secular and religious debates.

Transformative Feminist Leadership Institute

The Transformative Feminist Leadership Institute (TFLI) is an educative programme for young women leaders from Muslim contexts who are interested in gender equality, women's human rights, and feminism. The TFLI's goals are to enhance the effectiveness of the participants' advocacy for gender justice and equality, to capacity-build through the sharing of knowledge and experiences, and to encourage and enable a new generation of active networkers.

Women's Movement

Women's Movement is WLUMML's attempt to document the transnational history of women's rights movements in Muslim majority countries, correct the narrative that feminist struggles are a Western invention, and demonstrate the rich history of local and independent feminist movements.

Volunteer Programme

WLUMML's volunteer programme includes regular internships and fellowships. It develops the capacity of young networkers and encourages them to write, connect transnationally, and take action. It is also one of the major channels for intergenerational feminist connection. Participation means engaging with and learning from leading feminists, human rights defenders, academics, journalists and other civil society organisations who have a long history of pursuing women's rights and gender advocacy. We also ask our interns and fellows to undertake supervised research projects focusing on women's individual and collective struggles for equality and rights.



Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUML) is a transnational feminist network which promotes gender justice and equality for women whose lives are shaped, conditioned, or governed by laws or customs said to derive from Islam.

The transnational network provides information, solidarity, and support for women acting in their local contexts to advance gender equality. In doing so, WLULM acts as a solidarity network, a think tank, and a lobbying force for local feminist struggles.

Written and compiled by Dana Kamour with contributions from WLUML networkers.

