



# musawah

For Equality in the Muslim Family

## Musawah Vision

Issue 14: December 2013

*An update on Musawah issues and activities*

### I. Muslim Family Law News

- Egypt:** Women are some of the winners of the new constitution – [openDemocracy](#)
- India:** First all-women Sharia Court in Pune will deal with various family issues, including marital discord – [The Indian Express](#)
- Maldives:** Fiqh Academy rules abortion is permissible under five circumstances, including when a woman is pregnant as a result of rape – [Sun](#)
- Morocco:** Activists welcome parliament's repeal of a law that drops rape charges if the rapist marries his underage victim – [OnIslam](#)
- Pakistan:** For the first time in its 33-year history, the national Shariat Court appoints a female judge – [Dawn](#)
- Saudi Arabia:** Shoura Council to discuss revolutionary new personal status law that 'aims to achieve parity between men and women in all aspects of life' – [Saudi Gazette](#)

### II. Building Our Knowledge

#### Global Life Stories Project

The Gambia Life Stories project team, coordinated by Musawah Advocate in the Gambia, [GAMCOTRAP](#), has made new partnerships in working on the Musawah Global Life Stories Project, which is part of the [Musawah Knowledge Building Initiative on Qiwamah and Wilayah](#). The Newfield Foundation now supports GAMCOTRAP in creating awareness and documenting issues on the life stories of women in Gambia. This joint-collaboration intends to empower women to understand their rights as accorded in Islam and guaranteed by the Personal Status law based on their lived realities.

For updates from Musawah's knowledge building work, click [here](#).

We are on:

[Facebook](#)

[Twitter](#)

[YouTube](#)

[Google+](#)

## Musawah I-nGEJ Course

The Musawah Course on [Islam & Gender Equality and Justice](#) (I-nGEJ, pronounced 'I engage') is designed for women's and human rights activists from Muslim countries and communities throughout the world who wish to play a critical role in building a tradition of public debate on Islam, and shaping a public discourse that recognises equality and justice for Muslim women. The course, which is an initiative of the Musawah Capacity Building Programme, addresses the knowledge gap of participants with no formal or traditional education on Islam, and who are keen to understand the differences and diversity of Qur'anic interpretations, juristic opinions, and conceptual tools that exist within the tradition justifying reform as both necessary and possible in Islam.

Derived from the two-week course *Understanding Islam from a Rights Perspective* by [Sisters in Islam](#), the Musawah seven-day curriculum grows from the awareness that faith is subject to changing contestations and negotiations. Global trends have made visible the critical need to recognise and assert women's experiences as a source of authority in defining how Islam is understood, practiced and codified in law.

Run in a seminar format, the course consists of lectures, presentations, and group discussions including assigned readings and consultations with resource persons. It is designed for a maximum of 24 participants, and a minimum of two resource persons and two facilitators, one from the local context. A needs analysis is conducted to shape the final design of the course to meet the needs and priorities of participants.

If you are interested in hosting the course, please write to [musawah@musawah.org](mailto:musawah@musawah.org).

### ❖ Musawah I-nGEJ Course in the Maldives

Musawah conducted the I-nGEJ Course in November 2013 for women's and human rights activists, government representatives, legal practitioners, and members of the National Human Rights Commission in the Maldives. This course was hosted by the [United Nations Development Programme \(UNDP\) in the Maldives](#).

### ❖ Future Musawah I-nGEJ Courses

The next Musawah I-nGEJ Course will be conducted for women's and human rights activists from Afghanistan, and will be hosted by the [Afghan Women's Network](#). Musawah is also in the early stages of planning the course for South Asian activists later this year.

For more information on the Musawah I-nGEJ Course, click [here](#).

## Useful Resources

- ❖ **New book: *Muslima Theology. The Voices of Muslim Women Theologians*.** Aslan, Ednan / Hermansen, Marcia / Medeni, Elif (eds). [Peter Lang](#), 2013.

'This pioneering volume defines the contours of the emerging engagements of Muslim women scholars from around the world with the authoritative interpretive traditions of Islam, classical and contemporary. Muslima theology, here broadly defined to encompass a range of interpretive strategies and perspectives arising from multiple social locations, interrogates Islamic scripture and other forms of religious discourse to empower Muslim women of faith to speak for themselves in the interests of gender justice.' (Source: [www.peterlang.com](http://www.peterlang.com))

We are on:

[Facebook](#)

[Twitter](#)

[YouTube](#)

[Google+](#)

For an article on the subject mentioning the book, read *Continuing Momentum in Muslim Critical Gender Scholarship* by [Celene Ayat Lizzio](#).

❖ **New book: *Human Rights under State-enforced Religious Family Laws in Israel, Egypt and India***. Yüksel Sezgin. [Cambridge University Press](#), 2013.

This book looks at impacts of state-enforced (pluri-legal) religious family laws on human women's rights in Israel, Egypt and India. It identifies resistance strategies successfully mobilised by rights activists as well as best practices for the integration of universal human rights principles into religious legal systems.

For more about the book, click [here](#).

### III. Building Our Movement

#### Musawah Advocate Updates

##### Egypt/Qatar

Musawah Advocate and former Musawah International Advisory Group member Dr Amira Sonbol spoke on 'Modern Arab Women: Discourses and Alternative Narratives' at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London in December 2013. Speaking to a packed lecture hall, Dr Sonbol explained that scholarly research on the lived realities of Arab women is crucial towards bringing to light a more 'realistic' record of Arab women's daily realities. In her own research Dr Sonbol documents the active role women play as providers and sustainers of their families across the Arab world. She 'distinguishes between how women actually lived, and discourses that speak about how women should live'. Her research findings on pre-modern *Shari'ah* court records reveal that women were keen to exert control over the circumstances of their marriages, and that unlike today's Islamists, the *ulama* (legal scholars) did not pass judgement on women and work or women in the public sphere, even though at the time women working was indicative of poverty. However, this prevalent sensibility did not prevent the *faqih* (expert in *fiqh* or Islamic jurisprudence) from officiating court cases where feisty women disputed their rights to market-place spots.

For a more detailed report of the lecture, click [here](#).

##### Indonesia

Musawah Advocate in Indonesia, [ALIMAT](#), also known as the Family Justice Movement, are now supporting [PEKKA](#) (the Program for Women-Headed Households) in an advisory capacity. In providing PEKKA with legal empowerment trainings and consultations, ALIMAT envisions the [Musawah Framework for Action](#) to underpin and further strengthen the mission of PEKKA.

Rice farmers, Aceh  
(Source: Flickr/WorldFish)



We are on:

[Facebook](#)

[Twitter](#)

[YouTube](#)

[Google+](#)

## United Kingdom



In September, Musawah Advocate in the United Kingdom, Muslim Women's Network-UK (MWNUK), published astonishing data based on 35 case studies of British-Asian Muslim girls and young women. The report, *Unheard Voices: The Sexual Exploitation of Asian Girls and Young Women*, reveals that girls continue to be sexually exploited and authorities are failing to identify or support them. Girls are most vulnerable to offenders from their own communities who manipulate cultural norms to prevent them from reporting their abuse.

The full report (PDF) can be accessed [here](#).

## Musawah News and Events

### ❖ International Strategy Meeting on Facing Religious Fundamentalisms

The Initiative on Resisting and Challenging Religious Fundamentalisms of the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) together with Musawah, [Catholics for the Right to Decide](#) (Mexico) and Global Rights Watch, a project of [Ipas](#) and [PPFA](#), co-organised a strategy consultation on 'Advancing Women's Rights and Gender Justice in the Face of Religious Fundamentalisms'. The meeting was held in Istanbul, Turkey, in December 2013, also with the support of the [Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women \(ARROW\)](#).

The meeting brought together women's rights activists and key allies engaged in challenging religious fundamentalisms in order to stimulate and advance dialogue, cooperations and coordination across global regions, religions and sectors of work. In addition to identifying key trends and their implications, such as the challenge of religious right-wing groups trying to roll back the language of human rights in UN treat documents and declarations, participants worked together to deepen their analysis on these trends, share innovative strategies to address challenges, and develop concrete ideas and proposals for collaborative action.

For more information on the AWID Initiative, click [here](#).

### ❖ Consultative Meeting with Religious Scholars

On 8 November 2013, Musawah held a two-day consultative meeting in Rabat, Morocco, with religious scholars from Morocco and Egypt, and Moroccan women's rights activists and scholars. The meeting was co-organised by Musawah and the Research Center on Women's Studies in Islam of [Rabita Mohammadia des Oulémas](#) in Morocco. The meeting intended to begin a series of discussions between Musawah, the Research Center and religious scholars from both Morocco and Egypt about reform in the Islamic knowledge tradition, and discourse with a focus on *qiwamah* and *wilayah*. It also sought to share work that highlights why reform is necessary and possible, and explore ways of continuing the discussion and collaborating on common goals. As a follow-up to the meeting, some of the work from the Musawah Knowledge Building Initiative on *Qiwamah* and *Wilayah* will be published in a special issue of the Arabic newsletter issued by Rabita Mohammadia des Oulémas.

To watch a short video (in Arabic) of the meeting, click [here](#).

We are on:

[Facebook](#)

[Twitter](#)

[YouTube](#)

[Google+](#)

## ❖ Communications Strategy Meeting 2013

Musawah held its second Communications Strategy Meeting on 1-3 September 2013 in order to draw up a revised communications strategy document for 2014-2016. This involved discussions around (i) strategic priorities, (ii) new activities, and (iii) targets and indicators. Participants of the meeting included members of the Communications Working Group (CWG), members of the Musawah Global Secretariat and a few invited media practitioners.

Communications Officer, Meghana Bahar, shared an overview of the Communications work over the past three years; the group then discussed strategic plans. Members of this meeting adopted and agreed upon seven revised strategic priorities, taking into consideration the movement's growth thus far and envisioned future pathway. New projects in the pipeline include the translation of the Musawah website into Arabic and Farsi, as well as the development of a Musawah I-nGEJ electronic course.

To view new social media integrations and our first poll on the Qur'an and equality in the Musawah website, click [here](#).

## ❖ Curriculum- and Capacity-Building Workshop 2013

Thirty-one participants from 16 different countries participated in a curriculum- and capacity-building workshop in Port Dickson, Malaysia in August 2013. The goals of this workshop were to fine-tune the Musawah I-nGEJ 7-day curriculum and to grow the pool of Musawah facilitators and resource persons.



Participants at Musawah CBW 2013, Malaysia

## Musawah in the News

### ❖ Musawah featured in The Nation

Journalist Elizabeth Segran documents the journey taken by the movement since its launch in February 2009, and its role in reconciling Islam and feminism in [The Nation](#) (Dec 2013). The article firmly posits Musawah as a primary catalyst in articulating a vision of the future that upholds gender equality and social justice, posing a genuine challenge to proponents of a dogmatic, narrow vision of Islam.

To read the full article, click [here](#).



We are on:

[Facebook](#)

[Twitter](#)

[YouTube](#)

[Google+](#)

### ❖ Blog Post by Amina Wadud mentions Musawah

In her online blog post dated 7 November 2013, [Qur'an and Woman](#) author and Islamic scholar Dr Amina Wadud draws similarities between the significance of the Saudi women's initiative [Women2Drive](#) and the larger message that Musawah drives home:

'The Saudi women's drive initiative demonstrates a crucial aspect of the Musawah movement: Today's movement is the result of a critical mass of Muslim women demanding justice FOR themselves, articulating the form of that justice, and advocating the terms of it. Women decide for themselves what justice and equality will look like. They have the right, responsibility and agency to determine how they wish for that justice to be manifest and the terms of its implementation in their own contexts.'

To read the full blog post, visit [Feminism and Religion](#).

### ❖ Zainah Anwar on France 24

France 24, an international news and current affairs television channel based in Paris, interviewed Musawah Director Zainah Anwar during the 9<sup>th</sup> Women's Forum Global Meeting, held 16-18 October in Deauville, France.

To watch the full interview, click [here](#).

### ❖ Zainah Anwar at the Carter Center

The Carter Center's Human Rights Defenders Initiative [featured](#) Zainah Anwar and her speech at the Center on 'Mobilizing Faith for Women'.

For the Carter Center's video interview, click [here](#).

## IV. International Advocacy

### ❖ Musawah Statement to the OHCHR



Musawah submitted a [statement](#) to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) on child, early and forced marriage in December 2013, pursuant to the Human Rights Council (HRC) resolution [A/HRC/RES/24/23](#). This contribution was submitted in preparation for the panel discussion on the prevention and elimination of child, early and forced marriage, which is to take place at the 26<sup>th</sup> Session of the Human Rights Council in May 2014. Musawah's contribution addresses the particular problematic of child marriage in Muslim contexts, and the urgent need to challenge the ways in which governments invoke outdated, but contested, interpretations of Islamic laws to justify why change is not possible.

Child marriage in Darfur  
(Source: Flickr/UNAMID)

We are on:

[Facebook](#)

[Twitter](#)

[YouTube](#)

[Google+](#)

## ❖ Musawah and Allies Engage with Indonesian Government Officials

In November 2013, Musawah was invited by [International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific](#) (IWRAP Asia Pacific) to provide expertise in a consultation with Indonesia's national women's machinery, the Ministry of Women's Empowerment. The consultation was held to identify and explore strategies to support the implementation of follow-up issues identified in the CEDAW Committee's 2012 [Concluding observations](#) for Indonesia, namely reforming laws and practices pertaining to female genital mutilation and discriminatory laws on marriage in compliance with CEDAW Article 16. Musawah Advocates Suri Kempe and Nur Rofiah served as resource persons, contributing ideas on how to address structural and substantive challenges related to these issues. Other participants included representatives from partner ministries in the Indonesian government and [UN Women-Indonesia](#).

## ❖ Musawah Thematic Report on Article 16: Afghanistan

The [Musawah Thematic Report on Afghanistan](#) was submitted to the CEDAW Committee for review at its 55<sup>th</sup> Session in Geneva, Switzerland in July 2013. In this report, Musawah takes a critical look at the status of marriage and family relations in Afghanistan, examining closely the governing legal structure and critical issues such as the equality of spouses, their rights and responsibilities, minimum age of marriage, forced marriage, polygamy, divorce, and the custody and guardianship of children. The Government of Afghanistan reported to the CEDAW Committee for the first time since ratifying CEDAW in 2003 without reservations.

The CEDAW Committee's [Concluding observations](#) on the combined initial and second periodic reports of Afghanistan also reflected Musawah's strategic intervention in the areas of women's rights achievements, women's access to justice, violence against women, moral crimes including honour killings, women's freedom of movement, and marriage and family relations. Musawah's recommendations were made from the perspectives of the holistic [Musawah Framework for Action](#), which promotes equality and justice in Muslim families and family laws.

To access the Musawah website's feature on Afghanistan, click [here](#).

## ❖ Musawah List of Issues and Questions on Article 16

In July 2013, the [Musawah List of Issues and Questions on Article 16 in Bahrain](#) (PDF) was submitted to the CEDAW Committee for consideration. This was Musawah's first contribution to the CEDAW List of Issues and Questions. This was followed closely by the submission of the [Musawah List of Issues and Questions on Article 16 in Qatar](#) (PDF).

Musawah submits a List of Issues and Questions on Article 16 to the CEDAW Committee during the Committee's review of OIC (Organisation of Islamic Cooperation) states and states with significant Muslim communities. This particular engagement constitutes a strategic point of intervention in the CEDAW review process. Each Musawah List of Issues and Questions provides critical information for identifying gaps in State party reports, for framing follow-up questions, and for determining the direction, tone and issues for the Committee's constructive engagement with governments.

For the Musawah website's feature on Musawah's international advocacy efforts, click [here](#).

## Contact Us

Subscribe to the e-newsletter: [www.musawah.org](http://www.musawah.org)

Musawah Secretariat: [musawah@musawah.org](mailto:musawah@musawah.org)

### Musawah Affinity Groups:

#### I. Arab region (Middle East & North Africa)

The Centre for Egyptian Women's Legal Assistance (CEWLA):  
[info@cewlacenter.org](mailto:info@cewlacenter.org), [www.cewla.org](http://www.cewla.org)

#### II. Southeast, South & Central Asia

ALIMAT (Musawah Indonesia):  
[alimat@yahoo.com](mailto:alimat@yahoo.com)

#### III. The Horn of Africa

Musawah Sudan:  
[mahaelzein@yahoo.com](mailto:mahaelzein@yahoo.com),  
[manalabdel@gmail.com](mailto:manalabdel@gmail.com)

#### IV. Sub-Saharan Africa

Musawah Nigeria:  
[asmaujoda@hotmail.com](mailto:asmaujoda@hotmail.com)

#### V. The Gulf Region

Bahrain Women's Union:  
[bahwu@batelco.com.bh](mailto:bahwu@batelco.com.bh)

#### VI. Young Women's Caucus

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

To submit Advocate updates or for any other query, write to Musawah at:  
[info@musawah.org](mailto:info@musawah.org).

We are on:

[Facebook](#)

[Twitter](#)

[YouTube](#)

[Google+](#)