



Women Living Under Muslim Laws Annual Report

2022

WLUML Annual Report 2022

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

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Letter to Networkers

Dear friends,

The events of 2022 were devastating for women's human rights in many Muslim contexts. Yet, throughout the year, women's solidarity has shone through and given us all hope and courage.

In Afghanistan, women's limited and segregated access to higher education was finally slammed closed by the Taliban. The Taliban who, despite guarantees for 'all human and legal rights of every child, woman and man', have shown their true colours by consistently rolling back women's basic human rights and freedoms.

In Iran, the killing of the young woman Mahsa Amini while in custody by the morality police for wearing the veil incorrectly has brought grief to the nation. Anger that the regime uses women's bodies and beings as political strings has led to widespread protest across the country, and subsequently, through its repression, the death of many more young people. But young women will have no more and, despite the danger and extreme violence, under the banner of 'Woman, Life, Freedom' have poured into the streets and burned their veils. Young men have also stood by them and are rejecting the regime's regressive perspective on women and men's dignity and human rights.

The legal basis for the protection of women against violence has also been shaken. Turkey withdrew from the Istanbul Convention that recognises violence against women as a violation of human rights. In Sudan there is increasing violence against women and women human rights defenders. And, in Indonesia, we witnessed one step forward as the parliament passed the Sexual Violence Bill after 10 years of debates and discussion, however, the celebration did not last long as a harsh law was passed that criminalised sexual relations outside marriage as illegal even for non-nationals and poses a particular threat to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBTQ) people.

- See our solidarity statements -

Despite these events, throughout 2022 solidarity amongst women in Muslim contexts has proved strong and resilient. Iranian women of all ages, and even some young men, have symbolically cut their hair in solidarity with Mahsa Amini (and all women in Iran who have felt the aggression of the Islamic Republic), reviving an old tradition indicating their extreme grief. This solidarity was not limited to those in Iran but also felt internationally, particularly amongst the diaspora (there was an unprecedented estimated eighty to one hundred thousand people at one demonstration in Berlin).

It is perhaps the solidarity from women from Afghanistan with their Iranian sisters that has been most moving. Women from Afghanistan understand better than anyone else a regime of fear and repression conducted in the name of religion. Risking violent dispersal by the Taliban, they were there outside the Iranian embassy in Kabul chanting in solidarity for "Woman, Life, Freedom".

- See our articles, interviews, and blogs -

16 Days of Activism was a global opportunity to stand up against gender-based violence. Within WLUML, our established networkers and young activists shared why 16 Days is important to them and their hopes for the future. You can find their powerful responses here on [WLUML's Instagram](#). It was also an opportunity to connect with new partners including the EŞİK Platform, discuss women's rights from a regional perspective with Magdeburg University, and to sit down with Board Member Homa Hoodfar to discuss the elimination of violence against women and its impact on the formation and development of WLUML (see [WLUML's new podcast](#)).

- See our contributions to global campaigns -

For the new WLUML Podcast we have connected to activists across different contexts. Hilal talks Muslim women rappers and decolonising feminism, Mobeen and Sara shared their experiences in Afghanistan before the Taliban and their exile from their homeland, and Pasqualina shared her research on heavy metal musicians in the Middle East and how they produce music to promote their right to self-actualisation.

- See our podcast -

2022 was also the first time many of us were able to connect in person. First in Toronto, for a three-day meeting with Afghan women politicians and civil society leaders now living in North America to reflect and plan ways of resisting the Taliban and their extreme discriminatory laws. And then in London, for the research and planning conference that connected our youngest and most active members. We discussed WLUML's constitutionalism project, women's rights in the context of Muslim majority countries, reconsidered women's machinery and women's safety in public and private spaces, and the role of art in our struggle for gender equality. It is our sincere hope that 2023 will bring greater opportunities for collective work and the sharing of experiences and strategies.

We look forward to welcoming in the year and continuing to strive for gender equality and justice together.



In peace and sisterhood,

Dr Homa Hoodfar
WLUML Board of Directors

About WLUML

WLUML

Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUML) 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, whether they identify as Muslim, are members of another religion, or without spiritual belief. The transnational network provides information, solidarity, and support for women acting in their local contexts to advance gender equality. In doing so, WLUML acts as a solidarity network, a feminist think tank, and a knowledge and information force for local feminist struggles.

For more than 35 years WLUML has connected individual women and feminist organisations. We now connect women from Indonesia to Turkey, Kenya to Afghanistan, and Egypt to Germany, and more. WLUML 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

WLUML 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, WLUML is still led by women from a Muslim heritage. The history and development of WLUML is closely linked to struggles to establish women's rights as human rights (an understanding that was lacking even within the UN and other custodians of human rights) and 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](#).

WLUML Recommends...

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

[WLUML "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 WLUML \(1994\)](#), 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. Our current collective projects concern constitutionalising women's rights and reclaiming public spaces.

- 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.

Plan of Action: Critical Issues Informing Our Work, 2017-2022

-  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), following years of intense discussion on the NGOisation of the women's movement and the imprisonment of Homa Hoodfar in Iran on the charges of dabbling in feminism and being an agent of the CIA and MI6, 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

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

Council

Ada Romero
Amna Nasir
Anniesa Hussain
Camilla Gray
Fahima Hashim
Haddy Jatou Jonga
Hilal İşik
Humaira Saqib
Ifra Asad

Council

Isabel Marler
Mahboubeh Abbasgholizadeh
Masha Kardashevskaya
Najla Raheel
Saira K Zuberi
Sara López Izquierdo
Setenay Mutlu Adisönmez
Suzanna Eddyono
Zana Salam

Fellows and Interns

And, thank you to our 2022 fellows who joined us to kick start our new research programme 'Human Rights and Women-Centred Islamic Perspectives'!

Keyana Moayed
Yuyun Sriwahyuni
Ulya Fikriyat
Jannatul Maa
Larissa Freitas
Pasqualina Eckerström

Nor Ismah
Endri Yenti
Masyithah Mardhatillah
Noorhidayah
Syarifatul Hayati

Haslinda Mora
Hasnah
Rina Rehayati
Yumasdaleni
Fatimah Zuhrah
Miti Yarmunida

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.

[Quick Look at the 2022 Statements](#)

[International Women's Day, Demanding Justice, Freedom and Participation for the Women of Afghanistan - March 2022](#)

The events of 2021 and the return of the Taliban left us outraged and disheartened, but even more determined to struggle for gender justice and women's human rights. With increasing violence across diverse geographies, we want to remind the world that sustainable peace has to be at the top of the international community's agenda...

[Does the world need any more proof that the Taliban have not changed? - March 2022](#)

On March 23, 2022, the Taliban once again went back on their word that they would allow girls to attend secondary education. Women Living Under Muslim Laws joins with millions of global citizens in strongly condemning the Taliban's action denying women and girls the right to education. It has caused deep disappointment and sorrow to hundreds of thousands of women and girls in Afghanistan who recognize the significance of their fundamental right to education...

[We won't give up on the Istanbul Convention! - July 2022](#)

On 19 July 2022, Turkey's top administrative court announced that the decision to withdraw Turkey from the Istanbul Convention with just a single sentence published in the Official Gazette, on March 20, 2021, was lawfully taken by President Erdoğan. This is an unacceptable decision that could pave the way for Turkey to withdraw, not only from the Istanbul Convention but also from other international conventions concerning fundamental human rights to which it is a signatory...

One year since the Taliban seized power, we condemn their violent rule and disregard for women's rights - August 2022

The 15th of August 2022, marks one year since the Taliban seized power in Afghanistan, the second illegitimate takeover in the country's history. In this past year, the world has witnessed that the Taliban remain unchanged. Reminiscent of their violent rule from 1996 to 2001 they continue to abide by a misogynistic understanding of Islam, particularly in their disregard for women's rights...

Stop The War Against Women! - September 2022

Countless women have been victimized, imprisoned, and killed by the Islamic Republic of Iran's war on women, the latest woman was Mahsa Amini (22 years old). As a result of the state's discriminatory laws and forced hijab, she was arrested while walking in the streets of Tehran and taken by morality police; deaf to her family's objection. Within hours her braindead body was transported to the hospital, and she was pronounced dead shortly after. The discriminatory and inhuman laws have victimized women for decades by harassing, detaining, and harming them...

Sudan: Woman At Risk of Death by Stoning - September 2022

Mariam Tirab, 20 years old woman from Sudan was sentenced to death by stoning on June 27th, 2022. She was found guilty By a judge in Kosty in White Nile state of violating article 146(2) (Adultery). The young woman was arrested in 2021, when a police officer interrogated her without informing her that her confession will be used against her in court. She has been tried without access to legal representation and was not informed about the charges and the penalty of the crime of adultery (Zina) in Sudanese laws. She was denied her constitutional and legal rights under the Sudanese laws...

Solidarity Statement on International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women - November 2022

Today, as WLUML marks the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, we specifically express solidarity with the strength, resilience and courage of many women and girls in Afghanistan and Iran, where we have focused much of our activism in 2022. However, we acknowledge that male-perpetuated wars and male-dominated regimes, militant groups or fundamentalist ideologies continue to further their agenda of controlling women's bodies and minds...

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, lectures, and webinars 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:



'Love and Politics', by Kalin Pak



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

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



“...I hope to demonstrate how the ability to love should not only be understood as a personal choice, but also a political right. Because the right to love is entangled in structures of social control, it is often at odds with our ideas of autonomy and freedom of choice. In order to navigate through these complexities we must begin both a discussion of and a demand for our right to love....”

– Kalin Pak, *Love & Politics* (2021)

Articles & Interviews

Response to Iran and Afghanistan

WLUML Board members wrote a number of articles and accepted numerous invitations for media interviews to raise awareness of developments in Iran and Afghanistan. August 2022 was significant as it marked one year since the Taliban's forceful takeover of Afghanistan and the consistent rolling back of women's rights since. From September 2022, following the death of Mahsa Amini, Iranians have protested under the slogan of 'Woman, Life, Freedom' to demand a better future for all.

Articles & Interviews



[Afghan women are refusing to remain silent one year after the Taliban takeover](#) - Homa Hoodfar & Mona Tajali, The Conversation, August 2022



[Afghanistan's women in exile continue to push for equality](#) - Mona Tajali, The Washington Post, August 2022



[Iran on fire: Once again, women are on the vanguard of transformative change](#) - Vrinda Narain & Fatemeh Sadeghi, The Conversation, September 2022



[Les femmes au cœur du mouvement](#) - Homa Hoodfar, interviewed by La Presse, September 2022



[Iranian women have been protesting mandatory hijab for decades](#) - Mona Tajali, The Washington Post, October 2022



[Iranian women keep up the pressure for real change - but will broad public support continue?](#) -

French version: **[Ce n'est pas la première fois que les Iraniennes descendent dans la rue. Cette fois-ci sera-t-elle la bonne ?](#)** - Homa Hoodfar & Mona Tajali, The Conversation, October 2022



[En solidarité avec les Iraniennes](#) - Homa Hoodfar, interviewed by La Presse, October 2022



[Iranian Feminism and "All These Different Kinds of Veils"](#) - Homa Hoodfar, interviewed by The New Yorker, November 2022

Media Appearances



Spotlighting an Author - Mona Tajali: Women's Political Representation in Iran and Turkey - Mona Tajali, interviewed by the Iran 1400 Project, August 2022



What's happening in Afghanistan one year after U.S. withdrawal? - Mona Tajali, interviewed by Arirang Issue, August 2022



Women have always had a colorful presence in Iran's political scene - Mona Tajali, interviewed by VOA Farsi, September 2022



On the situation in Iran - Homa Hoodfar, interviewed by Daybreak Montreal, September 2022



Iran unrest - Mona Tajali, interviewed by CNN, October 2022



What is the main issue for women in Islamic countries, especially in Iran and Turkey? - Mona Tajali, interviewed by Iran International, November 2022



The problem is not only the hijab - Mona Tajali, interviewed by VOA Farsi, November 2022

WLUML's digital communications team launched a new opinion piece series, WLUML Spotlights. The protests in Iran and the solidarity shown by women in Afghanistan for Iranian women, formed the subject of these first blogs.

WLUML Spotlights



Where there is silence, there is death. Make sure that they are heard - Pasqualina Eckerström

Iran has been rocked by protests following the death of Mahsa Amini, 22. She was arrested by Iran's morality police for allegedly breaking hijab rules. Mahsa's photograph, and the future that was taken from her, has become a weapon for a generation of young Iranians tired of being abused, silenced, and forced to live in fear...



Don't Let Islamophobia be the Legacy - Pasqualina Eckerström

Protests have erupted in Iran following the death of Mahsa Amini, 22. Iranian morality police arrested her for allegedly violating hijab rules. The protests have been led by women, who have burned their mandatory hijabs and cut their hair...



Why the women of Afghanistan's support for the Iran uprising is a lesson to us all - Anniesa Hussain

Mahsa Amini is immortalised not only in Iranian history, but the history of global women's movements and causes. Her murder sparked a nationwide uprising across Iran, which has quickly become a global catalyst for thousands as they demand the rights of women, girls and two generations of Iranians, who despite never voting for an Islamic regime have never known life without it...

The WLUML Podcast

WLUML launched its storytelling space for anyone striving for individual and/or collective autonomy within Muslim countries and communities, but whose lives are shaped, conditioned or governed by patriarchal and/or authoritarian interpretations of Islam. This podcast aims to provide a channel of communication and solidarity as we work together towards the realisation of gender justice, equality and human rights.



Rebel with Rhythm: Muslim women rappers, decolonising feminism, and shattering the patriarchy

Hilal Işık, author of *Rebel with Rhythm: Shatter with Words*, joins us on our first podcast to talk about how Muslim women rappers are using rap as a tool to represent their stories, decolonise mainstream feminism of the west and shatter patriarchal treatment of them, as part of their journey to self-expression and autonomy.



Stories from Afghanistan: Life as a refugee one year later

This month marks one year since the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan. In this episode, Hilal and Anniesa speak to Mobeen (former Civil Society activist) and Sara (vocal journalist). Both publicly supported values the Taliban despise - women's rights, peace, democracy - and were proud representatives of a promising future generation of Afghans. The violent Taliban regime forced them both to flee for their lives to foreign countries. Now, as refugees, they speak to WLUML on their experiences prior to leaving Afghanistan and their thoughts on the Taliban, their experiences during this time and the current state of their homeland.



Metal Musicians in the Middle East: State blasphemy or self-actualisation?

In this episode, Hilal speaks to Pasqualina (Paky) Eckerström, Doctoral Researcher in Religious Studies at the University of Helsinki. She is currently working on a dissertation on how extreme metal musicians in Iran and Saudi Arabia use and produce music to express their subversion identities and promote their right to self-actualisation. Paky is also an Executive Board member of the International Society for Metal Music Studies, Research Fellow at Women Living Under Muslim Laws, and hosts her own podcast, Metal Break. Hilal & Paky discuss how heavy metal music is used as a tool of activism, expression and resistance to state oppression across MENA (particularly in Iran), and the persecution metal musicians suffer, in a region that views them as "blasphemers".



Homa Hoodfar Talks Elimination of Violence Against Women

To commemorate the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, Hilal and Anniesa sit down with Homa Hoodfar, WLUML Board Member and Professor of Anthropology at Concordia Montreal. Describing herself as an academic in the service of civil society, Professor Hoodfar has been an active member of WLUML since the 1980s, and was imprisoned in Evin Prison in 2016 under false charges of dabbling in feminism and security matters. In this episode she talks about the impact violence against women has had on the creation and formative years of WLUML, the evolution of reactive women movements, and, how the rise of technology has contributed to an awareness and dissemination of knowledge of violence against women across the globe.

Events

Webinars 2022

LOVE AS POLITICS
DISCOURSES OF VALENTINE'S DAY
AND LOVE JIHAD IN MUSLIM
CULTURES
11. FEB 2022 | 13:00 EST/19:00 CET

<https://agnesscott.zoom.us/j/97922688756>
MEETING ID: 979 2268 8756

KALIN PAK
Philosophy Graduate Student
Katholieke Universiteit Leuven Belgium

MODERATOR: PROF. MONA TAJALI
International Relations and Women's Studies
Agnes Scott College

AMNA NASIR
Journalist & Research Fellow WLUMI

PROF. VRINDA NARAIN
Faculty of Law
McGill University

DR. ZARA SAIEDZADEH
Senior Lecturer
Gender Studies, Örebro University, Sweden

COMMENTATOR: PROF. HOMA HOODFAR
Concordia University
Women Living Under Muslim Laws

AGNES SCOTT COLLEGE

WLUMI
Women Living Under Muslim Laws

Joint webinar with Agnes Scott College, February 2022

Demanding Justice, Freedom and Participation for the Women of Afghanistan
March 10 2022 / 10:00 AM - 11:30 AM EST
<https://mcgill.zoom.us/j/84511886333>

MODERATOR PROF. VRINDA NARAIN
Faculty of Law
McGill University

PROF. MONA TAJALI
International Relations and Women's Studies
Agnes Scott College

PALWASHA HASSAN
Georgetown University

ZAFRA YAFALI
Women Living Under Muslim Laws

PROF. HOMA HOODFAR
Concordia University
Women Living Under Muslim Laws

SPONSORING INSTITUTIONS
Centre for Human Rights and Legal Pluralism, McGill University
Simone de Beauvoir Institute, Concordia University
Women Living Under Muslim Laws

WLUMI
Women Living Under Muslim Laws

Joint webinar with McGill University Centre for Human Rights and Legal Pluralism and Concordia University Simone de Beauvoir Institute, March 2022

Women's Political Machinery: Challenges of Inequality and Violence Against Women
Tuesday, November 15
9:30 am EST
(via Zoom)
<https://harvard.zoom.us/j/920218124455?pwd=ZDh0YzY2NUl0em91Y2h0b2h0MTU3SjZkdz09>

A panel discussion examining women's political machinery in Muslim contexts

Dr. Sima Samar
Harvard Kennedy School - Carr Center Fellow, first Minister of Women's Affairs in Afghanistan

Dr. Mona Tajali
Associate Professor of International Relations and Women's Studies - Agnes Scott College (USA)

Dr. Vrinda Narain
Associate Professor, Faculty of Law - McGill University (Canada)

Dr. Rashida Manjoo
Professor Emerita - University of Cape Town - Department of Public Law (South Africa)

Dr. Sri Wiyanti Eddyono
Professor and Director of Master Program - Universitas Gadjah Mada (Indonesia)

This panel, organized by Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUMI), hosted by the Harvard Kennedy School's Middle East Initiative and Journal of Middle Eastern Politics & Policy (JMEPP), is revisiting various forms of resistance to empower women's machinery in Muslim contexts where, despite much advancement, women continue to face serious gender-based violence and discrimination justified in the name of religion and traditions, particularly in the political and public sphere. The discussion will predominantly focus on the following contexts: Afghanistan, Indonesia, Iran, Turkey.

MIDDLE EAST INITIATIVE

WLUMI
Women Living Under Muslim Laws

Harvard Kennedy School
Journal of Middle Eastern Politics & Policy

Joint webinar with Harvard Kennedy School Journal of Middle Eastern Politics & Policy and Middle East Initiative

WOMAN, LIFE, FREEDOM
Women's Rights from a Regional Perspective

Homa Hoodfar
Prof of Anthropology
Concordia University

Anniesa Hussain
MSci in IR & Global Issues
University of Nottingham

Hilal Isik
MA in European Studies
European University Viadrina

Online Discussion Panel with Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUMI)

30. NOVEMBER 2022, 18:30 CET
SCAN QR CODE TO REGISTER

WLUMI
Women Living Under Muslim Laws

UNIVERSITÄT MAGDEBURG

Joint webinar with Magdeburg University

Conferences 2022

WLUML MEETING WITH AFGHAN WOMEN POLITICIANS, LEGAL SCHOLARS, JOURNALISTS AND CIVIL SOCIETY LEADERS, MAY 2022

- Three representatives from WLUML's board met with Afghan women leaders now living in Canada.
- The meeting was emotional, being the first time many women had met in person since August 2021, but also revitalising as common ground and clear goals emerged.
- The event began with presentations in Farsi/Dari, or English with translation, on the power of women's solidarity and networking, the significance of institutions in realising women's rights, and the role of constitutions.
- Mona Tajali conducted in depth one on one interviews with each of the participants. She asked them to reflect critically on the institutions in Afghanistan responsible for the promotion of women's rights. She also attempted to understand their current activities and goals now that the Taliban have returned to power.
- On the final day the group brainstormed several issues: how to improve upon Afghanistan's 2004 constitution, how best to resist the Taliban, and how to most effectively mobilise Afghan women inside and outside of Afghanistan.

WLUML DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS & RESEARCH PLANNING CONFERENCE LONDON, SEPTEMBER 2022

The WLUML Digital Communications & Research Planning Conference London, September 2022, brought together 10 WLUML networkers for a productive and inspiring long weekend.

During the weekend we were able to:

- share the long history of WLUML and its founding members
- brainstorm the future 'WLUML Academy', a long term vision for the education and inspiration of young feminists
- finalise concrete plans on the development and strengthening of WLUML's digital communications
- explore the potential of WLUML's Constitutionalising Women's Equality Programme

Being in the same room also boosted our productivity, we were able to collaboratively deliver:

- a statement on Iran and the devastating killing of Mahsa Amini
- a podcast recording
- a website training

Global Women's Rights Campaigns

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

Women's Day, 8th March

On this day we shared the profiles of women who have tirelessly struggled for the advancement of gender justice and equality in Afghanistan, women who have faced seemingly insurmountable obstacles with bravery and conviction. See more on [WLUM's Instagram stories](#)



16 Days of Activism

Over the 16 days we shared messages from women's rights activists from around the world on what 16 Days mean to them and their hopes for the future. Also [Podcast](#) and [Events](#). For the statements, see [WLUM's Instagram](#)



Our Programmes & Campaign

HUMAN RIGHTS & 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.

CONSTITUTIONALISING WOMEN'S EQUALITY

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)

DEMANDING JUSTICE, FREEDOM & PARTICIPATION FOR THE WOMEN OF AFGHANISTAN

In 2020 there was still hope for a negotiated settlement with the Taliban. WLUMML, in consultation with its Afghan networkers, launched a campaign in support of women's demands and their participation in the peace talks. However, with the Taliban takeover and the implementation of their misogynist policies, WLUMML revised its campaign and its objectives for the new year. Last year's campaign information: 'No Peace Without Women's Rights in Afghanistan'

Our Programmes

TRANSFORMATIVE FEMINIST LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

The Transformative Feminist Leadership Institute (TFLI) includes 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. Alongside a school of feminism, WLUMML will also present accessible online courses and lectures.

BODILY AUTONOMY, INTEGRITY, AND SEXUAL RIGHTS

*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. WLUMML's Bodily Autonomy programme supports and makes visible feminist narratives, tactics, and demands from across Muslim societies for bodily autonomy. The **Love as Politics Project** 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.*

FEMINISM & ART IN MUSLIM CONTEXTS

'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.

Our Programmes

WOMEN RECLAIMING PUBLIC SPACES: CONFRONTING RISING SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND VIOLENCE

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 WLUMML 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 & POLITICS

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. WLUMML's research into electoral politics and female representation began in 2008 and the work is documented by several of our publications. WLUMML 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.

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.

