



ANNUAL REPORT

2024

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WLUML Annual Report 2023-2024

With contributions from the WLUML board and networkers

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Edited by Homa Hoodfar

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CALL TO ACTION

Dear friends,

For over 40 years, Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUML) has called for action against the injustices women face, often in the name of religion. Today, as violence, militarism, and systemic inhumanity escalate across the globe, we are once again raising our voices. But this time, we call for louder, bolder, and more urgent action, in defense of peace, moral courage, and our shared humanity.

We must be unrelenting. Our voices, our stories, and our resistance must become sharper, more powerful tools of truth and defiance in the year ahead.

Despite the tireless efforts of feminist and progressive movements to uphold justice and dignity, war and genocide have not only escalated, they have been normalized. In Gaza, Sudan, Iran, Afghanistan, and many other places, women and children are paying the highest price: starved, displaced, bombed, or stripped of their most basic rights.

Politicians in many powerful nations, far from working to end the violence, have often fueled it, arming one side or the other, hiding behind the language of diplomacy, and issuing hollow statements. Even when they say the right words, they fail to back them with action. Their failure is not passive; it is active, deliberate, and deadly.

We are witnessing not just a failure of leadership, but a collapse of moral courage. When starvation is used as a weapon of war, when girls are denied access to education, when women are punished for showing their faces or using their voices, we must name these acts for what they are: crimes against humanity. And when global institutions remain silent, or worse, enable these crimes, it falls to us, as feminists, human rights defenders, and people of conscience, to speak louder, organize stronger, and demand accountability.



As this report demonstrates, we, and our sister organizations, have not been silent.

In the face of escalating violence, feminist movements around the world have mobilized. We have challenged the narratives pushed by mainstream media and state powers, narratives that normalize military aggression and justify the building of war machines. We have used our stories, fact-checked, grounded in lived experience, and defiantly truthful, to disrupt this process of normalizing war and killing.

It has been heartening to witness the rise of mass mobilizations. In cities like London and across Europe, hundreds of thousands of people, of all ages, ethnicities, and religions, have taken to the streets, demanding that their governments, many of whom are complicit in promoting war, remember their higher responsibility: to uphold morality and protect and respect human life above all else.

Now, we invite you, feminists, activists, organizations, and communities, to pour your energy into disrupting war and hatred. In your own context, and in your own voice:

- Organize peace forums, public teach-ins, or international webinars.
- Write anti-war songs and powerful anthems for justice.

- 
- 
- Host poetry nights that bring to life the horror of war and the starvation that robs children of their humanity.
 - Make short films and documentary or organize circles of peace by inviting and showing the existing one to remind us of the importance of peace.
 - Focus on ending femicide and violence against women.
 - Mobilize the bold voices of youth and their innovating imagination for promoting peace and human rights
 - Use social media or any platform available to resist the normalization of war and hatred that so many governments promote or watch silently.

We know that war and militarism are antithetical to the feminist worldview. They destroy the very foundations of justice, equality, and colectivo care that we seek to build.

Now is the time for all of us to rise, together, to become a global anti-war orchestra.

Let our resistance echo across borders. Let our voices become impossible to ignore.

In peace and sisterhood,

Homa Hoodfar

Board of Directors WLUML

ABOUT WLUML

Women Living Under Muslim Laws ([WLUML](#)) is a transnational women's rights and 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 are secular or non-believers. Our transnational network provides field-based research for informed change, information, solidarity, and support for women acting in their local and global contexts to advance gender equality and create structural and cultural change. In doing so, WLUML acts as a solidarity network, a feminist think tank, and a knowledge and information force for local feminist struggles.

For over 40 years, WLUML has connected individual women and feminist organizations from Indonesia to Turkey, Kenya to Afghanistan, Nigeria to Senegal, Egypt to Germany, Iran to Pakistan 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 current website can be accessed [here](#) while our previous archived website can be accessed [here](#).

MISSION AND VISION

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

OUR MISSION: Since 1984, WLUML strengthens feminist local struggles for individual and collective autonomy within diverse Muslim contexts by facilitating a transnational solidarity network; building and mobilizing knowledge; and advocating for the realization of gender justice, equality, peace, human rights and freedom from gender-based violence.

OUR HISTORY

Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUML) was formed in 1984 in response to the urgent denial of women's rights under patriarchal or authoritarian interpretations of Islam. The network was born out of three specific cases from different countries where women were being denied fundamental rights. In response, nine women from Algeria, Morocco, Sudan, Iran, Mauritius, Tanzania, Bangladesh, and Pakistan came together to take action and to connect their struggles transnationally. Today, WLUML continues to be led by women of Muslim heritage, predominantly from the Global South. The history and development of WLUML is rooted in mobilizing international solidarity for the just treatment of individuals, particularly women, by governments, non-state actors, and political regimes.

OUR PEOPLE

We thank our Board, International Council Members and Interns who continued to steer and guide WLUML's activities throughout the year. They have all been at the forefront, promoting women's human rights, working to end discrimination against women in the name of religion and culture, and striving towards a more equitable and peaceful world.

WLUML BOARD MEMBERS



Alex McCarthy



Amal Elmohandes



Amna Nasir



Homa Hoodfar



Mona Tajali



Najia Haneefi



Naureen Shameem



Vrinda Narain



Zarqa Yaftali

CURRENT INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL

- Anniesa Hussain (UK)
- Azadeh Momeni (Iran, Canada)
- Camilla Gray (Australia)
- Dana Kamour (UK)
- Fatma Emam Sakory (Egypt)
- Haddy Jatou Jonga (Gambia)
- Hilal Işık (Turkey/Germany)
- Humaira Saqib (Afghanistan/Canada)
- Ifra Asad (Pakistan)
- Maira Asif (Pakistan)
- Maria (Masha) Kardashevskaya (Indonesia)
- Najla Raheel (Afghanistan/Canada)
- Pasqualina Eckerström (Italy)
- Saira K (Canada)
- Salam Zada (Iraq/Kurdistan)
- Sara López Izquierdo (Spain, on leave)
- Setenay Mutlu Addison (Turkey)
- Suzanna Eddyono (Indonesia)

INTERNS

- Fierro Castro, Alejandra (Colombia)
- Philippson, Mégane (Switzerland)
- Reno, Diana (United States)
- Zahoor, Sara (Pakistan)

HOW WE WORK TOWARDS OUR MISSION

- (i) By breaking the isolation of women struggling for gender equality through the facilitation of transnational solidarity – building inclusive spaces, furthering communication, linkages, and the sharing of experiences between the grassroots and global movements.
 - (ii) WLUMML connects women across borders who are engaged in the struggle for gender equality, fostering transnational feminist solidarity through inclusive spaces for dialogue, collaboration, and shared learning. By linking grassroots efforts with global movements, WLUMML amplifies women's voices, facilitates the exchange of strategies and experiences, and strengthens collective action across diverse cultural and political contexts
- (ii) By building field-based knowledge and data and sharing information – producing independent research that helps demystify the diverse sources of control over women's lives and minds, and the strategies and experiences of challenging these means of control.

COLLECTIVE PROJECTS

Collective projects are topic-specific initiatives arising from networkers' and sister organizations' shared needs and interests. Networking groups and individuals participate in the programs' 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 specialized topics. Our current collective projects concern constitutionalizing women's rights, stop gender apartheid in Afghanistan, and women reclaiming public spaces with a focus this year on the right to mobility and riding safely and free of harassment.

NETWORKING & INFORMATION SERVICES

WLUMML directly connects women and feminist groups to facilitate a non-hierarchical exchange of information, expertise, strategies, and experience. We document trends, generate new analyses, and support networker's participation in international events. In 2023, we focused on strengthening regional solidarities with our Turkish, Iranian, and Afghan feminist peers, apart from our larger global coalition-building work.

CAPACITY BUILDING

WLUMML is deeply committed to building the capacity of feminist individuals and network groups across Muslim-majority societies through a holistic approach that combines research, advocacy, and political education. Our **internship program** engages young networkers in meaningful work on feminist issues, **while exchanges and training sessions** foster cross-regional solidarity and skill-sharing. At the heart of this capacity-building agenda is the **Transformative Feminist Leadership Institute (TFLI)**, a revitalization of WLUMML's historic feminist leadership institutes, designed to train a new generation of intersectional, politically grounded young women leaders, particularly from repressive contexts like Iran and Afghanistan. Through these initiatives, WLUMML cultivates the knowledge, confidence, and networks needed to sustain long-term feminist movement-building in deeply challenging environments.

KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

WLUMML as a feminist think tank collect, 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 translations to other languages, including French, Farsi, and Arabic, where relevant and possible. Locally generated information is published in those respective languages.

Since our inception in 1984, WLUMML's programs and research have been designed to reflect the expressed needs of our diverse networkers. WLUMML programs have been supported by funding from generous donors, but we also rely heavily on our board, council members and active networkers' volunteering their 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, a long term board members in Iran on the charges of dabbling in feminism and baseless accusation of being a western agent for governments (notably the CIA and MI6) a charge routinely raised against adversaries of the regime, in Iran. To protect our Iranian and other networkers living under repressive regimes, the WLUMML International Council decided 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 programs. This followed the completion of a very successful funded program, 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 prioritization of women's interests by following the wishes of the women within our network. We are ever grateful to all the women who have given their time, knowledge, and commitment since 2017 to make our programs and outreach possible.

RESILIENCE AND RECOMMITMENT

Despite operating entirely on volunteer effort, with no core staff and no funds, **WLUMML never paused**. What followed was a period of sustained, defiant activity: a testament to what is possible when solidarity is grounded in shared purpose and radical care.

Even after the moratorium formally ended and COVID-19 lockdowns lifted in 2022, WLUMML's re-engagement with institutional donors has remained cautious and gradual. Despite lack of staff, and without being able to pay contributors for their time, energy, or writing, progress has been considerable- a testament to our commitment to the cause.

OUR PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

TRANSFORMATIVE FEMINIST LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE (TFLI): A LEGACY REIMAGINED FOR THE PRESENT

WLUML has long understood that transforming societies begins with transforming leadership. Since its founding in the mid-1980s, WLUML has nurtured feminist leadership across Muslim-majority contexts through solidarity networks, movement-building, and education. One of its hallmark initiatives was the **Feminism in the Muslim Contexts Leadership Institutes** (1998–2014), developed in partnership with the Center for Women’s Global Leadership at Rutgers University. These institutes offered generations of feminist activists across Asia, the Middle East, and Africa the opportunity to engage in intersectional, rights-based, and context-specific training that foregrounded Muslim women’s experiences and strategies for change.

In 2023, recognizing the rapidly shifting political terrain, particularly the regressive authoritarianism in Iran and Afghanistan, WLUML reimaged and relaunched this program as the **Transformative Feminist Leadership Institute (TFLI)**. The Institute emerged from deep consultations with young feminists and grassroots organizers, especially in Afghanistan and Iran, who expressed a pressing need for strategic training, political education, and transnational solidarity in the face of escalating gender repression. WLUML’s Board appointed long-time collaborator and Executive Board Member **Dr. Mona Tajali** to lead this renewed vision, supported by a team of co-board members from across the region, including **Homa Hoodfar, Zarqa Yaftali, Najila Haneefi, and Najla Raheel**.

What Makes TFLI ‘Transformative’?

The **Transformative Feminist Leadership Institute** is built on the belief that true leadership is not about formal authority, but about one’s capacity, individually or collectively, to shift gender relations and challenge structural oppression. The Institute is *transformative* because it facilitates internal and external change. It supports participants to interrogate the sources of gender inequality, understand power through a feminist lens, and develop strategic tools to act in their personal, communal, and political contexts.

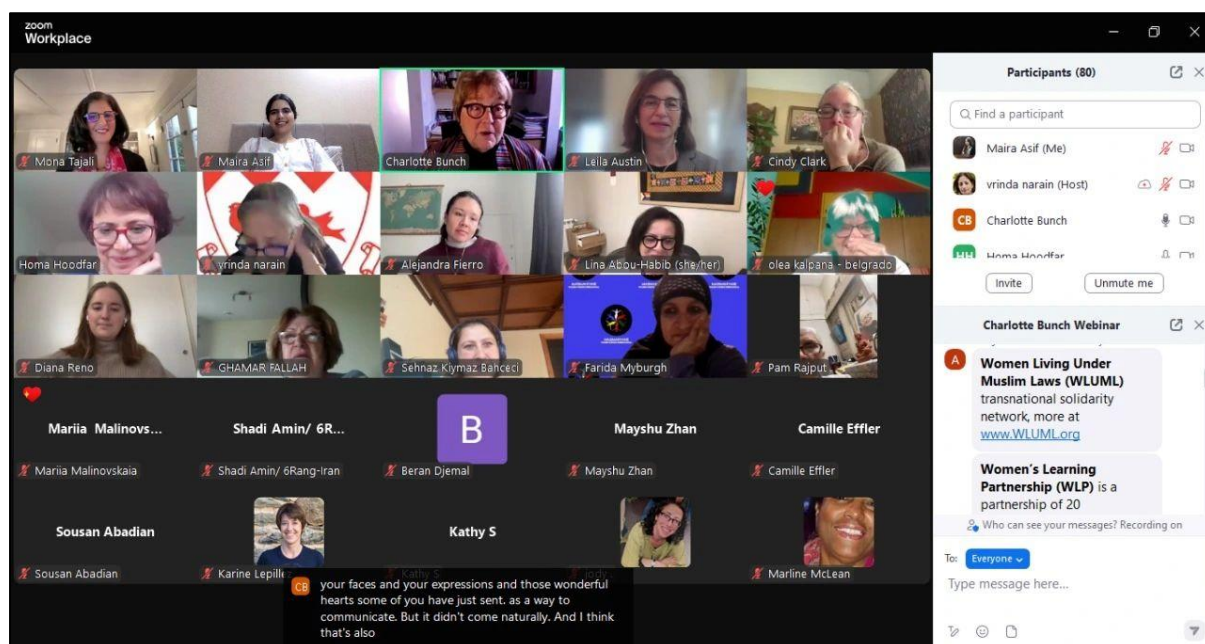
Designed as a hybrid program, it delivers training both online and in-person, across national, regional, and transnational levels. The program’s first phase prioritizes young women leaders from Iran and Afghanistan, with Dari and Farsi as the initial languages of instruction, and Arabic to follow in subsequent stages.

INAUGURAL PUBLIC LECTURE: DEFYING BACKLASH IN FEMINIST LEADERSHIP

To formally launch the TFLI, WLUML and Women’s Learning Partnership organized a highly successful inaugural webinar on **October 16, 2024**, featuring one of the world’s most influential feminist activists, **Charlotte Bunch**. Charlotte, the **original architect of the Global Center for Women’s Leadership**, has played a pivotal role in developing feminist leadership training and feminist movement-building and international advocacy for gender justice. Her talk, *Defying Backlash: Feminist Leadership and Change in Tumultuous Times*, set the stage for why transformative feminist leadership is essential in the current global political climate.

This event attracted **96 participants from around the world**, including feminist scholars, activists, and young women leaders from Iran, Afghanistan, and the broader Muslim world. The lecture highlighted:

- The necessity of feminist leadership in resisting backlash against women's rights.
- Lessons from global feminist movements on sustaining activism under repression.
- How transnational feminist solidarity can support women in closed societies.



The success of this public launch reaffirmed the demand for structured feminist leadership training, particularly among young women navigating political violence, religious fundamentalism, and systemic gender discrimination. The recording of the event can be accessed [HERE](#).

THE FIRST TFLI TRAINING COHORT: DECEMBER 2024

Following months of preparation, WLUML successfully launched the **first of its newly revised and reconceived TFLI training cohort on December 1, 2024**. The six-week intensive training program was designed to provide a deep dive into feminist leadership, movement-building, and political advocacy and feminist knowledge creating through feminsi tearch . Thirty young women activists from Iran, Afghanistan, and the diaspora formally enrolled in the program, engaging in interactive sessions, mentorship, and collaborative projects.

The training was structured around several **key thematic modules**, including:

1. **History of National Women's Movements: The Quest for Equality** – Examining feminist resistance in Iran and Afghanistan, including the **Women, Life, Freedom and Bread, Work, Freedom** movements.
2. **What is Feminism? Feminist Thought and Practice** – Introducing key feminist theories and how they apply to women's struggles in Muslim-majority societies.
3. **Women, Gender Equality, and Feminism: From the Local to the Global** – Exploring the role of transnational feminist advocacy networks.

4. **Feminist Leadership: Skills for Movement-Building and Political Decision-Making** – Training participants on campaign strategies, public advocacy, and grassroots organizing.
5. **International Human Rights Frameworks and Their Impact on Women's Rights** – Examining legal tools available for feminist advocacy in repressive states.
6. **Feminist Consciousness Raising Through Art** – Understanding how visual art, literature, and digital media are used in feminist resistance.
7. **7.practicum** where participants learn to design projects mobilizing their theoretical leanings to put in practice.

Each participant was encouraged to develop their own leadership project, culminating in a research-based presentation on feminist movement-building, which was formally shared with their peers in January and February 2025. The feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive, with many expressing that the training provided them with a renewed sense of purpose, tools for organizing, and deeper connections to a global feminist network.

Looking Ahead: Expanding TFLI in 2025

Building on the success of the first training cohort, WLUMML has strategic plans to expand TFLI in 2025, broadening its geographic scope and thematic depth. Future objectives include:

- **Expanding TFLI to include participants from Pakistan and Bangladesh**, strengthening South Asian feminist leadership networks.
- **Developing an online repository of Persian/Dari and Urdu training materials**, ensuring that feminist knowledge remains accessible and secure for women in highly surveilled environments.
- **Enhancing digital security training** for activists in Iran, Afghanistan, and beyond, helping women navigate state surveillance, online censorship, and digital repression.
- **Creating a mentorship program**, pairing experienced feminist leaders with young activists, to foster ongoing learning, collaboration, and transnational feminist solidarity.

WLUMML envisions TFLI as a long-term initiative that will continue to shape the next generation of feminist leaders, equipping them with the knowledge, skills, and networks needed to drive systemic change in their local and transnational contexts.

CONSTITUTIONALIZING WOMEN'S RIGHTS: SOLIDARITY WITH THE WOMAN, LIFE, FREEDOM MOVEMENT

The *Woman, Life, Freedom* movement erupted in **September 2022** following the tragic death of **Mahsa (Jina) Amini**, a young Kurdish-Iranian woman arrested by Iran's morality police for allegedly wearing her hijab "improperly." Her death galvanized a mass feminist uprising in Iran and among the diaspora, rejecting not only compulsory veiling but decades of gender-based repression. The movement was rooted in a long history of resistance and expanded into a transnational call for regime change, constitutional reform, and gender justice.

WLUML's response to this pivotal moment was rooted in our [Constitutionalizing Women's Rights Project](#), a multi-year initiative launched in 2020 to support feminist constitutional visioning in politically unstable or post-conflict Muslim-majority contexts. Led by a team of feminist legal scholars from Iran, India, and beyond, with support from **McGill University's Centre for Human Rights and Legal Pluralism (CHRLP)**, this project aims to develop secular, rights-based frameworks for constitution-making, grounded in feminist and liberal Islamic legal thought.

The Iranian Women's Bill of Rights: A Living Constitutional Document

As part of this initiative, WLUML supported the formation of the **Feminist Collective for Woman, Life, Freedom**, a diverse group of constitutional experts, feminist lawyers, and women's rights activists from inside Iran and across the diaspora. The collective's aim was to create a **Bill of Rights** articulating how the movement's demands could be translated into a future gender-just constitution.

After months of drafting and public consultations, across Iran, Berlin, Istanbul, Toronto, and online, the collective launched [Version 1 of the Iranian Women's Bill of Rights](#) on **March 8, 2023**, in both Farsi and English. Framed as a **living document**, the Bill interprets the movement's chant *Zan, Zendegi, Azadi* (*Woman, Life, Freedom*) into actionable constitutional demands rooted in equality, dignity, and pluralistic democracy. WLUML hosted the Bill's [public website](#), supported media dissemination and facilitated over consultations.



Reflections on Various Aspects and Impacts of Woman, Life, Freedom Movement in Iran and Internationally- Panel in Persian

Webinar

Farzaneh Bazpour, (Journalist, Iran International)
"Iranian Newspapers' Diversion from the Official State Clichés because of Mahsa's Movement"

Azadeh Momeni, (Post-Doctoral Fellow at Eshagh Omidyar Mir-Djalali Institute of Iranian Studies, Department of Near & Middle Eastern Civilizations, University of Toronto)
"Intersection of Art and Politics: From The American Women's Suffrage Movement to Arab Spring to Iranian "Woman, Life, Freedom" Movement"

Homa Hoodfar, (Concordia University, Canada)
"Woman, Life, Freedom: A Political Watershed in the Iranian Protest Culture"

Saeed Palvandi, (University of Lorraine, France)
"A Critical Analysis of the Woman, Life, Liberty Movement"

In **October 2023**, WLUML arranged travel and consultations in Turkey and Berlin with opposition and feminist groups, culminating in revisions and strengthened engagement. These efforts led to the release of [Version 4 of the Bill](#) on **March 8, 2024**, reflecting collective input from activists across geographies and generations.

2024 Activities: Amplifying the Bill and Supporting Feminists in their demands for gender equality. Peace and justice.

Throughout 2024, WLUML continued to support Iranian feminists in disseminating and revising the Bill of Rights as a tool for

mobilization, consciousness-raising, and constitutional negotiation. Our contributions took multiple forms:

- On **March 10, 2024**, WLUML's **Homa Hoodfar** presented at a Farsi-language [webinar](#) hosted by the **University of California**, titled *Woman, Life, Freedom: A Political Watershed in Iranian Protest Culture*. She was joined by WLUML Council member **Aza-deh Momeni**, who delivered a powerful talk on *The Intersection of Art and Politics*, highlighting how painting, poetry, and visual activism have kept the movement alive under state repression.
- From **June 13–15**, WLUML participated in the **Iranian Festival of Art and Culture in Montreal**, where Hoodfar presented on the 150-year struggle for gender justice in Iran, linking the historical trajectory of Iranian feminism to the constitutional futures imagined in the Bill of Rights.
- On **September 17, 2024**, WLUML marked the second anniversary of **Mahsa Amini's death** with a public statement reaffirming our unwavering solidarity with the *Woman, Life, Freedom* movement and calling for sustained international pressure to end Iran's state-sponsored gender persecution.



Figure 1 Dr. Homa Hoodfar at Iranian Festival of Art and Culture

Strategic Goals and Next Steps

WLUML views hosting and supporting the Iranian Women's Bill of Rights not only as a feminist legal document but as a strategic tool for future negotiations with political forces. Through our Constitutionalization Project, we continue to:

- Build bridges between feminist legal theorists and grassroots organizers;
- Host international consultations to support adaptation of the Bill in other contexts;
- Develop a Toolkit for Feminist Constitution Drafting, due to be piloted in 2025;
- Support emerging charters and bills in other Muslim-majority conflict settings.

In supporting the Iranian feminist movement's constitutional imagination, WLUML is reaffirming a critical lesson from past revolutions: without women's full and equal participation, there can be no legitimate democracy. We remain committed to ensuring that feminist frameworks not only resist authoritarianism, but reimagine governance altogether.



Figure 2 Our statement commemorating Mahsa Amini's death

STOP GENDER APARTHEID IN AFGHANISTAN: WOMEN'S STRUGGLE FOR DIGNITY

There is now consensus among Afghan women activists, international legal scholars, and human rights experts that the Taliban's policies constitute **gender apartheid**, "the use of the systematic segregation of the sexes imposed through law and policy as a governing ideology." For over three decades, WLUML has been at the forefront of the fight to name and challenge this system of oppression.

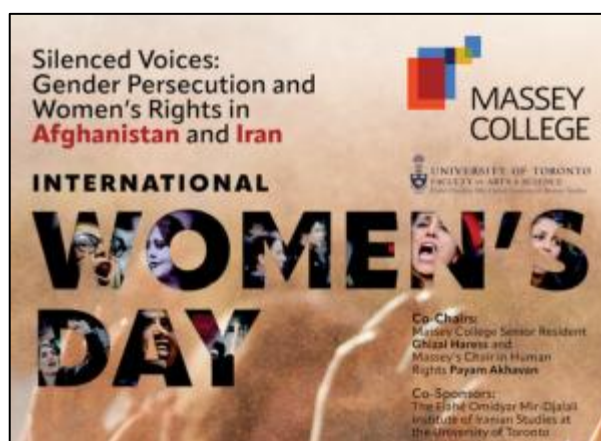
The term *gender apartheid* was first coined in the 1980s to describe the Islamic Republic of Iran's laws that rendered women legally inferior. It was used again in the 1990s during the Taliban's first regime in Afghanistan. Yet, at the time, institutions like the UN and Amnesty International did not regard gender inequality as a human rights or political issue. In response, WLUML, along with other feminist networks, began demanding international recognition of gender apartheid as a **crime against humanity**, particularly after the 1995 Beijing Conference.

Our **Stop Gender Apartheid in Afghanistan: Women's Struggle for Dignity** project builds on this legacy. Initiated after the Taliban's return to power in 2021 and bolstered through our **No Peace Without Women's Rights** campaign (2020–2021), WLUML's efforts have since grown into a global coalition resisting institutionalized gender persecution in both **Afghanistan and Iran**.

In 2023, WLUML began outreach to women's rights defender organizations across Asia, held coalition-building meetings, and commemorated August 13, marking the Taliban's return to power, with a protest outside Parliament Hill in Ottawa. We issued statements urging the international community to recognize the Taliban's regime as one of **gender apartheid** and co-launched events such as the *End Gender Apartheid; Build Peace* webinar with global human rights leaders. These actions laid the groundwork for 2024's deepened legal and political push.

Legal and Academic Advocacy: Anchoring Gender Apartheid in International Law

WLUML's advocacy in 2024 focused on transitioning from recognition to legal accountability. A pivotal moment was the **"Silenced Voices: Gender Persecution and Women's Rights in Afghanistan and Iran"** conference, held on **March 8, 2024**, International Women's Day. WLUML's **Homa Hoodfar** spoke alongside **Richard Bennett**, UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Afghanistan, and **Javaid Rehman**, UN Special Rapporteur on Iran. The convening explored the role of international law in naming and prosecuting gender apartheid as a crime against humanity.



Hoodfar emphasized the long-standing leadership of women in Iran and Afghanistan and highlighted how grassroots feminist movements continue to resist authoritarian gender regimes, despite silencing, surveillance, and systemic violence. The event also saw the **re-issuance of the Iranian Women's Bill of Rights**, connecting past and present feminist demands.

Global Coalition-Building and Intersectional Solidarity

WLUML's campaign remained anchored in transnational feminist solidarity. Following the coalition-building efforts launched in 2023, we continued strengthening alliances across regions. A key example was WLUML's collaboration with **Balaod Mindanaw (Philippines)** and the **Grassroots Justice Network**, where on **April 19**, Campaign Coordinator **Maira Asif** presented on the urgency of recognizing gender apartheid as a crime that foregrounded survivor leadership, legal reform, and coalition-based action.



Policy Advocacy and Parliamentary Lobbying

In **March 2024**, WLUML joined **Canadian Parliamentary lobbying efforts**. Team members, including **Vrinda Narain**, **Homa Hoodfar**, **Najia Zarqa**, and legal expert **Amanda Ghahremani**, met with Canadian lawmakers to advocate for policy shifts on gender-based asylum, refugee protection, and international legal recognition of gender apartheid.

We coupled this with a strongly worded statement condemning the Taliban's continued gender-based atrocities, calling for urgent and coordinated international action in August.

Later in the year, **Mona Tajali** represented WLUML at the "*Women in Afghanistan: Three Years Later*" webinar hosted by Virginia Tech's College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences. Her presentation provided a sobering reflection on the Taliban's deepening authoritarianism and the disappearance of women from Afghan public life.

WLUML's advocacy reached a crescendo in November 2024:

- On November 10, we joined the Women & Children Legal Research Foundation (WCLRF) in supporting the launch of a groundbreaking report that documented to date over 140 edicts issued by the Taliban, more than 100 of which directly restrict women's and girls' rights in both public and private life. This convening allowed WLUML to directly engage policymakers and press for international mechanisms to hold the Taliban accountable under law.
- In December 2024, WLUML intern Diana Reno authored a powerful article profiling Fawzia Koofi, an iconic Afghan women's rights leader. The



piece reframed Afghan women's stories not as tales of victimhood, but as blueprints for global feminist solidarity and resistance. This narrative advocacy complements our legal efforts by ensuring that Afghan and Iranian women's lived realities remain central to global justice agendas.

Conclusion: Building Toward Recognition and Justice

In 2024, WLUML advanced its *Stop Gender Apartheid* campaign from protest to legal strategy, from coalition building to policy transformation, and from survivor testimonies to structured international accountability demands. As we move into 2025, WLUML remains committed to securing the legal recognition of gender apartheid as a crime against humanity, and to supporting the leadership of women resisting oppression in Afghanistan, Iran, and beyond.



**Stop Gender Apartheid in Afghanistan:
Women's Struggle for Dignity**

OUR DEMAND

We demand the UN urgently adopt and implement a comprehensive international legal protection framework that recognizes gender apartheid as a crime against humanity and protects women and gendered minorities from institutionalized gender-based discrimination globally.



FEMINIST RESEARCH AND LEADERSHIP

Throughout 2024, WLUML members actively contributed to global feminist scholarship, publishing research that examines gender ideology, legal frameworks, and feminist movements across Muslim-majority countries. A key publication was in a Cambridge University Press publication on July 25, 2024, which recognized WLUML as a key actor in shaping global feminist advocacy. The [article](#), ***Dimensions of Transnational Feminism: Autonomous Organizing, Multilateralism, and Agenda-Setting in Global Civil Society***, explores how autonomous feminist networks like WLUML play a pivotal role in agenda-setting beyond the constraints of multilateral institutions like the UN and the World Bank. It argues that WLUML's grassroots, intersectional approach has allowed it to remain independent and responsive to the evolving needs of feminist movements globally.

WLUML's contributions to transnational feminist discourse were further highlighted by Dr. Mona Tajali's [article](#) titled ***State Gender Ideology and National Women's Machinery: A Necessary Shift in Focus***, published in *French Politics* on August 11, 2024. In this paper, Mona explores the role of state-controlled women's institutions (National Women's Machineryes or NWMs), arguing that while these entities are meant to protect women's rights, they are often instrumentalized by authoritarian states to maintain patriarchal control. By using Iran as a case study, Mona illustrates how state ideology shapes gender policies and limits the autonomy of feminist movements. This research provides critical insights into the relationship between authoritarian governance and gender justice, contributing to broader discussions on state feminism and women's rights within restrictive political environments.



Additionally, WLUML members have published op-eds and research pieces across major international platforms. Notably, Azadeh published an [article](#) in *The Spec* titled ***"Iran's Women Lead a Counter-Revolution that Can Restore Human Rights, Dignity, and Culture,"*** discussing how Iranian women's activism is reshaping political and social norms despite severe repression by the Iranian state.

Similarly, **Vrinda Narain** has been leading WLUML's research in examining the institutionalization of women's rights through constitutional mechanisms and how these legal frameworks can either advance or restrict gender justice depending on state ideologies and enforcement. Vrinda Narain's [article](#), ***"Women Are at Risk Under Syria's New Government, and the International Community Must Push for Women's Rights,"*** was published in the *Conversation*, highlighting the gendered implications of Syria's political transition and the urgent need for international intervention to protect women's rights.

THE CONVERSATION

Academic rigour, journalistic flair

Q Search analysis, research, academics...

Women are at risk under Syria's new government, and the international community must push for women's rights

Published: January 21, 2025 2:50pm GMT

Syrian women wave Syrian flags as they celebrate the fall of the Assad regime in a restaurant in Damascus, Syria, in December 2024. (AP Photo/Omar Sanadiki)

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As the international community celebrates the [fall of another dictatorship](#) following the collapse of Syria's Assad regime, the future of women's rights remains precarious.

Global leaders are commending Syria's liberation and discussing the return of [5.5 million refugees](#), but women's [rights advocates](#) are [raising urgent concerns](#).

Authors

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Fatemeh Sadeghi

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In 2018 WLUML launched the program Women Reclaiming Public Spaces to research and document initiatives of women reclaiming public spaces, 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. As part of this project in 2024, WLUML worked with authors from Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Syria, Türkiye, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Britain use cycling to challenge restrictions and reclaim public space. Edited by Homa Hoodfar and Dana Kamour, this collection highlights stories of activism, resilience, and change. More than just transportation, the bicycle becomes a symbol of freedom and resistance. A compelling read for those interested in gender, mobility, and the right to public space. The book **Riding to Freedom: Women and Bicycling in the Muslim Contexts** is set to be published on International Women's Day 2025.

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STRENGTHENING FEMINIST KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

Beyond individual publications, WLUML has remained committed to collective feminist knowledge production and dissemination. Throughout 2024, WLUML actively worked to document and archive women's resistance movements in Muslim-majority contexts. One of the most notable initiatives was the launch of the **"Timeless Struggles, Enduring Knowledge" campaign** as part of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence (November 24 - December 10, 2024). This campaign sought to highlight feminist resistance



through archival materials, book reviews, and activist reflections, bringing historical feminist struggles into contemporary discourse.

A key part of this initiative was the publication of a series of book reviews. These reviews provided critical feminist analysis of literature on gender-based violence, law, and resistance, reinforcing the importance of historical feminist struggles in shaping present-day activism.

VEILING AND UNVEILING LECTURE SERIES

The Veiling and Unveiling Lecture Series, co-hosted by WLUML and Concordia University, was a major intellectual space for feminist scholars, activists, and students to critically engage with the intersection of modesty politics, veiling, and resistance across various Muslim-majority contexts. These lectures explored how women navigate religious, cultural, and political pressures surrounding veiling, as well as how unveiling can act as a form of political protest or personal autonomy.

1. February 28, 2024 – Voluntary Unveiling in Turkey: Between Political Protest, Denouncing or Reclaiming Religion?

- Speaker: Zuheyra Izin



- This session examined Turkey's shifting political landscape and how voluntary unveiling among Turkish women has been shaped by political activism, secular nationalism, and religious conservatism. The discussion explored whether unveiling in Turkey represents a rejection of religious authority or a reclaiming of autonomy within faith traditions.

2. March 9, 2024 – Women's Unveiling and Modesty Politics in Egypt: Gender Debates in the Aftermath of the Revolution

- Speaker: Prof. Nermin Allam
- This lecture traced the evolution of veiling and unveiling movements in Egypt, particularly after the 2011 revolution. Prof. Allam discussed how women's bodies have been sites of political contestation, from the use of forced unveiling during colonial rule to the increasing pressure to wear the hijab in modern Egyptian society.



3. April 18, 2024 – Narratives of Unveiling in Morocco: Negotiating Self and Identity Formation

- Speaker: Dr. Meriem El Haitami
- This session explored how Moroccan women engage in unveiling as a form of identity negotiation, particularly among young women and diaspora communities. Dr. El Haitami analyzed how women navigate religious expectations, family pressures, and societal norms in Morocco, where veiling is both a personal and political choice.



4. October 23, 2024 – Unveiling in Malaysia: Locating 'Free Hair' in Wider Global Feminisms

- Speaker: Dr. Alicia Izharuddin
- This discussion focused on the Malaysian feminist movement's engagement with veiling and unveiling, especially in urban and activist communities. Dr. Izharuddin examined how the concept of "free hair" (a term used in Malaysia to describe unveiled women) is understood in relation to feminist resistance and Southeast Asian identity politics.



Each lecture attracted a global audience of students, academics, and activists, sparking critical discussions on how veiling is influenced by state policies, feminist activism, and transnational religious movements. These events also created opportunities for young feminists to engage with leading scholars, fostering intellectual exchange and feminist solidarity.

FEMINIST MOVEMENT BUILDING

In 2025, WLUML was active in several high-level advocacy meetings, academic conferences, and strategic convenings throughout 2024, ensuring that gender justice remains central in global policy discussions.

- **CSW 68 – Commission on the Status of Women (March 11-14, 2024):** WLUML members Homa Hoodfar and Mona Tajali attended CSW 68 in New York, where they engaged in strategic discussions with feminist leaders, UN representatives, and policymakers on advancing gender justice and intergenerational feminist leadership institutes.



GLOBAL FEMINIST CONFERENCES

WLUML members also contributed to **critical academic and policy discussions** at major global conferences, further strengthening transnational feminist networks and research collaborations.



Alternative Imaginaries: Feminist Transformative Politics in the Global South Conference (May 18, 2024, London, UK): WLUML's Vrinda Narain, Homa Hoodfar, and Mona Tajali presented on institutionalizing women's rights in Muslim contexts. The conference provided an important opportunity to engage with feminist scholars and activists from Bangladesh, Pakistan, Turkey, and Iran, as well as to explore potential research partnerships with the Global Prosperity Institute at University College London.

British Islamic Studies Conference (May 21-23, 2024, Leeds, UK): Vrinda Narain and Homa Hoodfar spoke on the importance of constitutionalizing women's rights in Muslim-majority countries, emphasizing how legal frameworks shape gender equality and feminist resistance.

Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition (WHRD-IC) Strategic Planning Retreat (May 28 – June 2, 2024, Kathmandu, Nepal): Homa Hoodfar attended this closed-door convening with over 35 leading feminist organizations and human rights defenders to discuss strategies for protecting WHRDs from rising threats and violence.



MEDIA AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENTS

WLUML's media and public engagement efforts in 2024 played a critical role in amplifying feminist voices, countering misinformation, and expanding global awareness of women's rights struggles in Muslim-majority societies. Through publications, podcasts, social media campaigns, and strategic storytelling, WLUML ensured that the narratives of women, activists, and human rights defenders reached a broad audience. This year's efforts were particularly focused on gender apartheid in Afghanistan and Iran, feminist leadership, and the importance of transnational solidarity in resisting backlash against women's rights.

THE WLUML PODCAST: ELEVATING FEMINIST VOICES

One of the standout media initiatives of the year was the [WLUML Podcast](#), hosted by WLUML's Council Member Anniesa Hussain, which featured a series of in-depth conversations with feminist scholars, activists, and human rights defenders. These episodes provided critical insights into the intersection of gender, law, and resistance, offering both historical perspectives and contemporary analyses.

EPISODES RELEASED IN 2024

[Episode 7](#) – Violence Against Minority Women in Muslim-Majority Countries (Nov 26, 2024)

- Hosted by Anniesa Hussain, this episode featured an interview with Julia Bicknell, discussing the multiple layers of discrimination faced by women from religious minorities in Muslim-majority states. The conversation explored the impact of blasphemy laws, forced conversions, and institutionalized gendered violence on these communities.

[Episode 8](#) – The Double Marginalization of Non-Muslim Women in Pakistan (Dec 2, 2024)

- Ifra Asad, an expert on religious minority rights, joined this discussion to examine how cultural-religious norms shape the perception and treatment of non-Muslim women in Pakistan. The episode provided case studies of intersectional discrimination, legal restrictions, and grassroots resistance efforts.

Episode 9 – How Poverty Underpins Discrimination Against Religious Minority Women (Dec 10, 2024)

- Featuring Elaine Alam, an international development expert, this episode highlighted how poverty exacerbates marginalization for religious minority women, limiting access to education, healthcare, and justice. The discussion underscored economic justice as a feminist issue, linking economic deprivation to gendered violence and systemic exclusion.

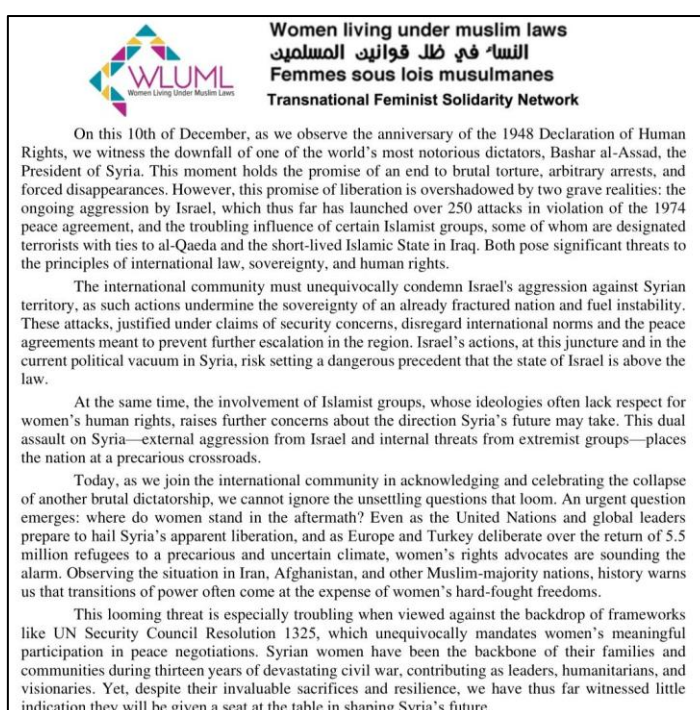
These podcast episodes were widely shared across WLUML's website, social media channels, and partner networks, reaching listeners in over 20 countries. The podcast continues to serve as an important educational tool for young feminists, scholars, and human rights practitioners.



SOLIDARITY WITH PALESTINE, SUDAN, SYRIA AND IRAN

WLUML also stood in solidarity with women and human rights defenders in Sudan, where escalating violence has had devastating consequences for women and girls. On June 11, 2024, WLUML supported **WHRDMENA Coalition**, **SUWRA**, and **ISHR** to [appeal](#) to the **United Nations Security Council (UNSC)**, calling for immediate action to protect civilians, particularly women and girls, from conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV). The letter emphasized the urgent need for humanitarian aid, safe corridors for displaced persons, and accountability for war crimes committed by both the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

WLUML also [stood in solidarity](#) with the women of Syria in December 2024, when the Assad regime fell. While acknowledging the time for celebration, the statement



reminded all peoples involved in the upcoming peace process to ensure women's voices are heard.



Women living under muslim laws
النساء في ظل قوانين المسلمين
Femmes sous lois musulmanes
Transnational Feminist Solidarity Network

Statement by Women Living Under Muslim Laws on the Current Genocide and Violence in Gaza, Palestine

Observing the daily bombings, forced starvation, and targeting of innocent Palestinian people rattles our hearts and calls on our collective humanity. When did the promise of “Never again” disappear from the hearts and minds of Western politicians? The conscience of the world will not forget the unimaginable suffering caused by Israel’s collective punishment directed at the men, women, and children of Gaza, Palestine.

Israel’s relentless bombardment and violence has transformed Gaza into a scene of harrowing loss and devastation. Innocent men, women, and children, seeking only peace and dignity, are caught in a conflict that has claimed countless lives and left many more in desperate need of aid. Hospitals overflow, schools are in ruins, and homes lie in shambles, painting a picture of despair that the world cannot ignore. The accumulative effects of Israel’s war on Gaza could mean the true death toll could reach more than 186,000 people, according to a study published in the journal Lancet.

The recent advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice (ICJ) has decisively rejected Israel’s legal justifications for its occupation of Palestinian territories. The ICJ has condemned Israel’s claims that the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza are merely “disputed” rather than occupied and emphasized that Israel’s occupation and settlement activities are violations of international law. While ICJ does not have a way to enforce the ruling and has to rely on other states to do so, nonetheless, it highlights the global consensus on the illegality of Israel’s actions, not to mention the inhumanity of it, and demands political accountability.

The suffering of the Gazan people is a stark violation of their human rights, with civilians bearing the brunt of the conflict. Women and children, disproportionately affected by crises, endure compounded horrors of displacement and loss, while children are robbed of their futures. The horror is well captured by the shocking finding by the Slow Factory that there are currently more child amputees in Gaza than anywhere else on Earth, across time and space.

The prejudiced narratives distorting the reality of the Palestinian struggle only perpetuate the cycle of violence and injustice. It has led to the disturbing rise in global Islamophobia and fuels indifference and misunderstanding toward the suffering of Muslim communities. We condemn colonial attempts to dehumanize or marginalize the Palestinian struggle.

We support the ICJ’s verdict and urge the international community to take decisive action. We call for an immediate ceasefire, the right to return for displaced Palestinians, the provision of humanitarian aid, and the recognition of Palestinian sovereignty.

With deepest sympathy and resolve,

Women Living Under Muslim Laws

SNAPSHOT: WLUML'S WORK AS A VOLUNTEER-RUN MOVEMENT



Rigorous, Feminist and Collective Publications

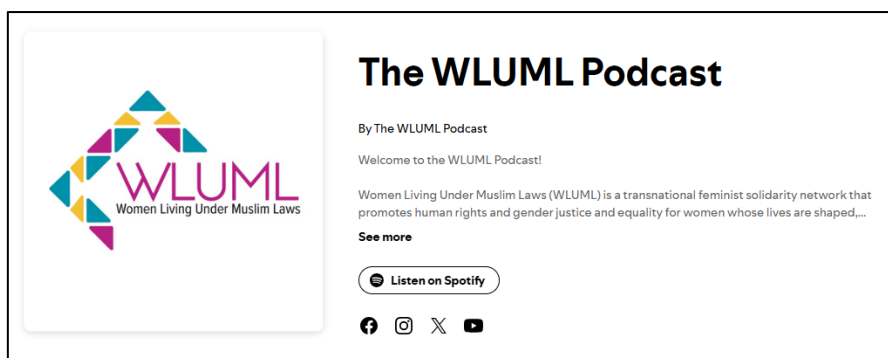
- **2024/2025**– *Riding to Freedom: Women and Bicycling in Muslim Contexts*, spotlighting mobility as a feminist and political act. Homa Hoodfar (Editor), Dana Kamour (Editor) with chapters from our members: Farinaz Basmechi, Iqra Khan, Rida Khan, Maira Asif, Setenay Mutlu Adisönmez, Ghazaleh Ebneenasir, Claire Cho, Anniesa Hussain, Itrath Syed
- **2024** – Subsequent to a long series of webinar by experts and advocates of gender equality women's rights *Women and Constitutions in Muslim Contexts*, co-edited by Dr. Vrinda Narain and Dr. Mona Tajali, analyzing gender in constitutional frameworks.
- **2021** – *Rebel with Rhythm, Shatter with Words* by Hilal Işık,. There has been a new surge of interest in this book that lends scholarly insight, lyrical analysis, and feminist critique, this book offers a unique perspective on the intersections of gender, religion, and hip-hop culture. It amplifies the voices of underrepresented Muslim women rappers and their acts of resistance through music. Although this book was published earlier it has attracted more interest in recent year.
- **Academic Presence** – WLUML featured in the scholarly article *Dimensions of Transnational Feminism*, cited in global research circles.
- **Ongoing** – Blogs, statements, and interviews regularly adapted as teaching tools in feminist classrooms and study groups across North America and the Global South.

A Dynamic and Regular Media Presence

- **Mainstream Features** – Appearances on CNN, CBC, Voice of America, The Conversation, and Al Jazeera.
- **Homa Hoodfar** – Spoke widely during the Mahsa Amini protests, on gender apartheid, and the history of Iranian resistance.
- **Mona Tajali** – Featured in *Authors Amplified*, spotlighting her work on political representation in Iran and Turkey.
- **Gender Apartheid Advocacy** – WLUML's media interventions helped normalize the term globally in both journalism and UN fora.
- **Articles & Op-eds** – Contributions to national and international news platforms and university publications.

Podcasts that Build Transnational Dialogue

- **8-Episode Series** – Featured scholars and activists from Afghanistan, Tunisia, Canada, and Pakistan.



High-Impact Webinars and Teach-Ins: 20+ Webinars since 2020:

- 28 Feb 2024 , *Voluntary Unveiling in Turkey: Between Political Protest, Denouncing or Reclaiming Religion?* Speaker: Zuheyla Izin, Moderator: Homa Hoodfar
- 9 March 2024 , *Women's Unveiling and Modesty Politics in Egypt: Reflecting Gender Debates After the Revolution* Speaker: Prof. Nermin Allam, Moderator: Homa Hoodfar
- 18 April 2024 , *Narratives of Unveiling in Morocco: Negotiating Self and Identity Formation* Speaker: Dr. Meriem El Haitami, Moderator: Homa Hoodfar
- 23 Oct 2024 , *'Unveiling' in Malaysia: Locating 'Free Hair' in Wider Global Feminisms* Speaker: Dr. Alicia Izharuddin, Moderator: Homa Hoodfar

Charlotte Bunch Inaugural Public Lecture for TFLI (16 October 2024)

- Title: *Defying Backlash: Feminist Leadership and Change in Tumultuous Times*
- Speaker: Charlotte Bunch
- Audience: 96+ participants from around the world. This event formally relaunched WLUML's Transformative Feminist Leadership Institute (TFLI).



Participation in Global and Regional Panels (WLUML members speaking, not organizing):

- March 2024 , *Silenced Voices: Gender Persecution and Women's Rights in Afghanistan and Iran* – hosted at a university conference (Richard Bennett and Javaid Rehman present)
- 10 March 2024 , *Woman, Life, Freedom: A Political Watershed in Iranian Protest Culture* – Farsi language webinar, organized by the University of California's Center for Near Eastern Studies (panel with many women from inside Iran and Afghanistan)
- 8 March 2024, CSW Parallel Event on Gender Apartheid (Homa and Mona participated)

- May 2024, *Alternative Imaginaries: Feminist Transformative Politics in the Global South* Conference, London (Vrinda, Homa, Mona presenting on constitutionalizing women's rights)

Statements of Global Solidarity and Action: Over 40 Public Statements from 2019–2025

- The genocide in Gaza
- The Taliban's war on women in Afghanistan
- State repression in Iran
- Withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention in Turkey
- Humanitarian crisis in Sudan

Multilingual Releases – Statements translated and disseminated in Arabic, Farsi, French, and Spanish.

Fellowship and Internship Opportunities for Young Feminists

- **Internships (2021–2025)** – Roles in digital communications, peacebuilding, Islamic feminist research, and publications.
- **Global Cohort** – Interns from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Switzerland, Colombia, Canada, the UK, and Iran contributed to WLUMML projects.
- **Alumni Engagement** – Several interns remain active as associates, team members, podcast guests, and regional connectors.

Cross-Movement Solidarity Building: Sisterly Letters and Open Calls

Multilingual – Emotional and political solidarity expressed in up to 5 languages per letter.

Media-Featured – Several letters and statements featured on international outlets and feminist platforms

- Syria: Letter of solidarity (2024)
- Iran: Letters during uprisings (2022–2023)
- Sudan: Urgent appeals (2023)
- Gaza: Ongoing feminist statements (2021–2025)

CONCLUSION

As WLUMML reflects on the milestones of 2024, we recognize a year defined by resilience, advocacy, and expansion in the face of growing global challenges to gender justice. From feminist leadership development to transnational advocacy and knowledge production, our work has remained steadfast in amplifying feminist voices and resisting systemic oppression. Through strategic partnerships, research, and movement-building, WLUMML has continued to foster transformative feminist networks across diverse Muslim contexts.

Looking ahead to 2025, WLUMML is poised for growth, deepened engagement, and strengthened impact. The coming year will focus on:

- **Expansion of the Transformative Feminist Leadership Institute (TFLI)** to train and support emerging feminist leaders.
- **Strengthening global advocacy on gender apartheid** and increasing international recognition of systemic gender-based oppression.
- **Advancing feminist legal research and constitutional reforms**, reinforcing gender justice in governance and policy.
- **Enhancing digital platforms and accessibility**, ensuring secure and open access to feminist knowledge and advocacy tools.
- **Commemorating WLUMML's 40th anniversary**, reflecting on our legacy and shaping the future of transnational feminist solidarity.

As we move forward, WLUMML remains committed to ensuring that women's rights, feminist resistance, and transnational solidarity remain at the center of global conversations. With a renewed vision and dedication, we will continue to build inclusive, intersectional, and sustainable feminist movements that challenge patriarchal structures and empower women as leaders in their communities and beyond.

Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUML) is a transnational feminist network that 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.

Authored by Maira Asif, Edited by Homa Hoodfar with contributions from WLUML networkers.

