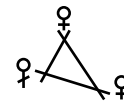


# CSBR E-NEWS

## Sexuality in Muslim Societies



WWHR- New Ways

### OVER 40 ORGANIZATIONS IN 11 COUNTRIES CAMPAIGN FOR SEXUAL & REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS: *ONE DAY ONE STRUGGLE - 09.11.09*

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Hundreds across continents joined the simultaneous international campaign by the CSBR creating a milestone in the struggle for sexual and reproductive health and rights.

On November 9, 2009 the CSBR organized a historic campaign bringing together a diverse group of nongovernmental organizations, academic institutions and activists across the Middle East, North Africa, South and Southeast Asia. As part of this simultaneous campaign entitled *One Day One Struggle*, tens of organizations from 11 countries held public demonstrations and meetings to assert that **sexual and reproductive rights are universal human rights**.



During the 1-Day Campaign that created a milestone event **by Caglar Cag** in the history of the sexual and reproductive rights movement, hundreds gathered in university campuses in Bangladesh, Indonesia, Lebanon and the Sudan, at press conferences in Cyprus, Egypt and Malaysia, in conference halls in Tunisia and Pakistan and on the streets of Turkey and Palestine, to underline the fact that **sexuality is not a private issue but a site of political struggle**.

On this one day we showed that even if we are in different continents, working on different aspects of the issues related to sexuality, we are united in our quest to realize sexual and bodily health and rights in Muslim societies. Creating the time and space for SRHR advocates to hold simultaneous yet diverse events, each focusing on the pertinent issue of their respective national and local contexts, the Campaign aimed to contribute and bring international visibility to this struggle.

Inside this issue you can find details on the struggles and issues raised by the advocates in all 11 countries via 17 simultaneous events realized as part of this Campaign that was coordinated by Women for Women's Human Rights (WWHR) – New Ways.

by Caglar Cag

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### 2ND CSBR SEXUALITY INSTITUTE, SEPTEMBER 2009, ISTANBUL

Building on the success and fruitful experience of the first ever international training on sexuality in Muslim societies that was held in 2008 in Malaysia, the **2nd CSBR Sexuality Institute** took place through September 11 - 17 in Istanbul, Turkey. Organized by the CSBR and WWHR – New Ways, the training brought together 20 leading sexual rights activists, researchers and practitioners from Bangladesh, Canada, Egypt, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Lebanon, Morocco, Pakistan, Palestine, the Philippines, Tunisia, Turkey, and the United Kingdom.

Wide spectrum of the group's areas of work and expertise including sexual health, sexual violence, sexual health and rights advocacy, LGBT, youth, and different backgrounds such as human rights, law, medicine, social sciences, and art resulted in a unique composition, allowing for extensive knowledge and experience exchange within the group itself.



Participants and trainers of the Institute

Composed of lectures, discussions, group work and exercises, roundtables, and a panel, the training sought to provide a comprehensive overview, while engaging participants' own experiences. The program included an overview of theory and research of human sexuality, sexual diversities and non-conforming sexualities, sexual health, HIV/AIDS, gender and politics, youth sexuality, sexuality education, SRHR and the international law, current debates on SRHR, Sharia and sexuality, and advocacy for SRHR at the local, national and international levels.

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## ONE DAY ONE STRUGGLE CAMPAIGN IN 11 COUNTRIES

Continued from page 1

The *One Day One Struggle* campaign was designed to raise public awareness on sexuality and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in the local contexts, and contribute to advocacy efforts on the national levels to counter the rising conservatism, fueled by militarism, increasing inequalities, the politicization of religion and Islamophobia that have strengthened patriarchal and extremist religious ideologies, which use sexuality as a tool of oppression.

A major goal of the Campaign was also to make the struggles of SRHR advocates in Muslim societies visible at the international level. Contrary to the coverage in Western media, the Campaign once again showed that there is not one single definition or description of “Muslim society.” The variety of issues raised by the 17 different events carried out in 11 countries portrayed the huge diversity of practices in different Muslim societies. For instance, advocates in Palestine campaigned against a widespread violation of women’s sexual and bodily rights in the Middle East, namely the so-called “honor killings” which is a practice almost unheard of in Southeast Asia. While homosexuality is still a criminal offence in many countries of the Middle East, the LGBTT communities in Bangladesh held panels, discussions and culture shows to bring more visibility to their struggles. Providing a glimpse at the courageous work undertaken by SRHR advocates in these societies, the Campaign shed light on the variety of our struggles that depend on the practices within our specific contexts.

As the first such international campaign from our regions, we hope it has also helped show the strength of our solidarity across continents and will set a precedent to increase awareness and understanding of sexual and bodily rights in Muslim societies regionally and internationally.

### BANGLADESH

#### DEBATING SEXUAL RIGHTS VS. SOCIAL NORMS

##### **Bandhu Social Welfare**

**Organization** organized an open discussion with the participation of self-identified MSM, who divided into two groups to debate the pros and cons of regulating sexual and bodily activities in line with Islamic instructions and “norms” of Muslim societies. The discussion led to increased knowledge on both sexual and bodily rights as human rights, and the conception of sexuality in Islam. Also discussed were the social constructions as barriers to promote sexual health and rights and the need for progressive modifications in Islamic laws. Organizers note that gaining clarity on these concepts and hearing different reasonings led participants to become more comfortable with their personal values and lessened “blameworthy” feelings. [www.bandhu-bd.org](http://www.bandhu-bd.org)



#### A FIRST FOR THE QUEER MEMBERS OF BENGALI SOCIETY

##### **Boys of Bangladesh (BoB)**

organized its first public event, bringing together the LGBT community, its supporters, selected media, and the general public for a day of film screening and discussion. Event entitled “Jaago” (Wake-up) aimed to increase affirmative awareness and visibility on sexuality, initiate a dialogue around marginalized genders and sexualities, strengthen the bond within LGBT community and increase the alliance between queer and straight members of society. Xecon Jasim Uddin of BoB explains that it was a landmark event as it welcomed both LGBT and non-LGBT people and hosted open displays of posters on sexual and bodily rights. He adds, “It is also special because this is the first time BoB took part in an international campaign joining hands with so many other countries and organizations. Now our LGBT community feels like a part of the worldwide solidarity and movement.” To contact BoB: [xecon27@yahoo.com](mailto:xecon27@yahoo.com)



#### A PIONEERING RESEARCH ON SEXUALITY AND RIGHTS IN DHAKA

At the national launch of a pioneering research project on sexuality and rights in urban Bangladesh, Dr.

Dina Siddiqi of **Center for Gender, Sexuality and HIV/AIDS at the James P. Grant School of Public Health of BRAC**



**University** shared the findings of this exploratory study that maps the manifold and changing understandings of sexuality, identity and rights among university students, factory workers, sexual and gender minorities in Dhaka city. Representatives from NGOs, international educational institutions, multilateral organizations, donors, journalists, leaders from activists groups representing people of marginalized sexual orientations, independent researchers, anthropologists and public health professionals were present at the event. Dr. Siddiqi notes that “*The launch and the research findings have facilitated visibility and mobilization in society as related to sexual rights, which will hopefully lead to increased public discourse on sexuality.*” <http://sph.bracu.ac.bd>

#### SEXUALITY AND PLEASURE IN THE QURAN

**Naripokkho** organized an internal panel entitled “Sexuality and Our Rights” with short presentations followed by an open discussion on the place of sexuality and pleasure in the Quran. A major theme of the heated discussion was if and how feminists should tackle the issue of multiple interpretations/misinterpretations of religious texts. While some members said this was the first time they heard about Quran’s recognition and sanctioning of a wife’s right to sexual pleasure, and the husband’s duty to ensure sexual satisfaction, others noted that this recognition was only within the bounds of heterosexual marriage. Questioning whether and on what terms feminists should engage with religion, the need for political as opposed to religious engagement was noted along with the complexity of the situation on the ground that is different from the formal struggle for rights. To contact Naripokkho: [a\\_labonno@yahoo.com](mailto:a_labonno@yahoo.com)

**BANGLADESH**

**BEING HIJRA (TRANSGENDER) IN BANGLADESH**



Rongberong and Sachetana Shilpa Shangha organized a panel and cultural show addressing the lives and problems of the hijra community in Bangladesh. Emphasizing that this was an incredibly important event, Rongberong president Joya Sikder says, "It is not often that

the hijra community has the social space to speak out openly, without limits, without worrying about propriety and social repercussions. Not all things can be said in all places; take the International Human Rights Day, there's only so much we can say about ourselves on that day. But here with the CSBR we have our space." Transgender community and sex workers attended the panel with speakers from BBC World, Hunger Project-Bangladesh and Sex Workers' Network of Bangladesh. Main discussion topics were; police brutality, characterization of hijras as sexually disabled and sex workers as socially disabled, need for identity to ensure rights, need for acceptance in family to mobilize social change. Sachetana Shilpa Shangha Association president Ivan Ahmed Katha notes, "People say we are a vulnerable group, but today we feel proud because we organized our own event in this Campaign and raised the voice of our platform."

To contact Rongberong: [joyasikder@yahoo.com](mailto:joyasikder@yahoo.com)

**CYPRUS**

**JOINT EFFORT AGAINST SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HOMOPHOBIA**

**Feminist Workshop (FEMA) and Initiative against Homophobia (HOKI)**

organized a discussion and film screening targeting the press, NGOs, academia and general public. Discussion and the press statement called for the reform of the Criminal Code in Northern Cyprus that dates back to British Colonial Laws. Demands include de-criminalization of homosexuality, and higher sentences for crimes like sexual assault and rape which are currently under the Code's "Crimes against Morality" section and do not have serious sanctioning. Organizers emphasize, "This event was important also because it marked the first official joint event organized by FEMA and HOKI."



HOKI: <http://en.queer.org>

To contact FEMA: [feministatolye@gmail.com](mailto:feministatolye@gmail.com)

**EGYPT**

**STRUGGLING FOR THE RIGHT TO ABORTION IN CASE OF RAPE**

**Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR) and New Woman Foundation (NWF)**

held a press conference to raise awareness on the proposal to amend the restrictive abortion law by allowing abortion in cases of rape. Conference aimed to engage different stakeholders in a discussion over how best to advocate and lobby for this amendment to the Egyptian penal code which criminalizes abortion with no clear legal exceptions. The amendment, which was approved by the Ministry of Religious Endowments' Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs two years ago, is yet to be discussed in the Parliament. Re-opening the debate right before the start of the new parliamentary session, the conference hosted MP Mohamed Khalil Quetta who initially proposed the amendment. Following the conference that was covered by a number of media outlets, EIPR and NWF are now planning for the necessary steps to continue the advocacy. [www.eipr.org](http://www.eipr.org) \* [www.nwrcegypt.org](http://www.nwrcegypt.org)



**ONE DAY 09.11.2009**  
**ONE STRUGGLE**  
An International Campaign for Sexual and Reproductive Rights  
organized by the Coalition for Sexual and Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies (CSBR)

**Bangladesh**  
Centre for Gender, Sexuality and HIV/AIDS, James P Grant School of Public Health, CGSH Brac University  
State of Bangladesh, BSB  
Banishe Social Welfare Organization  
Rongberong  
Narijokkhor

**Cyprus**  
Feminist Workshop, FEMA

**Egypt**  
Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, EIPR  
New Woman Foundation, NWF

**Indonesia**  
GAYA NUSANTARA  
Puah Anni Haseki Foundation, PUAN  
Institut Pelangi Perempuan, IPP

**Lebanon**  
Mooon  
Hatem

**Malaysia**  
Women's Aid Organization, WAO  
All Women's Action Society, AWAM  
Sisters in Islam, SII  
Empower

**Pakistan**  
Vision  
Organization for the Protection and Propagation of the Rights of General Minorities, OPPRM

**Palestine**  
Gender Studies Project at MADA Al-Carnet  
Prog Center for Applied Social Research, MADA  
The Center for Gender, Sexuality, Education and Health, MUNTADA  
Women Against Violence, WAV

**Sudan**  
Alfiaz University for Women

**Tunisia**  
Association Tunisienne des Femmes Démocrates, ATFD

**Turkey**  
Women for Women's Human Rights, WWHR - New Ways

by M. Ahsan Masood

"Qanun Jinayat" in the local government of Aceh as a violation of Islam and Islamic law because it dropped

articles on murder and theft; and instead criminalized *khalwat* (being in close proximity), sodomy, adultery and homosexuality. Underlining that the law violates especially women's and LGBT's right to bodily autonomy and expression, speakers noted that it is driven by homophobia since there is no explicit law or physical punishment against homosexuality in Islam. [www.gavanusantara.or.id](http://www.gavanusantara.or.id)



**"LEZ SCHOOL" TO PROMOTE SEXUAL AND LGBTT RIGHTS**

Institut Pelangi Perempuan launched the "Lez School," a short online course for young lesbians to learn about gender, sexual rights, feminism and LGBT rights. <http://pelangiperempuan.com>

## LEBANON

### TALKING OF SEXUALITY IN LEBANON

**MEEM** and **HELEM** in association with the Women's Rights Club and the Health Sciences Expertise Club at the American University of Beirut (AUB) organized a one-day seminar at AUB featuring experts and activists to shed light on challenges facing sexual and bodily rights in Lebanon. Organizers note that there was great interest in the event also because sexuality and sexual rights are not on the agenda of NGOs in Lebanon. Several student groups at AUB decided to work on sexual rights, which was one of the best results of the seminar that also marked the first joint event organized in collaboration by MEEM and HELEM.

[www.meemgroup.org](http://www.meemgroup.org) \* [www.helem.net](http://www.helem.net)



## MALAYSIA

### PENAL CODE SECTION 498: OUT OF DATE, OUT WITH IT!

**All Women's Action Society (AWAM), Empower, Sisters in Islam (SIS) and Women's Aid Organization (WAO)** organized a press conference in Petaling Jaya, Selangor to draw attention to Section 498 of Malaysian Penal Code on



"Enticing or taking away or detaining a married woman with a criminal intent". Conference marked the beginning of a longer campaign to lobby for the repeal of this law that discriminates against women's right to control their own sexuality and bodies. Presuming that married women lack the ability to think for themselves, the archaic law assumes women to be the property of men. Conference that was attended by reporters of major newspapers, television and radio channels had wide coverage, making the public question the purpose of laws that seek to regulate women's sexuality. Organizers note "Event was also significant because it was predominantly planned and carried out by newer activists within the women's movement. Hope this can be a way of bringing in fresh voices and energies." [www.awam.org.my](http://www.awam.org.my) \* [www.sistersinislam.org.my](http://www.sistersinislam.org.my) \* [www.wao.org.my](http://www.wao.org.my) \* <http://empowermalaysia.org/index.php>

## PAKISTAN

### BUILDING QUEER-STRAIGHT ALLIANCES

**Organization for the Protection and Propagation of the Rights of Sexual Minorities (OPPRSM)** held the event "Bring a Straight Friend Along" aiming for dialogue between queer people of OPPRSM and their straight allies about how friendship survives the coming out process. The



play written by an OPPRSM member, weaving together stories of queer people, was followed by an improvisation portraying a straight man discovering that his friend is gay and reacting argumentatively. As the audience began to defend points made by both characters, the discussion focused on the boundaries between support and approval. The lively debate on "acceptable" expression of gender identity in Pakistan's ultra-conservative society didn't end in resolution but on the consensus that the more straight people involved in the struggle for queer rights, the better society will be for queer and straight people alike. OPPRSM is very proud of the event that was a great success and hopes to win more straight allies with the same process. <http://opprsm.org>

## PALESTINE

### RAISING AWARENESS ON HONOR KILLINGS (FEMICIDE)

#### **Women Against Violence (WAV)**

organized a public outreach and awareness raising campaign on Femicide (honor killings) that took 112 women's lives in the past 23 years in Palestine. During the first 9 days of November, thousands of brochures, publications were distributed across country at the booths held in numerous NGOs, universities, colleges, hospitals and at courtrooms in Haifa and Nazareth. Names of all women killed in the name of "honor" were printed on campaign posters and banners, which were widely circulated. Final event was the screening of *Maria's Cave*, a film that narrates real stories of women killed in the name of "honor," or because they followed their dreams. Organizers explain that different sectors of the public showed interest in the campaign, which helped publicly advocate for women's bodily and sexual rights and resulted in more women joining WAV's volunteers' trainings. [www.wavo.org](http://www.wavo.org)



## SUDAN

### VOICING THE NEED FOR REPRODUCTIVE & BODILY RIGHTS

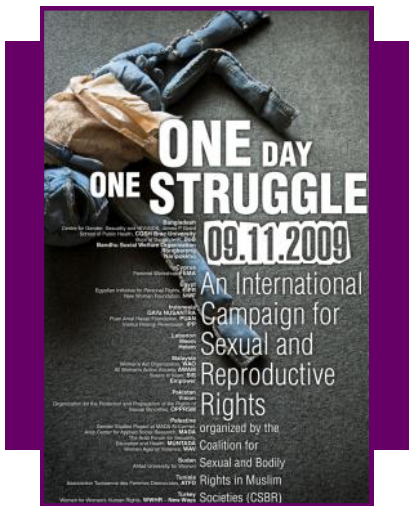
**Ahfad University for Women** in collaboration with Babiker Badri Scientific Association for Women Studies, CAFA and YPEER held a poster exhibit and policy forum aimed to address injustices and problems related to the infringing of Sudanese women's reproductive and bodily health and rights. Representatives from the Sudanese and Nigerian Ministry of Health (MoH), NGOs, UN agencies, universities and media participated in the event that was held shortly after the MoH expressed interest in reviewing the national reproductive health policy. Controversial issues i.e. recommendation to modify the policy to be more gender and rights sensitive were raised during the forum that contributed to national campaigns to end FGM and VAW and allowed different groups to share experiences, marking the event as a start of further networking for advocacy purposes. [www.ahfad.org](http://www.ahfad.org)

**TUNUSIA**

**WHICH SEXUALITY EDUCATION TODAY?**

**Tunisian Association of Democratic Women (ATFD)**

organized two events on sexuality education (SE) in Tunisia. The internal workshop focused on Tunisian feminists' perception on SE (binary view vs. inclusion of sexual orientations and identities), debate on sex work, and approach to sexuality including issues of self-censorship and medicalization limiting sexuality to reproductive health. The roundtable discussion, which was realized despite the internal security agents who did not allow entry to some participants, addressed the content of SE programs of National Organization of Family Planning and statistical studies that show the prevalent conservatism (in particular on virginity), homophobia, omnipresent role of religion, and lack of info on sexuality and pleasure among the youth. To contact ATFD: [tissoun@gmail.com](mailto:tissoun@gmail.com)



by M. Ahsan Masood

**TURKEY**

**FEMINISTS AND LGBTT ACTIVISTS STAND TOGETHER AGAINST SEXIST COURTS**

**Feminist Collective and LGBTT Human Rights Platform**

supported by the Women's Platform for the Reform of the Penal Code, Women's Platform against Sexual Violence and the Istanbul LGBTT Civil Society Initiative organized a silent street performance, a loud march and panel to protest unjust application of Penal Code article 29 on "unjust provocation" that is rampantly used to legitimize the violation of women's and LGBTT's bodily and sexual rights by providing sentence reductions to the killers of women, homosexuals, transvestites and transsexuals. The performance, press statement, spontaneous march and the panel, displayed and protested these court decisions, which ignore the fact that killing of women is a political act and feed on the patriarchic view of the body (be it female, homosexual, transvestite or transsexual) as a site for men to conquer. [www.wwhr.org](http://www.wwhr.org)



**INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT FOR THE ONE DAY ONE STRUGGLE CAMPAIGN**

**The Campaign received invaluable support and encouragement** from different parts of the globe. Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID), International Women's Health Coalition (IWHC), International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC), Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUML), Women's United Nations Report Network (WUNRN), International Women's Rights Action Watch (IWRAP - Asia Pacific) and International Sexual and Reproductive Rights Coalition (ISRRC) strengthened our efforts by disseminating news of the Campaign and posting the updates on their sites. NGO representatives and journalists from 5 continents sent their solidarity messages throughout this challenging process.

*"Thank you for this initiative, with this kind of advocacy we shall achieve a lot in the fight for women's rights. Please continue this campaign, we are all behind you."* National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Led by a woman) - UGANDA

*"Please add our network as a supporter of this needed campaign. This should not stop until you get some concrete outcomes on behalf of women's health and rights."* LACWHN - CHILE

*"Please let us know how we can be supportive of your amazing work. We feel this is our struggle too and will do anything within our power to support the cause."* IGLHRC - USA

*"We want to express our support and admiration for your excellent and timely campaign and ask how we can support it."* WLUML - UK

*"Congratulations! This is wonderful and so important. We will share this with our networks here."* CHANGE - USA

*"Congratulations for the initiative. With great pleasure we will pass on the news to contribute to raise awareness."* Union de L'Action Feminine - MOROCCO

*"This campaign is historic and brilliant - I will disseminate your call to many colleagues and activists and send all of CSBR full solidarity and congratulations in advance for what will surely be a momentous and powerful collective effort. Again, huge thanks for your tireless work."* Rosalind Petchesky - USA

*"You are all truly amazing and inspiring. I can not wait to see documentation from the day!"* Sinan Goknur - TURKEY

To receive a copy of the CD documenting the entire Campaign, please email us at [newways@wwhr.org](mailto:newways@wwhr.org)

To see the national and international coverage of the events and the overall Campaign: [www.wwhr.org/news.php?detay=47](http://www.wwhr.org/news.php?detay=47)

CSBR WELCOMES ITS  
NEWEST MEMBER:  
MUNTADA

The energy and works of the Coalition's newest member from Palestine has been most valuable in strengthening the efforts and solidarity of our network. Here is a brief introduction from Muntada:



**Muntada - The Arab Forum for Sexuality Education and Health** is a volunteer-based organization initiated in 2002 as a specialized national committee comprising female and male

volunteers who had successfully completed an accredited, intensive academic and practical training course in sexuality education and health.

Formally registered as a non profit volunteer organization in 2006, at the Muntada we seek to promote sexual rights and services within the Palestinian society through interactive and culturally-sensitive education projects, community-based advocacy, and training of professionals. We aspire to substantially raise community awareness on the challenges to sexual health and create counseling and educational programs that will effectively contribute to individual and community development.

Aside from our four extremely dedicated professional staff, we are currently made up of sixty-eight committed members from diverse professional backgrounds; most of these volunteers are social workers, nurses, counselors and educators. We work in teams to develop and implement plans aimed at social empowerment, promotion of sexual and reproductive health, and enhancement of sexual consciousness in the community through training programs customized for various target groups, particularly youth and women. Our activities also include community outreach and advocacy programs and training of professionals and community activists in sexuality education and rights.

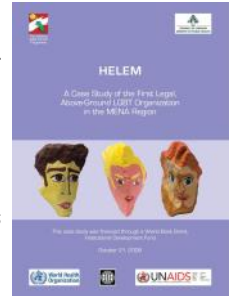
We have always believed that genuine social transformation can never be imposed, but has to come from the "inside." It should happen gradually, as it requires patience and passion. In addition, it involves collective responsibility, partnerships between various communities, and networking with regional and global coalitions.

CSBR is an open space for interaction, discovery, networking, and above all, learning about oneself and about others. It is international but at the same time it is culture-sensitive, representing social and religious views similar to our social reality. CSBR proved that the concepts of sexual and bodily rights are not a "western, white, middle and upper class" discourse, but rather basic human rights which can be addressed within Arab and Muslim societies. As the Muntada we are honored to be a member in this Coalition. [www.jensaneya.org](http://www.jensaneya.org)

A CASE STUDY OF THE FIRST LEGAL,  
ABOVE-GROUND LGBT ORGANIZATION IN  
MENA REGION: HELEM

The Lebanese Ministry of Public Health - National Aids Control Program, published a case study on the CSBR member HELEM as the "First Legal, Above-Ground LGBT Organization in the MENA Region." With a focus on HIV/AIDS, the study provides a detailed explanation of Helem's projects and activities.

Commenting on the study for the CSBR e-news, **Ghassan Makarem** from Helem states that "The study is a significance indicator about increased acceptance of sexual non-conformity by the Lebanese state and a recognition of Helem's work. We hope it can have an impact on HIV/AIDS prevention work in the MENA region, but without imposing a particular model on other countries with different circumstances." To download the study: [www.helem.net/node/212](http://www.helem.net/node/212)



CONFERENCE ON ARAB FEMINISMS

Last October, the Lebanese Association of Women Researchers (Bahitat) held an international conference entitled "Arab Feminisms: A Critical Perspective" in collaboration with the Women and Memory Forum, Cairo, the Department of Women's Studies at Bir Zeit University, the Anis Makdisi Program in Literature at the American University of Beirut (AUB) and the Center for the Advanced Study of the Arab World. Between October 4 - 7, 2009, professors, writers and researchers gathered at the AUB to discuss topics varying from "Arab Feminisms in the context of world politics" to the "discourse of modernity vs. tradition." Representatives from CSBR member organizations Mada Al-Carmel (Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian), Ahfad University for Women (Amira Badri), and Sisters in Islam (Zainah Anwar) were among the conference speakers.

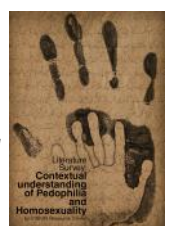
The conference marked a groundbreaking event for Arab feminism because politics related to sexual and bodily rights were openly debated in a public academic gathering for the first time. As is always the case, they were the most controversial at the meeting. **Nadine Moawad** (Feminist Collective) reports that, throughout the conference, sexuality was mentioned in panels, discussions, and also through questions over queer issues in relation to feminist art, politics, colonialism, and strategy. Highlighting the Arab feminists' major split over homosexuality in particular, Moawad adds that while some asserted that lesbian issues are not part of the Arab culture or the feminist discourse, others criticized such statements as backwards and emphasized that Arab lesbians exist among us and that sexuality must be an indispensable part of feminism. "The accusation we always get when we bring up sexuality in relation to feminism is that our ideas are alien, strange, untimely, mistaken, minority thoughts in our region," Moawad notes. "It is always most clear for us at conferences like these just how important it is to have a coalition like the CSBR existing so that we can say: There are indeed many of us working on progressive sexual rights politics in our societies."

For more info visit the blogs at: [www.feministcollective.com/arabfeminisms](http://www.feministcollective.com/arabfeminisms)

A LITERATURE SURVEY ON CONTEXTUAL  
UNDERSTANDING OF PEDOPHILIA AND  
HOMOSEXUALITY IN INDIA & PAKISTAN

In order to understand the issue of male child sexual abuse and commercial exploitation of children, CSBR member VISION issued a research report on pedophilia and homosexuality in India and Pakistan.

The report entitled *Contextual Understanding of Pedophilia and Homosexuality* aims to shed light on the major confusion that exists in Pakistani society with regards to the differences that exist between the concepts of pedophilia and homosexuality. For more info contact **Tahir Khilji** at [tkhilji2003@yahoo.com](mailto:tkhilji2003@yahoo.com) [www.visionpakistan.org](http://www.visionpakistan.org)



## 2ND CSBR SEXUALITY INSTITUTE

Continued from page 1



The program of the 2<sup>nd</sup> CSBR Sexuality Institute provided the opportunity to network with other organizations, and led to future plans of cooperation. Both the sessions and the diversity of participants which helped show the variety and the similarity of the issues leading to the formulation of new ideas, common working grounds and strengthened courage resulting from the empowering South-South knowledge transfer that took place in a safe space were cited by the participants to be the most important reasons making the Institute a success and a unique experience. The content and approach of the Institute were described to be “eye opening” by many who emphasized that it enabled the contextualization of both prior and newly acquired knowledge in line with their work and equipped them with more tools to apply in their respective fields. Here are some reflections on what some described to be a *too amazing process*:

### REFLECTIONS ON THE INSTITUTE

*Gulalai Ismail, Aware Girls - Pakistan*

I LEARNED THAT SEXUALITY IS ABOUT PLEASURE, HAPPINESS, WELLBEING AND CHANGE and not only about problems and repercussions. It gave me the opportunity to explore and reconstruct my definitions and perceptions by going into the history, analyzing case studies, and relating these to my own life. For me the Institute was about how we view ourselves, how others view us, and in reality what we are. I never imagined how diverse our issues and cultures were in Muslim societies. I understood that it is not only religion but also many other factors that lead to the emergence of problems related with sexuality. The Institute encouraged me to accept our issues and work on developing our own strategies that best suit our contexts. Also after this unique experience, I started respecting diverse sexualities from the very core of my heart. At my organization we are now reviewing our values and principles to make them more inclusive for diverse sexualities and gender identities.



*Xecon Yasim Uddin, Boys of Bangladesh (BoB) - Bangladesh*

PEOPLE COME TO BOB FOR COUNSELING AND ASK “I AM A HOMOSEXUAL BUT I ALSO PRACTICE ISLAM, IS THAT HARAM?” After this Institute I can explain them why it’s not a sin. For me the Institute was not only the theory. My organization is like a new born baby, here I had the chance to make connections with organizations that went through same stages. We already made plans to work together!

*Ghassan Makarem, HELEM - Lebanon*

THE FRAMEWORK HERE GIVES YOU A PUSH, not just a momentum but a step further from the work you are doing. I don’t want to be just saying “It was wonderful”, but it is wonderful. Plus the idea of CSBR is brilliant, very simple and just brilliant. This is the first time in a long while that I go to an international meeting on sexuality where there is no Islamophobia, and this gives one the chance to actually critically think and talk about Islam. Also it was quite amazing to meet people with so many similar experiences in terms of the tools used and challenges faced in movement building. I never thought the closest case to our experience in Lebanon would be Bangladesh for example. It will contribute to my work because we took the time to actually discuss the issues we are dealing with and put things into context.

*M. Ahsan Masood, VISION - Pakistan*



I AM VERY GLAD I WAS EXPOSED TO THIS INSTITUTE AT MY IMPRESSIONABLE AGE (26), before serious damage was done to my thinking. It will also contribute to my work as an artist, broadening my horizon about sexuality.

(Left: a work by Ahsan who also created banners for One Day One Struggle)

Once a month

*Saira Zuberi, AWID - Canada*

WHAT SET IT APART FOR ME WAS TO BE IN A SPACE WHERE EVERYBODY IS COMING FROM A CONTEXT OF SIMILARITIES, have roots or work in the Global South and have a fairly advanced understanding of the diversities of Muslim contexts. This made a huge difference on the level of conversation we could have and the openness we could share. It did not have a clear cut dichotomy that there has to be either only a purely and very narrowly defined secular response or only a response coming from within a religious tradition. The Institute will contribute to my work at AWID’s Resisting and Challenging Religious Fundamentalisms initiative as it has informed my knowledge of the strategies used in Muslim contexts. This is something to be disseminated across our audiences who are challenging fundamentalisms in different religions, so that they can inspire each other like we did here.

*Abdessamad Benalla, ALCS - Morocco*

ON THE PERSONAL LEVEL I LEARNED MORE ABOUT LOVE, ADVOCACY AND THE REAL FIGHT; having met the activists at the Institute I now have the will and the strength to accomplish more. It was a cosmopolitan Institute with a strong and lovely team of trainers and actors with different points of view and enthusiasms. I am now fighting for my organization to become a CSBR member.

*Seri Wendoh, IPPF - UK*

THE WAY IN WHICH SEXUAL RIGHTS WERE ADDRESSED BROKE DOWN THE WALLS OF RESISTANCE. We had the courage to examine the dialogue between sexual rights and religion, which was very unique. We saw that when interpreted to reflect the dignity of and respect for human beings, religious texts do not contradict what we do. And the Institute was not only work, it combined the way we see work and pleasure. By the way can I come again next year?



## FEATURE PUBLICATIONS & UPCOMING EVENTS

### **MAIL IN A HURRY: TRUE STORIES**

by MEEM, May 2009



CSBR member organization **MEEM** published Lebanon's first and long-awaited book on the lives of queer women and transgenders in Lebanon, which is available both in Arabic and English.

"Bareed Mista3jil," which translates into English as "Mail in a Hurry" is a collection of 41 stories from the experiences of lesbians, bisexuals, queer and questioning women, and transgender persons (LBTQ) from all over Lebanon.

Covering a wide range of topics and issues from coming out and relationships with families to self-discovery and discrimination, "Bareed Mista3jil" aims to introduce the Lebanese people to the real-life stories of one of the country's most hidden and ostracized communities. What makes this work even more special is that it is the first account of lesbian women's lives in the Arab World. [www.meemgroup.org](http://www.meemgroup.org)

For more information on the stories and purchasing options: [www.bareedmista3jil.com](http://www.bareedmista3jil.com)

### **INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES & TRAININGS ON SEXUALITY**

#### **54th Session of the UN CSW: Beijing + 15**

The 54th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) will prepare a review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (2000). The CSW will meet in New York, USA between 1 - 12 March 2010. Only NGOs that are accredited to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) may attend the annual sessions of the UN CSW, for which there are no pre-registration deadlines. For information on how to apply for ECOSOC accreditation, visit the DESA NGO Section at [www.un.org/esa/coordination/ngo](http://www.un.org/esa/coordination/ngo). NGOs without ECOSOC accreditation can organize and attend simultaneous events held in New York outside UN premises. To do so, they should contact NGO Committee on the Status of Women through [www.ngocsw.org](http://www.ngocsw.org).

For more information on *Beijing + 15* events: [www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing15/index.html](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing15/index.html)

#### **Disability, Sexuality and Rights Online Training**

CREA will give an online training on disability, sexuality and rights for practitioners and activists in human rights, public health and development organizations. The training will take place between February 1 - April 1, 2010 for 9 weeks, 5 hours per week. The goal of the training is to develop awareness on issues of disability and sexuality, and provide a political perspective on disabled people's sexual rights.

For more information: <http://web.creaworld.org/home.asp>

### **MILITARIZATION AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN CONFLICT ZONES IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

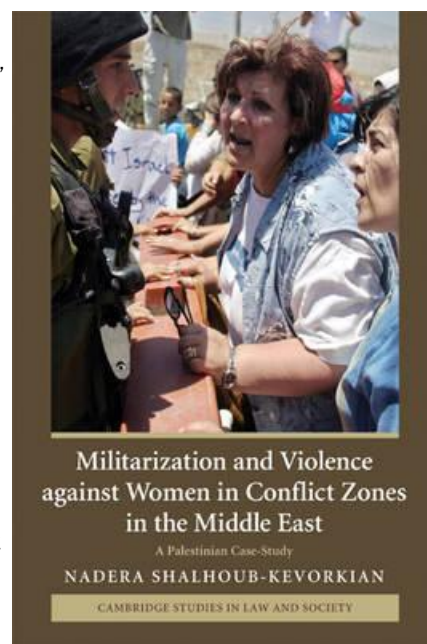
by Nadera Shaloub-Kevorkian; Cambridge University Press, May 2009

Founding member of the CSBR, **Dr. Nadera Shaloub-Kevorkian** published her new book entitled "*Militarization and Violence against Women in Conflict Zones in the Middle East.*" Commenting on the book for the **CSBR e-news**, Shaloub-Kevorkian says, "*The silencing of violence against women in militarized societies and conflict areas became an integral part of the national security doctrine, while excluding women suffering from the social/national and political concerns.*"

The book discusses the effect of militarization, while bringing voices of Palestinian women survivors of abuse to the forefront. In doing so, it looks at how bodily and sexuality politics, and geo-politics affect women's ways of surviving the effects of militarization. The book also raises issues regarding the effects of historical injustices, global politics of denial on national politics and the way this affects women's victimization and agency.

Shaloub-Kevorkian concludes her book by explaining that understanding militarization requires tracing the spiral transgressions that construct and re-produce violence against women in conflict zones.

The book is available for order at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) and [www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)



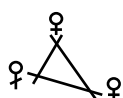
Prepared by  
WWHR - New Ways

Edit and Layout by  
Irazca Geray  
Emre Sahin

Original Design by  
Sinem Sinan Goknur  
Liz Ercevik Amado

E-mail: [newways@wwhr.org](mailto:newways@wwhr.org)

Visit our website at  
[www.wwhr.org](http://www.wwhr.org)



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