

**Global Feminism and Women's Citizenship in the Muslim World:  
The Cases of Iran, Algeria, and Afghanistan**

Valentine M. Moghadam

Director of Women's Studies and Associate Professor of Sociology

Illinois State University, Normal, IL 61790-4260 USA

[vmmogha@ilstu.edu](mailto:vmmogha@ilstu.edu)

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Globalization is a complex economic, political, cultural, and social process in which the mobility of capital, organizations, ideas, discourses, and peoples has taken on an increasingly global or transnational form. Much has been written about the economic and cultural dimensions of globalization, but there is now a growing literature on the globalization of women's rights movements, and efforts are underway to theorize global or transnational feminism.

The late 20<sup>th</sup> century saw the emergence of women's rights movements throughout the Muslim world. This took place in the context of several important socio-demographic, political, and cultural developments: the rise of a critical mass of educated, employed, politically experienced, and mobile women in Muslim societies; their participation in the UN Decade for Women and the UN conferences of the 1990s, especially the International Conference on Population and Development (or the ICPD, which took place in Cairo in 1994) and the Fourth World Conference on Women (or the Beijing Conference, which took place in 1995), where they networked with other women activists; the rise of Islamic fundamentalism and conservative revisions to family laws by neopatriarchal states, which alarmed Muslim women in the Middle East, North Africa, South and Southeast Asia, and west Africa; the spread of the Internet and increasing access in Muslim societies. These developments resulted in at least two types of mobilization: the formation of women's rights or feminist organizations within countries, and the creation of the international solidarity network Women Living Under Muslim Laws.<sup>1</sup> Both the nationally-based women's organizations and the transnational network WLUML are dedicated to

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<sup>1</sup> Islamist women's organizations and various kinds of women-run NGOs also were formed, but they will not be considered here.

ending Muslim women's second-class citizenship and bringing about women's equality, autonomy, and empowerment.<sup>2</sup>

Classic theories of citizenship have focused on national-level dynamics in the explication of rights and movements for rights (e.g., the state, social development, class struggles, political resources), but in an era of globalization, supra-national factors are increasingly influential. Keck and Sikkink (1998), for example, show the "boomerang effect" that international pressure from other states and from transnational advocacy networks can have on domestic movements and campaigns. Many of those working within the field of globalization studies are positing the withering away of the state due to the emergence of powerful institutions of global governance (Cox, 1992; Gray 1998) and indeed of a "transnational state apparatus" (Robinson, 2001; Sklair, 2002). Studies show, too, the emergence of a "global civil society" or "transnational public sphere" (Guidry, Kennedy and Zald, 1999) consisting of transnational social movement organizations and international NGOs (Smith, et al, 1997; O'Brien, et al, 2000), including transnational feminist networks (Moghadam 2000) that engage with intergovernmental and multilateral organizations in pursuit of the expansion of human rights, environmental protection, women's rights, and other issues.

At the same time, women's organizations around the world remain focused on their societies and states; some lobby for the return of the welfarist, developmentalist state that prevailed before the onset of neoliberal economics; others for the protection or expansion of reproductive rights; and yet others for equal rights in the family and marriage. The state still matters to women, especially in the areas of reproductive rights and family law. In Muslim countries, family law is the battleground upon which women's organizations, Islamists, and neopatriarchal states vie for influence. In the recent past, Muslim states were reluctant to endorse CEDAW without qualification; the reservations entered typically pertained to statements in the Convention calling for women's equal rights in family matters. But women activists are increasingly setting their sights on global civil society, the transnational public sphere, and institutions of global governance to accomplish their goals at home. They look to the UN's women's rights agenda for legitimacy, and they appeal to transnational feminist networks for solidarity and support with campaigns. Both nationally-based women's organizations in Muslim

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<sup>2</sup> A "transnational feminist network" brings together women from three or more countries around a common agenda, such as women's human rights, feminist economics, reproductive health and rights, anti-militarism. Some of the better-known TFNs include Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN), Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUML), Women in Development Europe (WIDE), the Women's International Coalition for Economic Justice (WICEJ). Although TFNs of the present wave appeared in 1984-85, one of the earliest ones is the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), formed in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

countries and the transnational feminist network WLUML make the reform of Muslim family law and the implementation of CEDAW – without reservations – among their principal objectives.

Three cases will elucidate the salience and interplay of the local and the global in the pursuit of Muslim women's citizenship rights. Iran exemplifies the case of an active movement for women's citizenship in the face of a strong state and weak global links; the Algerian case shows how a state-feminist alliance against an Islamist opposition resulted in political rewards for women; and the case of Afghanistan illustrates how the plight of women in a failed but repressive state captured the attention of transnational feminist networks and resulted in unprecedented international interest in women's rights in a single country. I begin with a general discussion of the problem of women's second-class citizenship in Muslim countries, and proceed with the three case-studies. I end with some reflections on the interplay of the local and the global in defining and expanding women's citizenship and implications for feminist theories of citizenship.

### **The Problem of Muslim Women's Second-Class Citizenship**

All societies are stratified by gender – and by class and ethnicity or race – but many Muslim societies exhibit extreme forms of gender stratification and discrimination, as manifested in the differential legal rights of women and men, women's under-representation in political structures, and their limited access to paid employment (especially in the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia). The sources of women's second-class citizenship lie in patriarchal gender relations, political economy, legal frameworks, and the nature of the state.

In many contemporary Muslim societies, patriarchal gender relations are maintained by precapitalist forms of economic and social arrangements – such as petty commodity production, kinship-ordered agrarian systems, the predominance of the social institutions of the family and religion – and by the power of “the father”. Here, property, residence, and descent proceed through the male line; women's principal role is marriage and childbearing; the senior man has authority over everyone else in the family, including younger men; and women are subject to distinct forms of control and subordination. Such patriarchal social and gender arrangements, which were once common in Europe, persist in Asia and North Africa, and are evidenced by early marriage, high fertility, and the importance of female virginity and virtue to the family's honor (Kandiyoti 1988, 1992; Moghadam 1998; Charrad 2001). “Classic patriarchy” is particularly evident in Afghanistan, where precapitalist social forms prevail, but patriarchal gender relations are the norm in other Muslim countries and especially in rural areas.

Certain forms of political economy limit women's access to economic resources and employment. The oil economy and high wages of the Middle East and North Africa from the

1960s to the 1980s tended to depress female employment from both the demand and supply sides. This reinforced women's economic dependence, and strengthened what I have called the patriarchal gender contract (Moghadam 1998). The male breadwinner/female homemaker ideal that remains dominant in many Muslim societies. It finds expression in family laws, in marriage contracts, and in cultural discourses, and it limits women's choices, opportunities, and participation, including access to paid employment.

Family laws reflect and reinforce the state of gender relations and especially the status of women (Glendon, 1977; Shachar, 2000), and in many Muslim countries, family laws are based on interpretations of Sharia law that mirror patriarchal attitudes and codify women's subordination. The persistence of Muslim family law is in some cases the legacy of state-tribe compromises in the years of postcolonial state-building. Where newly-created states relied on tribes and clans for legitimacy and support, they left the patrilineal kinship systems – with their controls over women's behavior, mobility, and sexuality – intact. Charrad (2001) had described these processes for the Maghrib, showing how the different ways that state-building elites in Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia dealt with kin-ordered tribes had divergent outcomes in terms of women's rights in the family. Her analysis can be extended to Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan, where state-tribe compromises similarly took place.<sup>3</sup> Elsewhere in the Middle East, the legacy of the Ottoman *millet* system can be seen; for example, Lebanon and Israel established confessional systems and have no uniform civil code to govern matters of marriage and divorce (Shachar, 2000). Iran has a very small population of non-Muslims but they, too, have always retained control over family matters. For the majority Muslim population, liberalization of family law took place in the late 1960s and early 1970s, but a very conservative interpretation of Muslim family law was adopted by the Islamic Republic after 1979.

One factor that complicates and confuses women's citizenship is the discrepancy in many Muslim countries between constitutions that award equal rights to men and women and the family laws derived from the Sharia (Islamic canon law) that undermine this equality. Contrary to constitutional guarantees of equality of citizens, the family laws (also known as personal status codes) delineate different rights and obligations for men and for women. In rendering women minors and dependents of fathers, husbands, or other male guardians, religiously-based family laws reinforce the distinction between the public sphere of markets and governance – which are cast as the province of men – and the private sphere of the family, with which women are identified. Family matters are considered to be outside the purview of human rights, mainly because they based on Sharia law, which is considered to be off-limits to reform or revision.

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<sup>3</sup> Honor killings in Jordan are an extreme form of such male kin control over females.

In most Muslim countries, therefore, women's second-class citizenship is codified in the Sharia-based family laws. Religious law is elevated to civil status, and religious affiliation is a requirement of citizenship. Although Islamic law gives women the right to own and dispose of property, they inherit less property than men do and may lose their *mahr* if they are found to be at fault in the case of divorce. Furthermore, inasmuch as religious/civil laws require that women obtain permission of father, husband, or other male guardian to marry, seek employment, start a business, or travel, this means that women are seen as incapable of entering contracts on their own. The highly formal Islamic marriage contract does require the consent of the wife, and in some countries women may insert stipulations into the contract, such as her right to divorce should her husband take another wife. Marriage, however, remains largely an agreement between two families rather than two individuals with equal rights and obligations. In marriage, the husband has rights over his wife; he may take another wife (up to four) and he may divorce his wife, whereas a woman must remain monogamous and cannot easily initiate divorce. Marriage gives the husband the right of access to his wife's body, and marital rape is not recognized (see Shehadeh 1998; Welchman 2001) Children acquire citizenship and religious status through their fathers, not their mothers. Muslim women may not marry non-Muslim men. In many countries, the criminal code provides for acquittal or a reduction of sentence for men who commit "honor crimes", and premarital sex and adultery are considered serious offenses, especially for women.

Another source of women's second-class citizenship lies in the nature and role of the state, which in the context of the Middle East and North Africa has been defined as "neopatriarchal" (Sharabi 1988; Moghadam 1993/2003; Frisch 1997). Although in more recent decades some tension has developed between the state and communal entities such as tribes and extended families, the neopatriarchal state continues to uphold the traditional order in a modernizing context. Thus it is the state that has reinforced discriminatory family laws and upheld kin and social controls over women. The neopatriarchal state, moreover, is authoritarian; male citizens have few political rights, and women even fewer. Although the neopatriarchal and authoritarian state exists in varying degrees, with different implications citizen rights across the Muslim world, in general, civil and political rights are extremely limited. In Afghanistan under the Taleban, they were all but non-existent.

### *Feminist Responses: Transnational and National*

Since the 1980s, women's movements in Muslim societies have had to contend with patriarchal Islamist movements, neopatriarchal states, and religious-based family laws – a rather formidable combination of forces. One response to this was the formation of a transnational

feminist network known as Women Living under Muslim Laws, an anti-fundamentalist network of Muslim feminists and secular feminists who link with other women's networks to advance the human rights of women, especially within the Muslim world.

WLUML emerged in response to concerns about changes in family laws in the countries from which the founding members came. In July 1984, nine women – from Algeria, Sudan, Morocco, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Iran, Mauritius and Tanzania – set up an Action Committee of Women Living Under Muslim Laws in response to situations arising out of “the application of Muslim laws in India, Algeria, and Abu Dhabi that resulted in the violation of women's human rights” (Kazi, 1997: 142). By early 1985, the committee had evolved into an international network of information, solidarity and support. Tasks for the network were established at the first planning meeting, in April 1986, involving ten women from Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Sudan, Nigeria, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The tasks were to create international links between women in Muslim countries and communities; to exchange information on their situations, struggles and strategies, in order to strengthen and reinforce women's initiatives and struggles through various means (such as through publications and exchanges); and to support each others' struggles through various means including an Alert for Action system (Hélie-Lucas, 1993: 225). Since then, WLUML has become a network of women who are active in their local and national movements but who meet periodically to reach consensus on a Plan of Action. For example, the 1997 Plan of Action identified the following as priorities: the continuing rise of fundamentalism; militarization/armed conflict situations and their impact on women in Muslim societies; and sexuality. Thirty-five activists from 18 countries gathered in Dhaka, Bangladesh, to agree upon the Plan.

Because WLUML includes women activists who are anti-religious and those, like Sisters in Islam of Malaysia, who are religiously observant women, the network deploys various strategies and discourses to champion women's rights, including reinterpretation of religious texts. WLUML is, however, resolutely anti-fundamentalist and committed to the separation of religion from the realm of politics and the law. Its most prominent strategy is to provide solidarity to women experiencing oppression and to publicize their condition. Over the years, WLUML has been active in raising international awareness about the dangers of fundamentalism for women, issuing many appeals concerning the plight of women during the civil conflict in Algeria, the oppression of women under the Taleban in Afghanistan, and the trend toward legal Islamization in parts of Nigeria and Malaysia.

Another form of Muslim women's mobilization has been the proliferation of nationally-based women's organizations throughout the Muslim world that use a variety of legal and

discursive strategies to achieve their goals (Joseph and Slyomovics 2001; Moghadam, 2002, 2003). Some use a secular discourse and take a confrontational stance (e.g., Algeria, Turkey) while others frame their demands in Islamic discourse and engage in consensus-building (e.g., the Islamic Republic of Iran, Egypt). Across the countries, their demands may be crystallized as follows: (1) the modernization of family laws, 2) the criminalization of domestic violence and other forms of violence against women, (3) women's right to retain their own nationality and to pass it on to their children (a demand mainly of Arab women), and (4) greater political and economic participation. They emphasize, too, that existing family laws are at odds with the universal standards of equality and nondiscrimination embodied in international instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. As we shall see, these issues are central to feminist demands and claims in Iran and Algeria.

### **The Islamic Republic of Iran**

Until the 1990s the Islamic Republic of Iran was relatively isolated, a condition ensured by legal measures banning the use of satellite TV dishes, limiting international travel, and restricting the use of the Internet. Delegates to the UN women's conferences in 1980 and 1985 were Islamists who staunchly defended the *chador* and the Islamic Republic's record, notwithstanding overwhelming evidence of oppression, discrimination, and second-class citizenship for women and minorities. Both the legal restrictions and the highly charged ideological climate prevented contact between women activists in Iran and expatriate Iranian feminists. Post-Khomeini liberalization under President Rafsanjani, however, lessened the restrictions on travel, with the result that expatriate Iranian feminists began to travel to Iran and make connections with women's rights activists, both Islamic and non-Islamic. They were also able to observe dissidence, resistances, and alternative discourses. One such discourse was that of Islamic feminism, as expressed in the women's magazine *Zanan*, which began to publish in 1992. In the wake of the Islamic Republic's failure to deliver on its promise to liberate women, faced with clerical insistence on the perfection of Iran's Shariat-based family law, and unhappy with a legal environment that allowed men to divorce their wives at will or take second wives, disillusioned Muslim women turned their attention to the Islamic texts. Their re-reading led them to emphasize the egalitarian and emancipatory spirit of the Quran, the Prophet's message, and early Islamic history. In this way, interpretation became a strategy to question the legitimacy of patriarchal laws and women's second-class citizenship.

Another strategy has been to create a prodigious women's press, including feminist magazines and women's publishing collectives (e.g., *Zanan*, *Jens-e Dovvom?*, *Farzaneh*,

*Hoghough-e Zanan*, *Roshangaran Press*, *Fasl-e Zanan*, and the output of the new Cultural Center of Women). This feminist press reflects the development of a collective identity and expresses the grievances and aspirations of contemporary Iranian women. It also reveals the importance of the international arena for Iranian women activists; articles published in the Iranian feminist press include translations of feminist essays published in other countries, and many are solicited from expatriate Iranian feminists.<sup>4</sup> In Iran, women's rights activists are deeply immersed in domestic battles for reform and equality, but they have an eye on the international scene, and the translations and solicited articles from abroad give credence to their demands and claims concerning their second-class citizenship in the private sphere of the family and the public sphere of the state, culture, and employment.

Grievances about women's legal status and social conditions are replete in the feminist press, where there is a strong emphasis on women's inequality within the family. Parvin Abyaneh (2000) has described a survey of 72 articles in the magazine *Zanan* that dealt with problems of women's legal status and reported that fully 61 percent of them dealt with family issues. A key objective of Iranian's women's rights activists, both secular and Islamic, is to modernize family law and give women equal rights in matters of marriage, divorce, and child custody. The matter of inheritance, still a taboo subject, may soon be raised. But while the reform of family law has long preoccupied Iranian feminists, since at least 2000 they have been concerned with a new issue: domestic violence. Articles in the more recent feminist press describe domestic violence as both a social problem and a violation of women's rights.<sup>5</sup>

Another issue of concern to Iranian women that appears in the feminist press is women's under-representation in formal politics and the need for greater participation in parliament, the local councils, and the highest political offices. Azzam Taleghani's self-nomination for president in 1997 – and her disqualification on grounds of sex – brought the question of women and the presidency to the fore. In 2001, some 40 women sought the nomination, and all were summarily disqualified. At least two documentary films have been made on the subject of women's pursuit of the presidency. A related concern has been the status of women's rights issues on the agenda of the reform movement.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> A 2000 issue of *Jens-e Dovvom?* [The Second Sex?] carried a translated article on Madonna by a U.S. sociologist and an article on preparations for the Beijing+5 conference in New York as well as interviews and articles on domestic topics.

<sup>5</sup> See *Fasl-e Zanan* [The Season of Women: A Collection of Feminist Articles], Vol. 1, 1380/2001 and Vol. 2, 1381/2002. See also the article by Shahla Ezazi in *Farzaneh* [journal of women's studies and research], Vol. 5, No. 10, winter 2000.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Mahboubeh Abbas-Gholizadeh, in *Farzaneh*, vol. 5, no. 10, winter 2000.

Women's rights activists in Iran have framed their grievances and demands in Islamic terms and have drawn from the cultural stock to press for women's rights and equality. But they also have used secular language and pointed to international conventions and standards, thus challenging the dominant political and ideological framework. They have called for the adoption of international conventions and norms such as CEDAW and the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action; they have participated in or followed international forums such as the Beijing Plus Five meeting in June 2000; they have formed links (albeit limited) with global feminists; and they have received various kinds of support from Iranian expatriate feminists.

Despite liberalization during the 1990s and especially during the Khatami years, an environment of repression continues. This may be one reason why the women's movement in Iran is not integrated into transnational feminist networks such as Development Alternatives with Women in a New Era (DAWN), Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUML), the Women's Learning Partnership for Equality, Development, and Rights (WLP) or the numerous women's health and reproductive rights networks. Nor are they well connected to global civil society organizations dealing with human rights, children's rights, or the environment. Expatriate Iranian feminists are trying to rectify this and to facilitate international networking by inviting Iran-based feminists to conferences in Europe and the United States, by distributing edited volumes, calendars, and other publications of the Iranian women's press (e.g., the impressive output of Noushin Ahmadi-Khorasani), by organizing screenings of films with feminist themes, by circulating petitions protesting the mistreatment of feminist leaders in Iran, and of course by writing on and lecturing about Iranian women's activism.

In at least one case, action on the part of international feminists made a difference in Iran, illustrating the "boomerang effect" of transnational advocacy. Mehrangiz Kaar, a secular feminist lawyer and women's rights activist, was arrested and imprisoned in Iran as a result of critical remarks she made at a conference in Berlin in April 2000. In the repressive environment of the Islamic Republic, protests could not be organized on her behalf, but a campaign to publicize her plight was launched by a U.S.-based transnational feminist network, the Women's Learning Partnership, whose director is an Iranian-born feminist. The campaign emphasized the injustice of her imprisonment as well as the fact that Ms. Kaar was suffering from breast cancer, and spearheaded a petition drive and the dispatch of letters to the Iranian authorities. Eventually, Ms. Kaar was released and permitted to leave Iran with her daughter for medical treatment abroad.

For sociologist Ali Akbar Mahdi, feminism in Iran reveals women's "greater awareness of human rights, individual rights, individual autonomy within marriage, family independence within the kinship network, and a form of national consciousness against the global diffusion of

Western values” (Mahdi, 2000). However, for Ayatollah Khamenei – the country’s unelected clerical Leader – women’s rights activists in Iran sound dangerously like Western feminists. He has warned against the dangers of the “feminist tendency” and declared it to be an inappropriate solution for Muslim women.

## **Algeria**

Like Iran, Algerian feminists have waged a battle for rights and equal citizenship in the face of the fundamentalist challenge. Algeria’s feminist movement may be divided into two phases. In the period 1980-85 Algerian women formed groups and engaged in collective action to protest the government’s draft Family Code, which they regarded as patriarchal and deleterious to women’s citizenship. In the second period, roughly 1990-2000, they mobilized again in response to the rise of the Front Islamique du Salut (FIS) and the violence of its armed wings, the AIS and the GIA. Eschewing nationalist or religious language, Algerian feminists draw on the international language of rights, equality, citizenship, modernity, and empowerment – which derive from liberal, socialist, and feminist traditions – to frame the issues and advance their cause (Moghadam 2001).

The Algerian women’s movement in its first phase emerged in the period following the December 1978 death of the long-time leader Colonel Houari Boumedienne. The immediate post-Boumedienne period was marked by a conservative move at women’s expense, in line with the shift away from Algerian socialism and towards a market economy, and in response to the growing Islamist tendency in the region. When the Ministry of Justice announced the creation of a commission to draft a Family Code, some 200 university women convened an open meeting at the industrial workers’ union headquarters in Algiers on 8 March 1979 to demand the disclosure of the identity of the members of the commission, and to express their concerns and demands. On 21 January 1982, Algerian feminists issued a six-point demand, calling for: monogamy; the unconditional right of women to seek employment; the equal division of family property; the same age of majority for women and men; identical conditions of divorce for men and women; and effective protection of abandoned children (Bouatta, 1997: 5; Messaoudi and Schemla, 1998: 50).

The debate over the family code and the presence of *moudjahidates* (the former women liberation fighters) among the protesters forced the government to withdraw its proposal, but an even more conservative revision was presented in 1984 and quickly passed by the National Assembly before much opposition could resurface. Feminists stressed that the Family Code contravened the equality clauses of the Constitution, the Labor Code, and international

conventions to which Algeria is a signatory (Cherifati-Merabtine, 1995; Bouatta, 1997), and they formed a number of new women's organizations to defend women's rights. L'Association pour l'Egalité des Droits entre les Femmes et les Hommes (known as Egalité) was established in May 1985, with Khalida Messaoudi, a former math teacher and activist in the first phase, as its first president. Also prominent in the group was Louisa Hannoun, a Trotskyist and women's rights activist.

Austerity measures implemented by the Bendjedid government, combined with political frustration directed at the FLN, led to the riots of October 1988, in which young people played a prominent role. In turn, the riots ushered in a brief period of political liberalization inaugurated by the 1989 constitution that legalized political parties. But this period saw the increasing popularity of the FIS. Algerian feminists were alarmed by statements emanating from Islamist leaders such as Ali Belhadj, who declared that "the natural place for a woman is at home" and that "the woman is the reproducer of men. She does not produce material goods, but this essential thing that is a Muslim" (Mahl, 1998). The FIS leadership proceeded to issue statements condemning the anti-fundamentalist women as "one of the greatest dangers threatening the destiny of Algeria" and branding them "the avant-garde of colonialism and cultural aggression" (Bennoune, 1995: 197). Belhadj also denounced democracy as atheistic, and promised to install Sharia law and Islamic government.

The fundamentalist discourse and agenda of the FIS were supported by a segment of the female population, and in April 1989 a demonstration of 100,000 women in favor of Islamism and sex-segregation shocked the anti-fundamentalist women. But this display also spawned a network of anti-fundamentalist feminist groups. When Egalité seemed to equivocate over the nature of the fundamentalist uprising, Khalida Messaoudi left to form another organization, l'Association pour le Triomphe des Droits des Femmes. In this second phase of the Algerian feminist movement, the struggle against fundamentalism took center stage.

When the FIS won the elections in 1991, the FLN grew alarmed and cancelled the second round. The FIS responded with violence, and new and more deadly armed groups, such as the Islamic Armed Group (GIA), emerged. After shooting to death one young woman in April 1993 and decapitating a mother and a grandmother in separate incidents early the next year, the GIA issued a statement in March 1994 classifying all unveiled women who appeared in public as potential military targets – and promptly gunned down three teenaged girls (Bennoune, 1995). The violence against women escalated during that year, and included kidnappings and rapes. Women were denounced in mosques by imams, who pronounced fatwas that condemned activist or unveiled women to death. Lists of women to be killed were pinned up at the entrance to

mosques (Mahl, 1998). March 1995 saw an escalating number of deaths of women and girls. Khalida Messaoudi was officially condemned to death by the fundamentalists and was forced to live underground. Zazi Sadou, who had founded the Rassemblement Algérien des Femmes Democratiques in 1993 and took public positions against theocracy and authoritarianism, was similarly put on an Islamist death list. Nabila Diahnine, an architect and president of the feminist group Cri de Femmes, was assassinated in February 1996 while on her way to work in the northern city of Tizi Ouzou (Shirkat Gah, 1997). Members of the feminist groups and their many supporters took to the streets to protest the sexual violence and the threats against unveiled women, as well as the military government's inability to protect women. After one public protest in the spring of 1994, the independent newspaper *Al Vatan* wrote: "Tens of thousands of women were out to give an authoritative lesson on bravery and spirit to men paralyzed by fear, reduced to silence. ... The so-called weaker sex ... refused to be intimidated by the threats advanced by 'the sect of assassins'" (cited in *World Press Review*, July 1994:34).

The period 1989-1994 saw the formation of a number of active feminist organizations calling for the abolition of the Family Code; full citizenship for women; enactment of civil laws guaranteeing equality between men and women in areas such as employment and marriage and divorce; abolition of polygamy and unilateral male divorce, equality in division of marital property. After the rise of Islamism in 1991 many of the feminist organizations advanced the slogan "No dialogue with the fundamentalists" (Mahl, 1998; *WLDI Bulletin*, 1998: 4).

Throughout the 1990s, Algerian feminist organizations participated in a number of national and international initiatives on violence against women, including a March 1994 tribunal in Algeria "to judge symbolically the responsible Islamists and the former president of the Algerian Republic for their crimes against humanity." The women's groups built coalitions to organize street demonstrations in Algeria to defend democracy and the citizenship of women (*WLDI*, 1998: 4). The Rassemblement Algérien des Femmes Democratiques (RAFD), which is part of the network Women Living under Muslim Laws, was active in documenting human rights violations, particularly those by Islamists against women, and in collecting women's testimonies. It produced a publication entitled *Algérie réveille-toi, c'est l'an 2000!*, a compilation of news articles about the atrocities, and also worked with U.S. feminist and human rights lawyer Rhonda Copelon to file a civil action suit in Washington, D.C. against the FIS and its U.S. representative, Anwar Haddam.

The 1997 municipal and parliamentary elections saw the election of 11 women to the National Assembly, among them several well-known feminists and women leaders. Among those elected in 1997 were Louisa Hannoun, leader of the Workers' Party (dubbed "Algeria's shining

star” by the Algerian press), Khalida Messaoudi, who had then joined the Rally for Culture and Democracy, and Dalia Taleb of the Socialist Forces Front. Since then, there have been cracks in the women’s movement, but the unity once displayed in the face of the fundamentalist threat has given way to fragmentation. At the same time, the Algerian government has recognized and rewarded feminists for their activism. In the summer of 2002, President Bouteflika appointed five women to cabinet positions – an unprecedented number in the Middle East and North Africa. And in deliberate defiance of Islamist norms, an increasing number of courts are now headed by women judges. Still pending, however, is the president’s promise to reform family law.

### **Afghanistan**

In the latter part of the 1990s, the ruling elite of Afghanistan, known as the Taleban, instituted the harshest and most bizarre theocratic dictatorship in the world, with a gender regime that was particularly severe on women, though men also suffered. The world came to know about the dire condition of Afghan women largely through the efforts of women’s organizations working within their countries and transnationally. Armed with the new international consensus regarding the rights of women – or “global feminism” – and with the advantage of easy access to information technologies and especially the Internet, feminists in Europe and the United States were ready to organize, mobilize, and act when the Taleban took control over Afghanistan in September 1996 and instituted their draconian gender regime. Amnesty International had earlier turned its attention to the women of Afghanistan, and with the help of Pakistani researchers (e.g., Habiba Hassan, 1995) discovered what it called “a human rights catastrophe” for the women of Afghanistan under the Mujahidin (Amnesty International, 1995, 1996).

Pakistani feminists – including those associated with WLUML – tapped into their networks in South Asia and elsewhere, and lent support to collective action by Afghan women expatriates. The Afghan Women’s Network, which was based in Islamabad and Peshawar, Pakistan, issued a statement on 15 October 1996 that read in part:

We are a group of Afghan women and their supporters who live in Pakistan and Afghanistan. In a country where over 90% of the women and girls are illiterate, we are a group of women who were encouraged by their families to become educated. Many of us have university degrees. Many of us previously worked in Afghanistan as lawyers, engineers, professors and doctors. Now we are working with NGOs, UN agencies and schools. Some of us are widows. Many of us are the sole support of our families. Because

we are educated, we believe that we have the responsibility to speak out for ourselves and for other Afghan women who have not had the opportunities we have had. ...

We ask for your support for the participation of Afghan women in the peace process and the guarantees of women's rights to employment outside the home and women's and girls' human rights to education and security.

Their statement noted the concern that had been expressed in a press release by UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali on 7 October and listed the support they had received from organizations such as the International League for Human Rights, Equality Now, Amnesty International, People's Decade for Human Rights Education, Working Group on the Human Rights of Women, Refugee Women in Development, Sisterhood is Global Institute, Women Living Under Muslim Laws, and UN Agencies (WLUML, 1998). At the same time, action alerts were dispatched by the Sisterhood is Global Institute (SIGI) and WLUML. In mid-October 1996, Human Rights Watch, Women in Development Europe (WIDE), Refugee Women in Development, the International Women's Tribune Center, and the Center for Women's Global Leadership drafted an "Urgent Appeal Letter Concerning Women's Rights in Afghanistan" addressed to José Ayala Lasso, the UN's Human Rights Commissioner. ISIS International, a feminist communications network, reported that it was delivered to him on 17 October on behalf of 61 organizations from Asia, Europe, Latin America, and North America (see WLUML, 1998: 154).

In Europe, Afghan refugee women formed coalitions with French, Italian, Spanish, and other European feminists, who petitioned members of their national parliaments and members of the European Parliament, demanding that European countries condemn the actions of the Taliban and deny diplomatic recognition of the new regime. The Afghan women's group Negar was formed in France in October 1996, and it put the spotlight on the Taliban's denial of education to women and girls. Emma Bonino, an EU official and member of Italy's Radical Party, made a dramatic visit to Afghanistan in 1997, was briefly arrested, and returned to Europe to champion the cause of Afghan women. On 2 February 1997, a large number of Spanish feminist organizations held a demonstration in Madrid in support of the human rights of Afghan women. And in May 1997 the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, or ICFTU, called for work stoppages in support of women in Afghanistan (WLUML, 1998: 174). Their solidarity campaign continued. Meeting in Brussels on 26-27 March 2001, the ICFTU's Women's Committee issued a resolution deploring "the constant repression, violence and harassment against women" that contravened various international conventions, urged ICFTU affiliated

organizations “to press their governments to use every means of pressure available” to condemn the repression and ensure that the Taliban restore women’s right to work, to health care and freedom of movement.<sup>7</sup>

By early 1998 only three governments – those of Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE – had recognized the Taliban government, and the European Parliament urged them to withdraw their diplomatic recognition and support (*Reuters*, 20 Feb. 1998). Clare Short, British minister for international cooperation, and Emma Bonino, then EU Commissioner for Humanitarian Rights, designated International Women’s Day on 8 March 1998 as a day of solidarity with Afghan women. Feminists and progressives demonstrated in front of UN offices in Brussels, Moscow, and Rome against the Taliban’s “gender apartheid”. That same spring, Italy’s Association for Women in Development (AIDoS) held a press conference in which Ziba Shorish-Shamley, a co-founder of the U.S.-based Women’s Alliance for Peace and Human Rights in Afghanistan (WAPHA) spoke. WLUML organized or took part in numerous actions, issued action alerts and petitions, and compiled a dossier on violations of Afghan women’s human rights and the responses of international feminists (WLUML, 1998). The *WLUML News Sheet*, which was produced by the Lahore-based Shirkat Gah feminist group, carried information on Afghan women in almost every issue.

Throughout the world women expressed outrage at the Taliban. On March 8, 1998, Massoumeh Ebtekar, the highest ranking female official in Iran, visited Mazar-e Sharif (still under the control of the Northern Alliance), condemned the Taliban as unIslamic and expressed support for the “Islamic human rights” of Afghan women. That same month, the UN Commission on the Status of Women “condemned the continuing violations of the human rights of women and girls in Afghanistan.” UNICEF director Carol Bellamy lodged a strong protest with the Afghan authorities concerning their treatment of women and girls, during a visit in early April 1998. In September 1999, the UN Special Rapporteur for Violence against Women, Radhika Coomaraswamy, denounced the Taliban’s policies on women after completing a four-day visit to Afghanistan.

In the United States, the Feminist Majority issued an appeal to their network in [June?] 1997 to urge the U.S. government not to recognize the Taliban.<sup>8</sup> The plight of Afghan women

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<sup>7</sup> ICFTU, <http://www.icftu.org>, accessed 10 April 2002.

<sup>8</sup> In March 1997, I gave a talk at Illinois State University (which I had just joined as Director of Women’s Studies) and at the University of Illinois in Springfield, in which I discussed the history of women’s oppression in Afghanistan, described the violations of women’s human rights under the Mujahidin and the Taliban, and highlighted the irresponsible role of the United States in the growth of Islamist extremism. I

under the Taleban was so extreme that even the U.S. State Department's human rights report for 1997 (published in early 1998) had to concede the progress that women had made under the communists and which they had lost after the communist collapse. Afghan expatriates Zieba Shorish-Shamley, Zohreh Rassekh and others formed WAFPA (*vafa* in Dari/Persian). WAPHA's action alerts, appeals, and petition drives, sent via Internet, became a very effective advocacy and lobbying tool, and educated many American feminist academics and activists.<sup>9</sup> Zieba Shorish-Shamley testified before Congress and traveled extensively throughout the United States and Europe, while Zohreh Rassekh helped carry out two influential and widely-cited studies on Afghan women's health for *Physicians for Human Rights* (1998, 2001). In October 2001 the New York chapter of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom developed a website called Peace Women, and included an extensive link on Afghanistan with information on the activities of various Afghan and non-Afghan feminist groups. (See [www.peacewomen.org](http://www.peacewomen.org))

RAWA stepped up their activities and became especially vocal and visible during the Taleban era, issuing numerous appeals in now perfect English. They forged links with the U.S. Feminist Majority, who sponsored visits by their representatives to campuses and conferences (e.g., the Feminist Expo in Baltimore in summer 2000). RAWA became exceptionally media-savvy, giving interviews to the press, and appearing on the Oprah show and on the Larry King Show.<sup>10</sup> RAWA produced an extensive website in English and Dari that was/is informative and interactive. It detailed their many activities in Peshawar and underground in Afghanistan (e.g., health clinics, schools, fact-finding), included photo galleries and video clips, expressly invited Oprah viewers to send comments or queries, and described "our plans for the future". The latter, incidentally, includes attention to be paid to "the taboo subject of women's own sex preferences."

WAPHA made contact with U.S. feminists and in early 1998 began to lobby against the planned oil pipeline from the Caucasus through Afghanistan that Unocal, a US oil company, wanted to build in concert with other oil corporations. WAPHA, NOW, the Feminist Majority, and the Center for Women's Global Leadership put pressure on President Clinton, who agreed not to recognize the Taleban government and withdrew support for the Unocal deal. The efforts

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recommended that the Taleban be denied diplomatic recognition, that Afghan refugees be given safe haven wherever they went, and that humanitarian assistance be provided to Afghans, especially women and girls. I reiterated my view, first made in a 1994 article (Moghadam 1994), that aid to Afghanistan be subject to "gender conditionalities".

<sup>9</sup> See, e.g., "Appeal on Behalf of the Afghan Women, Men and Children! Powerless Afghan Women Beg for Survival!", Sept. 22, 1997, via Internet.

<sup>10</sup> See, e.g., Katha Pollitt, "Tearing at the Veil: Questions for Sajeda Hayat and Sehar Saba, *New York Times Magazine*, May 14, 2000. The two women also spoke at my institution, Illinois State University.

included organizing outside the embassies of Afghanistan and Pakistan, mobilizing women's groups across the U.S. to pass resolutions condemning the Taleban, lobbying Congress and the UN, and meeting with the State Department and White House officials (Morgan and Ottaway, 1998). On 5 December 1998, Unocal withdrew from the consortium, "because of concern over low world oil prices, the presence of Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan, and pressure from feminist groups protesting the company's contacts with the Taleban" (*Bloomberg*, 15 Dec. 1998; *NYT*, 5 December 1998).

A major achievement during the period was the Conference for Women of Afghanistan, which took place in late June 2000 in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. Organized by the France-based group Negar, the two-day conference brought together expatriate Afghan women living in the United States and Europe, about 250 Afghan refugee women from Tajikistan and Iran, and 45 non-Afghans from countries such as Algeria, France, Spain, and the U.S. The non-Afghans included Khalida Messaoudi, the famous Algerian secular feminist and militant anti-fundamentalist, whose keynote address drew a sustained standing ovation, and the French-Algerian writer Juliette Minces. At the conference, Negar declared its support for the World March of Women 2000, an initiative of feminists in Quebec, Canada that targeted neoliberal capitalism and violence against women.<sup>11</sup> The conference itself produced the "Declaration of the Essential Rights of Afghan Women", based in part on UN documents and the Afghan constitutions of 1964 and 1977.<sup>12</sup>

Bouyed by the Unocal victory, the Feminist Majority expanded its Campaign to Stop Gender Apartheid and mobilized numerous groups and individuals in the United States to condemn the Taleban and support the human rights of Afghan women. Its website included an extensive section called "Help Afghan Women", as well as an informative link called "Global Feminism" (see [www.feministmajority.org](http://www.feministmajority.org)). Groups that endorsed the campaign included the American Nurses Association, the American Medical Women's Association, the YWCA of the USA, Planned Parenthood Federation of America, NOW, WAPHA, General Federation of Women's Clubs, and the Coalition of Labor Union Women. Prominent women such as Hillary Rodham Clinton signed on, giving speeches and contributing funds to support underground schools and clinics for women and girls in Afghanistan. Mavis Leno, wife of the popular late-

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<sup>11</sup> The World March of Women was launched by a rally by some 2,000 women in Geneva on March 8, 2000 and culminated in worldwide marches and rallies in October.

<sup>12</sup> I am grateful to Maliha Zulficar, one of the Afghan participants, for drawing my attention to the importance of this conference. Information on the conference and Declaration may be found on <http://www.erols.com/kabultec>

night comedian and talk-show host, Jay Leno, became chair of the campaign and took the campaign to Hollywood, where more funds were raised. The Feminist Majority and its local chapters sponsored visiting delegations from RAWA, who spoke at conferences, on campuses, and with the media. The Feminist Majority took part in, endorsed, and helped to publicize the Dushanbe Conference and its Declaration. After the tragic events of 11 September 2001, women senators joined the bandwagon, and in October 2001, Barbara Boxer won passage of an amendment to the Foreign Operations Appropriations Bill calling for the inclusion of Afghan women in the reconstruction of Afghanistan. She then joined Barbara Mikulski and Kay Bailey Hutchinson in introducing new legislation aimed at helping to alleviate the healthcare and educational crisis facing Afghan women and girl refugees.<sup>13</sup>

After the Taleban were driven from power, Afghan women expatriates in France, Canada, the U.S., the U.K. and elsewhere mobilized their formal and informal networks to engage in advocacy and lobbying for the establishment of Afghan women's rights and for their participation in the political processes underway. Consequently, transnational feminists worked to ensure that Afghan women were represented in the emerging political bodies, that funding be allocated for girls' schools and women's hospitals, and that the new Ministry for Women's Affairs be given adequate resources. To this day, Womankind Worldwide, a London-based transnational feminist group that deals with women's development and human rights, provides e-communication about the situation of women in Afghanistan and serves as a site for meetings and lectures on Afghanistan and for visits by Afghan women leaders. There has been much discussion about the constitutional process, including the composition of the constitutional commission and the wording of the draft constitution, particularly with respect to references to the legal status of women.

The campaign for Afghan women's rights is significant for at least three reasons. First, it is illustrative of the way that global feminism is invoked, transnational feminist networks are mobilized, and international feminists respond. Second, it was the campaign that helped to "internationalize" the American feminist movement and its key organizations, largely at the instigation of expatriate Afghan women's groups such as RAWA and WAPHA. Third, the Feminist Majority's Campaign to Stop Gender Apartheid and the battle against Unocal was perhaps the first time that a woman's issue had galvanized so much interest as to affect U.S. foreign policy. The American campaign was not without its problems, and elsewhere I have described them. But it cannot be denied that the non-recognition of the Taleban, the prevention of

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<sup>13</sup> "Women Senators Step up Fight for Afghan Women", *Feminist Daily News Wire*, Oct. 25, 2001, via Feminist Majority website.

the Unocal pipeline, and the strong influence of international feminists in post-Taliban Afghanistan on behalf of Afghan women's rights to education, employment, political participation, and legal equality showed the efficacy of transnational feminist advocacy in an era of globalization. The Afghan case also shows how feminist networks participate across borders in the transnational public sphere, "a real as well as conceptual space in which movement organizations interact, contest each other and learn from each other" (Guidry, Kennedy, and Zald, 1999: 3). It shows, too, that the transnational public sphere, while "an opportunity structure that is recognized most clearly in the core countries of the industrialized West, is appreciated even in relatively marginalized sites in the non-Western world as well" (Ibid.: 9).

### **Conclusions**

The mobility of feminists and feminist ideas, participation in the transnational public sphere, and new international institutions and norms conducive to women's rights are among the opportunities afforded by the era of globalization that have positive implications for women's citizenship within and across borders. National-level dynamics – including changes in the characteristics and aspirations of the female population, and feminist conflicts with states and Islamist movements – are clearly behind the drive for women's citizenship in the Muslim world, lending credence to classic theories of citizenship. And yet, in an era of globalization, supra-national institutions, norms, and movements intersect with national-level factors, although not in exactly the same way in every case.

A major impetus for the movement for women's citizenship rights in Muslim countries has been political Islam. The rise of Islamic fundamentalism – and the clarity of its patriarchal agenda – has been a key factor in galvanizing women in the Muslim world and setting in motion movements for the definition and expansion of women's rights. This has coincided with the growth of the population of middle-class and educated women with aspirations of equality, mobility, and empowerment. The cases of Iran and Algeria show that many Muslim women in the Middle East and North Africa are unwilling to accept notions of "difference" that translate into unequal rights and second-class citizenship – hence the emphasis on reform of Muslim family law and the insistence on greater political rights and participation. As such, it is clear that the struggle for citizenship is rooted in domestic issues of political/cultural contention and social conflict; certainly it should not be seen as a manifestation of Western feminism's reach. At the same time, it cannot be denied that the struggle for women's citizenship is a global phenomenon – indeed, one of the defining features of the era of globalization – and that domestic struggles may find support, legitimacy, or inspiration in transnational ideas, movements, and organizations. The case

of Afghanistan is perhaps an extreme example of the influence of the global over the local, and it shows the extent to which the mobilization and mobility of feminist networks, advocacy, and resources can affect the course of domestic political battles. Still, one may conclude that for women in the Muslim world seeking the expansion of citizenship rights, critical sites and resources are the state, civil society, the transnational public sphere, and transnational feminist networks.

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