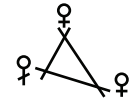


CSBR E-NEWS

Sexuality in Muslim Societies



WWHR New Ways

A NEW BILL SPARKS INTENSE DEBATE:

A DRAFT ANTI-PORNOGRAPHY BILL DIVIDES INDONESIA

Indonesia, home to the world's largest Muslim population, is caught up in a growing national debate around pornography which is about to enter a new phase.

The parliament has issued the new draft of the Anti Pornography Bill which will be discussed in 2008. The parliament claims that several changes have been made to the previous draft that drew intense criticism from the women's groups, human rights activists, ethnic minority groups, LGBT groups, as well as artists. Despite the parliament's claims, human rights activists are arguing that the changes are rather cosmetic than substantive.

Although the idea for the bill was launched in 1999, it only seized public attention in early 2006. By then, more than 40 local regulations on morality and religiosity had already been issued by the local authorities at provincial and district levels.

Pornography is currently a crime under Indonesian Criminal Code and the Media Law. Both laws aim to protect the citizens from sexual exploitation, and prohibit the making and distribution of pornography.



For the supporters of the new bill, however, these legal provisions remain inadequate in preventing a nation-wide moral deterioration encouraged by the globalization of capitalism and Western values...

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COUNTDOWN FOR CSBR'S

CSBR's international "One Day One Struggle" campaign on sexual and bodily rights is scheduled to take place in April 2008. CSBR members will hold simultaneous actions and activities on pertinent sexual rights issues in their respective countries and all the activities will be compiled for international dissemination.

CSBR members who came together for the recent comparative research meeting also discussed plans and potential activities for the campaign. ATFD is planning to frame the campaign in Tunisia around their advocacy efforts for sexuality education, while WWHR-New Ways in Turkey intends to organize an activity on the issue of morality. WAV and MADA in Palestine are interested in addressing the issue of the parallel legal system and sexual rights in the context of the campaign.

CSBR members Nadera S. Kevorkian (Palestine), Ahlem Belhadji (Tunisia), and Dina M. Siddiqi (Bangladesh) will be coordinating the campaign and activities and actions will be finalized by January 2008. We are truly excited and are looking forward to our April campaign!

A STEP TOWARDS SEXUALITY EDUCATION IN LEBANON



"Dr. El-Kak presenting at the RSH education workshop"

The UNFPA in Lebanon in collaboration with the Government of Lebanon through the Educational Center for Research and Development (ECRD) in the Ministry of Health is working on a project to integrate reproductive and sexual health (RSH) as "Population Education" into school curricula. This project comes as exciting and essential after the failure of 1997-1998 attempt of introducing sexuality into school curricula in Lebanon. The political and socio-cultural (religious) climate at the time, as well as some technical obstructions played a major role in the previous failure.

As a member of the technical team, I am responsible for overseeing the proper integration of the conceptual and thematic issues of RSH into curricula.

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CSBR LAUNCHES COMPARATIVE RESEARCH ON SEXUALITY IN MUSLIM SOCIETIES

November 15-18, 2007, Istanbul

The CSBR International Comparative Research Meeting, organized by WWHR-New Ways, took place in Istanbul between 15-18 November, 2007 with 17 participants from Bangladesh, Canada, Indonesia, Lebanon, Malaysia, Pakistan, Palestine, Tunisia, Turkey, and U.S.A. Through the intense three day meeting, participants presented and reviewed the research proposals for each case study, discussed extensively the research framework, methodologies and approaches. The politicization of sexuality was identified as an underlying theme in all the research case studies. In a nutshell, the research will investigate sexuality in the current political landscapes; the actors and movements shaping that landscape; as well as the evolving discourses on sexuality. Participants agreed that each case study will analyze sexual and bodily rights in a manner that illuminates CSBR's common understanding of these concepts, while concurrently acknowledging the dynamic and evolving nature of various constructions of sexualities and rights.



Participants expressed that the research papers will themselves constitute a form of resistance to previous and existing discourses by challenging fixed constructions on issues pertaining to Islam, sexuality and gender. The research is envisioned as a tool for positive social change targeting the broadest range of social actors in each national context, as well as an international audience.

TURKISH LGBT GROUPS STRUGGLE FOR THEIR RIGHT TO ORGANIZATION



“Protesters in front of the court”
Istanbul, Turkey

Opening lawsuits to shut down LGBT organizations has almost become a bureaucratic ritual of governorships in Turkey; a ritual that one has to go through while establishing an LGBT organization with a legal entity.

In 2005, Ankara and Bursa governorships were the first ones to take LGBT associations to court demanding their closure, claiming that these organizations are threatening public morality. Despite the fact that each one of these cases were soon rejected by the courts and the two LGBT organizations gained official recognition by the state, governorships' insistence on their discriminatory attitude has reached a new level in Istanbul.

Istanbul governorship had first taken Lambda Istanbul LGBT Association to court in 2006 and demanded its closure. However, the case was rejected in Lambda's favor as the court maintained the fact that every Turkish citizen has a constitutional right to found an organization.

The governorship of Istanbul then appealed to a higher court in 2007 which so far has held two hearings. Lambda members and allies as well as the press were present at both hearings. Lambda members who expect the next hearing to be the final one and await a decision in favor of Lambda, also state that in case of a decision against the organization, they are ready to take the case to the European Court of Human Rights. Third hearing of the case will be held on January 31st, 2008.

Lambda court case becomes even more significant with regards to the ongoing debates around the draft for a new Turkish constitution. The first draft put forth by the government was received with much criticism and was denounced as a “backlash” against gender equality, women's rights and human rights. The Women's Platform for a New Constitution immediately launched a campaign to prevent backlash and to gain new ground. Among other issues, the Platform demands the constitution's anti-discrimination article to include “sexual orientation and gender identities.”

“...despite the fact that previous closure cases against LGBT associations were all rejected, governorships insist on their discriminatory attitude”

STRATEGIES FOR SEXUAL RIGHTS ADVOCACY CANNOT BE ‘ONE SIZE FITS ALL’

By Toni Kasim, Malaysia

During the APCRSH Conference in Hyderabad I represented CSBR, presenting a paper in ARROW's symposium “Religious Fundamentalisms and SRHR: A Symposium on the Impact of Catholic, Hindu and Islamic Fundamentalisms on Women's SRHR”. In the limited time given to each speaker, I felt it was important to emphasize the difference between what Ziba Mir-Hosseini refers to as ‘textual Islam’ and ‘political Islam’, and that the impact on women is largely determined by the history and development of the socio-political contexts of the different countries.

All the speakers were asked to give their take on what they mean by “fundamentalism” which I am very glad we did. The word has taken on several meanings and over the years has become loaded in different ways; in particular, how it has become synonymous with “Islam” and Muslims. I thought that it was important to locate the various forces and dynamics – heteronormative patriarchal practices, religious orthodoxy, the 70s-90s ‘Islamic revivalism’, the post 9/11 politics that have fueled both Islamisation and Islamophobia, and the “fundamentals vs fundamentalism” discourse – because these have been conflated and created a concept that has now become oversimplified as ‘Islamic fundamentalism’.

It was also worth noting that the growth of Islamophobia has given regressive nation states the opportunity to seize on the ‘Islam under siege’ mentality at the personal, national and the transnational brotherhood levels. The terms ‘liberal’, ‘progressive’, ‘Muslim feminist’ have been coined and positioned in opposition to terms such as ‘militant’, ‘radical’, ‘conservative’, ‘Islamist’, which have on the one hand provided the opportunity for enlarging the discourse, but at the same time created dichotomies that are simplistic and often damaging to subtle and nuanced discussions. Rather than present a list of areas and impacts, I decided to present a few examples of the issues and how the laws and approaches to the aspects of women's SRHR (e.g. inheritance, abortion, family law) can vary greatly from one Muslim community to another depending on its context. My objective was to dispel the idea of ‘Islam says...’. These laws are not homogenous and from this it is clear also that strategies cannot be ‘one size fits all’.

And the feedback was incredibly encouraging. Lots of people came up to me over the following days with many positive things to say. I found out later that the Director of ARROW was told that it was the best panel in the conference. Apparently they liked the balanced view I gave, as well as the do-able strategies and the experiences that we collectively have as groups working on these issues. Many said that it gave them hope, perhaps one of the most meaningful feedbacks one can receive.

On a more personal note, my sister was also at the conference which is significant for me, because not only is this the first time we are in the one conference, but my sister wears a long *hijab* (without a face veil) and a *jubah* (long dress). For years we've always known that we have a lot in common in spite of our different belief systems, and over the four days, I think we grew to love and respect each other more than ever before. I see life and my own struggles differently when I look at her, more multi-dimensional somehow. I am more grounded in what I am fighting for when I think of her and my niece who also wears a hijab. And the most wonderful thing is that I found out that she felt the same about me! She sent me a text message the other day and called me a ‘gift to her life’, and how much she has learnt from me and respects me for it. That text message still sits in the ‘saved messages’.

“...patriarchal practices, religious orthodoxy, the 70s-90s ‘Islamic revivalism’, the post 9/11 politics that have fueled both Islamisation and Islamophobia have been oversimplified as Islamic fundamentalism”

YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN PRACTICE

By Sehnaz Kiyamaz, Turkey

This October, 11 young women advocates from the Asia-Pacific region came together for the 2nd International Women's Health Coalition's Advocacy in Practice (AiP) training in Hyderabad.

The young women advocates came from youth and women's rights organizations working on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in Indonesia, Cambodia, Pakistan, Nepal, India, Vietnam and Turkey. CSBR member organizations AAHUNG (Pakistan) and WWHR- New Ways (Turkey) representatives were also among the participants. Following the



“Young women activists at AiP”, Hyderabad, India

training, AiP participants had the opportunity to put their knowledge to practice at 4th Asia Pacific Conference on Reproductive and Sexual Health and Rights (APCRSHR).

During the conference, the AiP participants were dissatisfied by the weak, almost symbolic participation of the young people; and found it contradictory to the special topic of the conference “engaging young people in SRHR work”. The conservative nature of some of the sessions was also among the common concerns. In light of these, the group met with the members of the APCRSR’s international steering committee and presented a proposal to facilitate stronger participation of young people at every level of the conference. Rodelyn Marte of NAPY consulted with some AiP participants and included their feedback in her presentation for the plenary session. In addition, the group participated in the preparations for the plenary session of the Open Letter that was released after the conference.

In the end, the AiP training and the conference proved to be a great learning ground. The young advocates were successful in conveying the need for a strong and significant participation of young people at every level of SRHR work. They pointed out that a strong participation is necessary for being able to address youth issues as well as for bringing new and fresh perspectives to our work for the greater enjoyment of sexual and reproductive health and rights by everyone.

A DRAFT ANTI-PRONOGRAPHY BILL DIVIDES INDONESIA

By Andy Yentriyani & Neng Dara, Indonesia

Continuing from the cover page...



“Feminist women protesting the Bill”
Jakarta, Indonesia

The new bill, therefore, strives not only to prohibit pornography, but also to criminalize *pornoaksi* - persons (women) who demonstrate sensual body parts and movements. This is particularly threatening given that over a third of new local regulations (bylaws) on morality target

the dress code of Muslim women, obliging them to wear the veil. Another target is prohibition of sex work. Local regulation passed in 2005 by the authority of Tangerang, for instance, criminalizes ‘anyone who gives the impression of being a prostitute’. Local authorities carried out raids in the streets after dark, following this bylaw and arrested innocent women. Local vigilant groups have been also mushrooming and many have carried out violent campaigns attacking local sex workers. All of these local regulations and actions share a similar jargon in defining their objective; namely to guard women’s morality as integral part of the establishment of national identity.

Although the majority of Indonesians are Muslims, the call to impose a uniformity of identity based on Islam provoked widespread protests from civil society, particularly from women’s groups. Led by women’s activists, an alliance for diversity called “Aliansi Bhineka Tunggal Ika” organized several rallies to protest the bill. The alliance brings together human rights activists, artists and performers, indigenous communities, and individuals. One of its biggest rallies was attended by more a thousand women in Jakarta on 2006 International Women’s Day. It is noteworthy that even *Fathayat NU*, the women’s wing of one of the biggest mass based Islam organization, courageously declared a firm objection to the bill. This stand was in opposition to the support given by its core organization.

It was due to these vehement public objections that the parliament decided to postpone the discussion of the bill in 2006 and called for a revision. The significant cut on the length

of the bill, the exclusion of the most controversial provision on *pornoaksi*, and the inclusion of prohibition of child pornography are amongst the improvement claims.

However, substantial problems remain. First and foremost, the bill divides and defines pornography as (a) light pornography, namely all forms of pornography implicitly exhibiting sexual activity including materials revealing nudity and suggestion of sexual activities, (b) serious pornography, namely any form of pornography depicting explicitly sexual activity such as genital, penetration and perverse sexual behaviors such as intercourse with the same sex, minors, corpse, and/or animal, and (c) child pornography, namely all forms of pornography engaging the participation of a child, portrayal of a child or a pregnant women as either the subject or the object, in all forms of media.

Secondly, it maintains the requirement to establish a state body at national, provincial and district levels to police the (im)moral behavior of all citizens. Thirdly, it encourages the active participation of vigilant groups, interpreted not only as the community’s right to public ordinance but also citizens’ obligation to uphold ‘the nation’s values’. Lastly, it introduces social punishment of ostracizing into Indonesian legal system.



“Native groups at the protest”
Jakarta, Indonesia

Women’s organizations are firmly opposing the bill. They are at the forefront of the opposition against the religious fundamentalist groups perpetually attempting to control women’s bodies and minds. Hence, while conducting a more critical reading of the draft, we also need to have a mapping of political powers behind the draft and the coalition against the bill, as well as to monitor all discussions on this issue. This is urgent for us to develop an advanced strategy to win this battle on our sexual and bodily autonomy.

Photos: Kompas, Jakarta Post, Media Indonesia, Tempo, Pos Kota (09/03/ 2006)

A JIHAD FOR LOVE: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO ME?

By Tahir Khilji, Pakistan

Directed by Parvez Sharma and produced by Parvez Sharma and Sandi DuBowski, "A Jihad for Love" is a documentary film on Islam and homosexuality.

Parvez is a good friend and a well meaning person. I have seen the evolution of his project when it was still named, "In the name of Allah". I still remember the evening, several years back, when Parvez and I met in a café in Washington DC to film my interview on my work with the transgender community in Pakistan. While orienting me to his project, he showed me a little synopsis and shared an image of a seemingly young white man wearing a white cap with his back towards the camera and the word Allah written in blood on his left shoulder.

As a born Muslim man, the visual of Allah written in blood and that too on the bare back of a man was offensive for my religious sensibilities. I refused and walked away from the scene.

Some years later Parvez and I again got connected in his home town Delhi, India. Parvez and his project had matured. He had a better sense of what he wanted to achieve from his project and I was able to put a context around him and his film. This time, I agreed to be interviewed and share my work in Pakistan in front of the camera. Following year, Parvez introduced me to Sandi, the producer of the film. Now another discomfort developed. Parvez's last name is Hindu and Sandi is Jewish by faith. What had I gotten myself into? My mind worked overtime and provided many answers. I chose the obvious one that any Pakistani with average frame of reference would choose. "This is indeed an Indo-Jewish conspiracy to tarnish Islam." This needed a little self reflection exercise. I started asking myself some hard questions:

Why did I in the first place agree to come in front of the camera? What convinced me to be part of the project that I knew had all the makings of a controversy and that too a dangerous one? In the political and religious climate of Pakistan, how would my take on the religion and my work gel with the viewers specifically in my own country and generally outside in the Islamic world? A bag full of questions without any answers!

As always both my parents (late) came to my rescue. My parents taught all of us siblings to respect people irrespective of caste, color or religion. They taught us to not just read Koran but to understand the real crux of it that only preaches humility, humanity and respect for all in the world.

The answer was simple. My intentions were to somehow bridge the gap between a disenfranchised population that I had been partnering with in my work and in the society that I was living. At that point, for almost 8 years I had breathed the same air and shared the same food and to a certain extent suffered along with a community that had been deceived by one and all. Would Allah deceive her/his own creation?

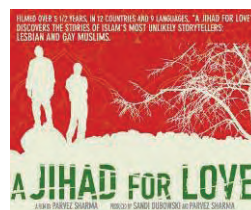
If I am uttering blasphemy and would be held accountable for sacrilegious thinking, then would it not be Allah who would make that decision and hold me accountable for this crime? I seek comfort in this knowledge and know that my Allah who understands my logic, who understands my simplicity, who knows that I am human, who knows that I do a million things in a day that are unforgivable but still is willing to put up with me, will not hold this against me.

The question remains, what was I doing in *A Jihad for Love*? Simple! I was questioning and answering and trying to understand what predisposes one to a condition of non entity in society. In the final cut my work and my interview did not make it but whatever did make to the final version is a simple exercise of questions and answers and attempts to understand the deep relation between Allah and her/his creations.

My heart goes out to you Muhsin because you were honest in your life and had the courage to ask the question and getting your own answers and living your life according to your answers and what satisfied you. You know that your answers and your satisfaction is the sum total of your conversation with your Allah, with my Allah, with everybody's Allah.

Then why are they using the word "Murtad" for you Muhsin? And more than that, who are they to use this word for you? Your deeds are your personal baggage and nobody but nobody has any business in prying in other people's personal belongings in the religion and outside the religion. In *A Jihad for Love* you are sharing your life the way you lived it. You are trying to find answers as a Muslim to understand your own dilemma as you feel it. You are honest and you are open to listen to other people's opinion. You are tolerant. Who could be a better follower of Islam than you?

Given the choice I would say my prayers are besides you and behind you because for me you symbolize honesty and integrity. Your personal choices in life are between you and your Allah. I have nothing to do with it. I think, Pervaz this is the message you are trying to give in *A Jihad for Love* as well. Isn't it?



A Jihad for Love is a feature documentary about the "complex global intersections between Islam and homosexuality". Parvez Sharma's film features Muslim gay lives in India, Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, Egypt, South Africa and France, exploring how gay

Muslims reconcile their sexuality with their faith. It challenges assumptions about a monolithic Muslim community. The film presents itself as "speaking with a Muslim voice" and distances its approach from other documentaries about sexual politics in Islam made by Western directors.

CSBR ACTION:

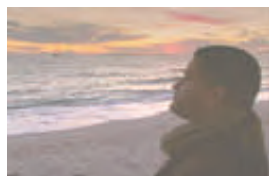
MUSLIM JUDICIAL COUNCIL TARGETING LGBT PEOPLE IN SOUTH AFRICA

A Jihad for Love, featuring Imam Muhsin Hendricks, an openly gay Imam and co-founder of The Inner Circle, was screened in Cape Town in November. The Inner Circle hoped that the screening of the film would contribute to their efforts for consciousness raising on the LGBT rights in the Muslim community in South Africa. However, following the screening of the movie, the Muslim Judicial Council (MJC) of South Africa released a reactionary declaration on Thursday, November 29, 2007 deeming that "any Muslim who rejects the clear injunction of Islam on the homosexuality and believes it to be right, acceptable or correct, is regarded as out of the fold of Islam and such a person is decreed to be at murtad [apostate]."

As a consequence of this declaration, Imam Muhsin Hendricks was targeted at the Friday sermons in Western Cape Mosques. CSBR members took an urgent action upon getting in touch with Muhsin Hendricks and The Inner Circle, sending protest letters to MJC and support letters to Muhsin Hendricks and his organization, The Inner Circle.

The Inner Circle website: <http://www.theinnercircle.org.za/>

A Jihad for Love website: <http://www.ajihadforlove.com/>



"Imam Muhsin Hendricks"
Featured in *A Jihad for Love*

A STEP TOWARDS SEXUALITY EDUCATION IN LEBANON

By Dr. Faysal El-Kak, Lebanon

Continuing from the cover page...

A workshop was held last month in Beirut for government officials, UNFPA representatives, and school executives to discuss in detail the new concepts and schemes to be introduced in the curricula. My presentation at the workshop focused mainly on the evolving concepts in sexuality globally, and those discussed within CSBR such as politics of sexuality, gender issues, violence, services, sexual identities, non-discrimination, sexuality across life cycle, pleasure. This discussion drew a lot of debate and controversy that fed into the making of the new curricula.

On the other hand, the ongoing discussion is aiming also to rephrase many of the "old concepts" and "attitudes" and replace them with terms that are essential to the proper development of sexuality knowledge, awareness, and resources, which is the primary objective of the upcoming curricula.

This proposed curricula is expected to be ready early next year, and all parties are enthusiastic to see it implemented. It comes at a time where there is a huge need for sexual health services and sexuality education given the current absence of any competent and substantial resources made available to people in general and to youth in particular.

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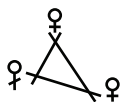
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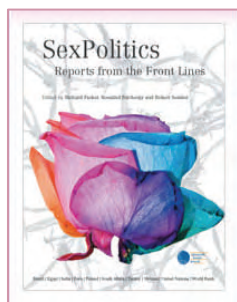
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WWHR New Ways

Feature Publication: Sex Politics - Reports from the Frontlines



Sexuality Policy Watch (SPW), an international policy research group, recently published online the e-book *Sex Politics - Reports from the Front Lines*. *Sex Politics* is a compilation of 10 research case studies on the current dynamics of sexual politics. While eight of the case studies focus on country settings (Brazil, Egypt, India, Peru, Poland, South Africa, Turkey, and Vietnam), two explore sexual politics at international institutions, namely the United Nations and the World Bank. Each case study, through diverse themes and emphases, addresses the meta-question "How and why are gender and sexuality being used in political power struggles within and across countries and institutions?" The e-book is available online for downloading free of cost at:

<http://www.sxpolitics.org/frontlines/book/index.php>

Sex Politics also features two chapters by CSBR members: a case study entitled "Sexuality Politics in Egypt" co-authored by Hossam Baghat (EIPR), and "How Adultery Almost Derailed Turkey's Aspiration to Join the European Union" by Pinar Ilkharacan (WWHR-New Ways). The case study from Egypt tackles sexuality politics dominated by conservative forces, and at the same time the "silent resistance", in particular of the youth, despite the absence of progressive counter discourses on sexuality. The case from Turkey examines the recent Penal Code Campaign and Reform, in particular the competing discourses on the most contested issues during the campaign: honor, virginity, youth sexuality, extra marital sexuality and sexual orientation.