



Musawah Vision

Issue 12: March 2013

An update on Musawah issues and activities

I. Muslim Family Law News

- India:** A civil court's landmark judgement prohibits polygamy. - [The Telegraph India](#)
- Iran:** Non-registered *Shari'ah* marriages deprive children of their mothers' citizenship. - [Qantara.de](#)
- Lebanon:** President Sleiman takes concrete steps to legalise civil marriage. - [The Daily Star](#)
- Malaysia:** The Federal Court rules against a ban on a Sisters in Islam book on Muslim women and Islamic extremism. - [Sisters In Islam](#)
- Morocco:** The parliament works to amend a law that allows a rapist to escape prison by marrying his victim. - [Global Post](#) and [Women News Network](#)
- Tunisia:** Tunisia's first official shelter for survivors of domestic violence opens. - [WeNews](#)

II. Building Our Knowledge

Global Life Stories Project

Dr. Lynn Welchman, Professor of Law at School for Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), UK and one of the authors of a theoretical paper for the *Qiwamah* and *Wilayah* Knowledge Building Initiative, mentioned the Musawah Global Life Stories Project in her [inaugural lecture](#) at SOAS Inaugural Lecture Series on 31 January 2013. The lecture was entitled 'Human Rights and Middle East - A Thousand and One Stories Starting with Palestine'.

For an overview and background information about the project, click [here](#).



Dr. Lynn Welchman at her inaugural lecture at SOAS

Resources

The multiple burdens of Muslim women in India

As a marginalised group within a disadvantaged minority, Muslim women in India face multiple burdens. Whether it's the daily struggle of unemployment and poverty, or the question of identity and women's roles in society, Muslim women have to pierce through layers of challenges in their quest for equality and human rights. More details about 'Muslim Women and Minority Rights in India' can be found in this [article](#).

At the core of Indian Muslim women's struggle for equality and justice continues the debate of what's best, a civil personal status law or a codified religious law based on a progressive reinterpretation of Islam. A report of the recently held three-day conference on the 'Status of Muslim women in Indian sub-continent' that took place at the Maulana Azad National Urdu University can be found [here](#).

100 Extraordinary Muslim Women Past & Present

The Women's Islamic Initiative in Spirituality and Equality (WISE), a program of the American Society for Muslim Advancement (ASMA), highlights the achievements of two extraordinary Muslim women each month in a particular area of interest. [Volume 13](#) (March 2013) was dedicated to extraordinary Muslim women in Religious Law. The two women in the spotlight are [Amrah bint Abdur Rahman](#), a jurist (Muftiyyah) and Hadith specialist from the time of Tabi'een (Prophet successors), and [Judge Kholoud al-Faqih](#), who made history as the first female judge appointed to a *Shari'ah* court in Palestine and the Middle East.

For the full archive of 100 Extraordinary Muslim Women, click [here](#).

New book: *Islamic Feminisms*



Published in French by [La Fabrique](#), this just-released and already sold-out resource on Islamic feminisms was edited by [Zahra Ali](#), a doctoral student in France. It outlines the historical discursive production of Islam as 'oppressive', traces the history of feminisms within Islam, and suggests possible next steps for decolonised feminist work led by young women who refuse to choose between pre-set, mutually exclusive identities. The volume chronicles the work of Musawah and includes contributions from Zainah Anwar, Dr. Ziba Mir-Hosseini and other well-known Muslim feminists.

For a book review (in French), click [here](#).

For an article on the subject mentioning the book, click [here](#).

III. Building Our Movement

Musawah Advocate updates

Indonesia

The Indonesian Life Stories team is currently collaborating with CEDAW Working Group of Indonesia in holding thematic discussions with the Women's Caucus of the Indonesia Parliament to advocate for the Bill of Gender Equality and Justice Law. One of the main issues that is being discussed in these sessions is the impact of *qiwanah* and *wilayah* (commonly understood as male authority over women) on Indonesian women's legal rights in marriage and family relations. Two of these thematic sessions were held on February 22 and March 8.

Philippines

Musawah Advocate in the Philippines, Nisa ul-Haqq fi Bangsamoro, conducted two back-to-back training workshops on Gender, Islam and the Philippine Code of Muslim Personal Laws (CMPL). The first training, which targeted *Shari'ah* counselors and practitioners, was held 23-25 March 2013, and was attended by 20 participants. The second training, which was for men from the general public, was held 26-28 March 2013, and was attended by 25 participants.

The training drew on materials addressing the lived realities of Muslim women in the Philippines, sex and gender, Muslim women's life stories, *Tawhid* as inspiration for gender justice, primary sources of Islamic law (Qur'an, hadith, *fiqh* on women) and the CMPL provisions on marriage, divorce, paternity and affiliation, guardianship and custody. On the third day of the trainings, Nisa facilitated a session with the workshop participants to gather their input and recommendations in regard to challenges in the implementation of the law for *Shari'ah* counselors and possible amendments to the code.

Among the speakers at the two trainings were Mr. Faqiuddin Abdul Kodir from the Fahmina Institute in Cirebon, Indonesia, and Dr. Nina Nurmila, professor at the Islamic State University in Bandung, Indonesia. The two activities have helped build a strong constituency that will help support the review and possible amendment of the CMPL.

Musawah news and events

New International Advisory Group Members

Omaima Abou-Bakr, Egypt

Omaima is Professor of English and comparative literature at Cairo University, and a founding member of the Women and Memory Forum, a non-governmental women's studies and research center based in Cairo. She studied at Cairo University, North Carolina State University, and the University of California at Berkeley, specialising in medieval Sufi poetry and comparative topics in medieval English and Arabic literature. Her

scholarly interests also include women's mysticism and female spirituality in Christianity and Islam, feminist theology, Muslim women's history, and gender issues in Islamic discourses and cultural history. She has published a number of articles in both English and Arabic on poetry and medieval literary texts, as well as gender-sensitive readings of women's historical representation in Islamic writings and of developing religious discourses.

Nani Zulminarni, Indonesia

Nani is National Coordinator of PEKKA (Empowerment of Women-Headed Households), a national NGO based in Jakarta, established in 2001. PEKKA organises and assists more than 820 grassroots groups of poor women heads of households in 18 provinces of Indonesia around economic, social, political rights and justice issues. Nani began her work as a women's rights activist in 1987 by joining the grassroots NGO, the Center for Women's Resources Development (PPSW). She led PPSW as its executive director from 1995-2001 and currently serves on its advisory board. She is a member of several networks of nonprofits including Musawah Advocate in Indonesia, ALIMAT. She is also actively involved in the Indonesia Muslim Activists and Scholars Network.

Marina Mahathir, Malaysia

Marina came in to the field of women's rights and Islam through her 12 years as President of the Malaysian AIDS Council, as a Board member of ARROW and currently as a Board member of Sisters in Islam. She has regional and international experience on the governing bodies of the AIDS Society of Asia and the Pacific (ASAP) and UNAIDS, on advisory groups for the Asia Pacific Leadership Forum and the Asian University for Women (Bangladesh). She is also a columnist in The Star newspaper for the past 20 years. Marina is an active blogger ([Rantings by MM](#)), and social media communicator (@netraKL). Additionally, she is Co-Executive Producer of an award-winning young women's TV programme 3R: Respect, Relax, Respond. Marina is the Convener of the Musawah Communications Working Group.

Johaira Wahab, Philippines

Johaira is a member of the Board of Directors of Nisa Ul Haqq Fi Bangsamoro (Nisa), a women's organisation based in Mindanao, Nisa is engaged in constituency building and advocacy for the reform of Muslim family law in the Philippines. Nisa has also been instrumental in the enactment of gender and development (GAD) codes in autonomous region in Muslim Mindanao. Johaira heads the legal team of the Philippine Government's negotiating panel in peace talks with a Muslim rebel group seeking further self-governance in Muslim Mindanao, where she maintains the stand for Muslim women's rights in the context of peace agreements, and transitional and post-conflict context. She also sits in the Bangsamoro Transition Commission to draft the law that will create the new autonomous region in Muslim Mindanao.

Hatoon al-Fassi, Saudi Arabia

Hatoon originates from Makkah. She is a Saudi historian specialising in women's history. She graduated from the University of Manchester, UK. She teaches at Qatar University's

Department of International Affairs. Her interest, devotion, research and action cover ancient Islamic women's history, Saudi women's issues and Islamic rights, gender studies, women's religious rights, women writers, history of the Arabian Peninsula and human rights. She is a columnist at the al-Riyadh daily national newspaper and a commentator on Saudi women for national and international media. She is a founding member of Baladi, an initiative that seeks to strengthen women's public participation in Saudi Arabia, with a special emphasis on the upcoming municipal elections.

Shaista Gohir, UK

Shaista is a leading Muslim women's rights activist in Britain. She is the former Executive Director and current Chair of [Muslim Women's Network](#) UK. Shaista has also worked for international organisations such as Save the Children and Oxfam. She is also the founder of the [Big Sister](#) website, which highlights inspirational Muslim women globally from past to present. Through this website and her Youtube channel, [Muslim Feminist](#), she challenges patriarchy and promotes the rights of women. In recognition of her work, she was awarded the MBE honour in the Queen's birthday honours list in 2008. In 2009, Shaista was included in the Muslim Women Power list, which named the most influential Muslim women in Britain. In the same year she also won the Asian Woman of Achievement Award in the Social and Humanitarian Category.

New Musawah Secretariat Staff

Natasha Dar is the new Musawah International Advocacy and Capacity Building Programme Officer. After conducting fieldwork in Morocco on the 2004 Mudawanna Islamic Family Law reform, and its imbrications in the gender and class politics of the region, she became interested in examining the production and transformation of Islamic legal knowledges in diaspora communities. She has written on legal reform and practice as sites for social change, normalization, and resistance; the politics of multiculturalism; and the global racialization of Islam and Muslims. Natasha holds a BA and MA from Stanford University; in the past she has worked as an Apprentice Baker in San Francisco, and as an Employment Counselor to survival sex workers in Vancouver, BC.

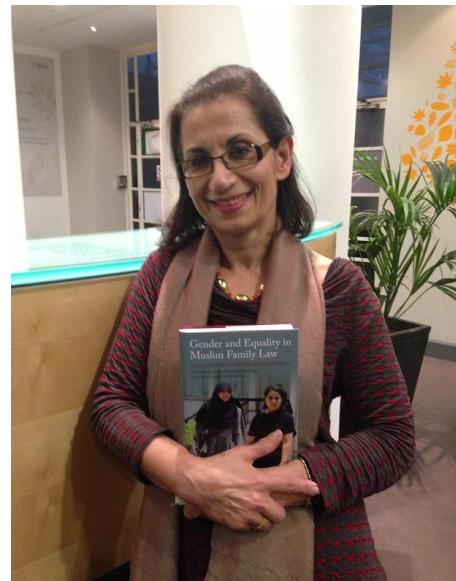
She was raised first generation in the US, by a mother raised first generation in Pakistan, by parents from Indian-occupied Kashmir.

Speeches

Dr. Ziba Mir-Hosseini, Musawah International Advisory Group member and convenor of the Musawah Knowledge Building Working Group, presented her research and gave speeches at various academic institutions, conferences and events throughout the Global North. One of her latest papers is *Moral Contestations and Patriarchal Ethics: Women Challenging the Justice of Muslim Family Laws* which she presented at a conference titled 'Shari'ah and Islamic Ethics in Transition' organised by the Institute of Culture, Religion and World Affairs (CRWA), Boston University, 8-9 March 2013.

Book launch

On April 27, a new book co-edited by Dr. Mir-Hosseini was [launched](#) at a panel discussion at [SOAS](#), University of London. [*Gender and Equality in Muslim Family Law*](#) is a collection of essays exploring gender and equality in Islam and offering ground-breaking analysis of the male monopoly over matters of family law and court practices. The book argues for women's full equality before the law by re-examining the jurisprudential and theological arguments for male guardianship (*qiwamah* and *wilayah*) in the Muslim legal tradition.



Dr. Mir-Hosseini at book launch

Musawah in the news

Musawah on display

The International Museum of Women (IMOW) featured several Musawah Advocates in its recent display [*Muslima: Muslim Women's Art & Voices*](#), which went live in March 2013. Musawah Director, Zainah Anwar, was interviewed by curator Samina Ali for a display entry about [*Muslim Sisterhood*](#) and empowering feminist Muslims. In [*Equality, Equity, Empowerment*](#), IMOW interviewed Musawah Advocate in Canada Alia Hogben about the work of the Canadian Council of Muslim Women (CCMW). In [*Living Under Muslim Laws*](#), Musawah Advocate Fahima Hashim, the Director of Salmmah Women's Resource Center in Sudan, explains how they are changing laws and advocating on behalf of women in a country ruled by Islamic law.

Musawah on WikiGender

Musawah now has an entry on WikiGender, an online resource about all gender-related information. The entry chronicles the launch of Musawah in 2009 and includes information about the Musawah community and the two current projects we are working on:

1. Musawah Knowledge Building Initiative on *Qiwamah* and *Wilayah* (QiWi Initiative)
2. Musawah International Advocacy Initiative on CEDAW and Muslim Family Laws

For the full entry, click [here](#).

IV. International Advocacy

The Musawah report on *CEDAW and Muslim Family Laws: In Search of Common Ground*, which critically examines how governments use Islam and *Shari'ah* to justify their reservations and resistance to demands for law reform, remains in demand at various trainings and meetings. In January, the report findings and its recommendations on how the Musawah Framework could be used by NGOs engaged with the CEDAW process to

demand for equality and justice, especially under Article 16, were presented at three platforms.

Musawah Advocate Azza Soliman from the Centre for Egyptian Women's Legal Assistance (CEWLA) presented it at the MENA region '*Equality Without Reservation*' network meeting in Cairo, 24-26 January 2013. The network, currently coordinated by the New Woman Foundation in Cairo, calls for the removal of all reservations to CEDAW and the ratification of the Optional Protocol to CEDAW by Arab States. The Musawah work and the CEDAW report were also presented in Cairo by Musawah Director [Zainah Anwar](#) at the Women Living Under Muslim Laws leadership training for activists from countries in transitions to democracy.

At a CEDAW training organised by International Women's Rights Action Watch (IWRW) Asia Pacific in Manama, Bahrain, Musawah Advocate Maryam Al-Rwaiei from the Bahrain Women's Union presented the Musawah report to NGO activists from Bahrain and Qatar who are preparing shadow reports that will be submitted to the CEDAW Committee. The training, which took place 11-14 January 2013, brought together 35 participants from Bahrain and Qatar and focused on re-affirming and strengthening participants' knowledge of CEDAW concepts and mechanisms, emphasising the process of writing and presenting a Shadow Report to the CEDAW Committee and how to use the shadow reporting process as a tool for advocacy within the country. Both countries are due for review before the CEDAW Committee in February 2014.

V. Contact Us

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Musawah website: www.musawah.org

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Musawah Affinity Groups:

I. Arab region (Middle East and North Africa)

The Centre for Egyptian Women's Legal Assistance (CEWLA)
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II. South East, South and Central Asia

Alimat (Musawah Indonesia)
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III. The Horn of Africa

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IV. Sub-Saharan Africa

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V. The Gulf Region

Bahrain Women's Union
bahwu@batelco.com.bh

VI. Young Women's Caucus

Representative: [Johaira Wahab](#)
Facebook page: [YWC](#)

To submit advocate updates or ask questions, write to Musawah at: info@musawah.org