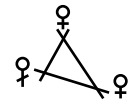


CSBR E-NEWS

Sexuality in Muslim Societies



WWHR - New Ways

GLOBAL CONSERVATISM RISING AGAINST SEXUAL RIGHTS

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The upsurge in the use of Islam as a tool to further conservative politics suffocating the freedom of expression and association, criminalizing sexuality and violating the right to bodily and sexual autonomy is turning into a full-fledged attack on the hard-won gains of human rights advocates in Muslim societies.



photo by Sylvia Tan, Indonesia

Alarming backlashes of the past few months demonstrate how the rising tide of conservatism is coursing beneath seemingly distant

lands, and different states across the board through the Middle East to Southeast Asia, all sheltered and reinforced in the wheels of legislation and law enforcement. We are witnessing blatant violations of human rights, such as the adoption of Islamic Criminal Bylaw (*Qanun Jinayat*) in Aceh punishing adultery and homosexual conduct with stoning to death and caning, the Anti-Pornography law violating the freedom of expression in Indonesia, women being punished by whipping for so-called offences like drinking alcohol in

public, and police interrogations against women's rights NGOs for the mere act of issuing press statements to criticize the violation of international human rights principles and the civil law in Malaysia, and incessant court cases to close down LGBT organizations in Turkey where conservative groups get in line to applaud ministers who announce that homosexuality is an illness to be treated...

There is urgent need for a thorough assessment of these institutional and systematic attacks against human rights, and to decipher the interconnections underlying these backlashes that threaten to cripple the work and legitimacy of women, human and LGBT rights activists in Muslims societies. It is high time to pull together our efforts not to lose further ground and to counter these global attacks against our struggle for bodily, sexual and reproductive health and rights.

See inside for detailed accounts of the recent events in Malaysia, Indonesia and Turkey.

WORKING WITH A CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENT TO INTEGRATE SEXUALITY EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS: PAKISTAN EXPERIENCE

By Kiran Khandwala, Aahung Youth Research & Training Coordinator - Pakistan

CSBR member **Aahung** is an NGO that has undertaken admirable work by promoting healthy behaviors amongst adolescents in Pakistan.



Young people below the age of 25 years currently make up over 63% of the population of Pakistan. Adolescents and children in the country face a number of sexual health threats as a result of not having vital information and skills that can enable them to lead healthier lives free of fear, guilt, confusion, infection and violence. Efforts to mainstream Sexual and

Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) education has been an ongoing challenge within the conservative Pakistani society, where awareness of such a kind is often considered a taboo.

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WITH ALL ITS PRIDE THE RAINBOW FLAG COMES TO DHAKA

By Xecon Jasim Uddin, Boys of Bangladesh (BoB) - Bangladesh

The Rainbow Flag, which is a symbol of LGBT rights movement worldwide, has finally been raised by the Bangladeshi gay community in Dhaka.



Boys of Bangladesh (BoB), the largest network of self-identified Bangladeshi gay men is the pioneer of LGBT rights movement in Bangladesh, and has

been closely working with the LGBT community for the last seven years. Just recently this non-registered and non-funded organization has been able to set up a small space which is now turning into a hub of the LGBT movement. It was thus deemed to be very important to raise a rainbow flag here to declare their existence and take a step forward.

Cont. page 3

WORKING WITH A CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENT TO INTEGRATE SEXUALITY EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS: PAKISTAN EXPERIENCE

By Kiran Khandwala, *Aahung Youth Research & Training Coordinator - Pakistan*

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Nevertheless it is important that such issues are addressed, and that is primarily what *Aahung* has been working towards since 1994, and is now considered a leading expert in the field in an environment devoid of public resources. To date, *Aahung* has successfully integrated sexual health education and services into large reproductive health organizations, schools, medical universities, nursing colleges and government outreach programs.



The Youth Component of *Aahung* works on Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (ASRH) and the primary focus is to impart necessary information and skills to young people about their bodies in order to enable them to make

healthier choices and informed decisions. Specifically, the Youth Component works with teachers and caregivers to impart knowledge on violence and child sexual abuse, gender, puberty and body changes, human rights and sexual rights, anatomy, health and reproductive health in adolescents, including the management of issues such as STI's and HIV/AIDS etc. A large focus of the training is on student centered learning and participatory methodology and all of *Aahung's* trainings follow that methodology. This type of approach encourages dialogue between students and teachers, and is encouraging students to be creative and better develop their communication and analytical skills by making them more self-confident and assertive.



Currently, *Aahung*, the Education Department of Sindh, and the Population Welfare Department of Sindh, have formed a unique partnership to increase adolescent access to sexual

and reproduction health information in government schools in Karachi, Hyderabad, Mirpurkhas and Umerkot. In order to strategically implement this pilot project, *Aahung* staff did a needs assessment and found that trainers in both rural and urban areas were receptive to the training, and felt a strong need for such a program to be implemented. *Aahung* then trained a group of 44 Master Trainers from the four cities on ASRH information and issues in February 2010. These trainers will subsequently select schools in their regions, and train teachers on how to deal with challenges and ASRH issues. Ultimately, the teachers will then implement the *Aahung* ASRH curriculum with the students once schools re-open in August 2010.

Working with religious leaders

Simultaneously, *Aahung* is also working with a group of *Ulema* (religious leaders) from different schools of thought to address some of the conservative elements



of ASRH education in Pakistan. A group of *Ulema* were hence identified for this process and meetings were held with them to share the pilot project with them and to gain their support and advice on how to

make the training content culturally and religiously appropriate. The meeting adjourned with all the *Ulema* pledging their support and enthusiasm for the project and a smaller working committee of *Ulema* was created. Following this, another meeting was held with the smaller committee of *Ulema* where *Aahung* ran a sample session on ASRH issues, shared the draft training agenda and showed them some of *Aahung's* resources. This entire session was a success and the *Ulema* have given *Aahung* their full support in trying to make this project a success.

It is refreshing to see that prejudices are not shared amongst the entire population about SRHR issues. Now people everywhere understand the importance of access to correct information and are willing to discuss issues



about sexual health. *Aahung's* reach in ASRH training in government schools is currently limited to Sindh, but upon the success of this model, these trainings will be implemented throughout the

country in both urban and rural areas. Hence, this project will aid in spreading ASRH information to youth all over Pakistan and will educate young people on how to lead healthier lives.

CEDAW COMMITTEE ENDORSES RECOMMENDATIONS BY EIPR AND CRR

By Soha Abdelaty, Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR) – Egypt



The Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights' (EIPR) advocacy efforts to enhance protection for the sexual and reproductive rights of women in Egypt took a different turn following recommendations issued by the CEDAW Committee. After reviewing

Egypt's combined 6th and 7th periodical report, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women issued a number of recommendations to the government on how to promote the sexual and reproductive rights and health of women and girls, many of which were recommendations the organization put forward in a joint shadow report to the UN body. The EIPR and the Center for Reproductive Rights (CRR) in New York had worked together to submit a shadow report highlighting areas of concern such as insufficient public information on maternal mortality and morbidity, unsafe abortion, inadequate family planning services, deficient adolescent reproductive services and failure to protect women from sexual violence. The Committee reviewed Egypt's report at its 45th session, convening through January 18 - February 5, 2010.

Our report and research on sexual and reproductive health and rights has enabled us to reach the following conclusions on the situation in Egypt: available sexual and reproductive services are limited and not comprehensive, especially for women in rural areas and those most in need of such services. There is also a great lack of coordination between state agencies offering care services for these women. Furthermore, there is a great shortage of available information and numbers on reproductive and sexual health and rights issues in general, and as a result women, and particularly adolescents, also suffer from the lack of access to information on the subject-matter. Service providers, especially doctors, law enforcement officials and those responsible for dispensing justice, also suffer from this lack of information and are unable to provide women with the correct information. They are also greatly affected by society's biased views on some of the issues related to SRHR. Finally, we found that many of the legal provisions on sexual and reproductive rights place the blame on women and penalize women for decisions they make with regards to their sexual and reproductive rights and health.

Call to enact a comprehensive law and a national plan of action to combat violence

In light of the above, we were very pleased with the Committee calling upon the Egyptian government to enact a comprehensive law "criminalizing all forms of violence against women, including domestic violence, marital rape, sexual violence, sexual harassment, institutional violence and crimes committed in the name of honor," and to adopt a national plan of action to combat violence. The Committee further recommended that Egypt expand social services available for victims of violence and increase the number of shelters for domestic violence victims, ensuring access for all women.

The CEDAW Committee also called for measures to improve women's access to family planning information and services, including strengthening efforts to increase knowledge of, and access to, affordable contraceptive methods. It also urged the government to promote awareness of emergency contraception, highlighting its benefits for rape victims. The recommendations also included a call to widely promote sexual education "with special attention to the prevention of early pregnancy and the control of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS." Finally, the Committee called upon the government to conduct comprehensive national surveys on maternal mortality and morbidity in Egypt and "publish all findings and include, in its next report, gender disaggregated data on morbidity rates, both at the national level and in urban and rural areas."

Regretfully, the CEDAW Committee refrained from adopting any recommendations on enhancing access to safe and legal abortion for women. Egyptian law criminalizes abortion in the Penal Code with no clear legal exceptions permitting the procedure – even in cases of rape and incest - which can deter health care providers from performing the procedure for fear of legal penalties. Egyptian law also finds a woman guilty if she willingly chooses an induced abortion. Our research also found that legal restrictions on abortions tend to harm poorer and younger women disproportionately, and post-abortion care was found to be largely inadequate. And yet there are no national and comprehensive databases documenting the spread of unsafe abortion across the country. An amendment to the Penal Code to allow abortion in cases of rape was put forward two years ago by a member of parliament, but there is a lack of political will on behalf of the government to discuss and act on the matter, despite broad civil society support.



The EIPR is adamant in continuing its research and advocacy on this issue, and will continue working with all stakeholders to ensure this and other amendments to the law are adopted to allow women in Egypt safe and legal abortion. The EIPR will also work in the upcoming months to ensure the implementation of CEDAW Committee recommendations by the Egyptian government.

To view Shadow Report: <http://eipr.org/en/report/2009/12/18/593>

WITH ALL ITS PRIDE THE RAINBOW FLAG COMES TO DHAKA

By Xecon Jasim Uddin, Boys of Bangladesh (BoB) - Bangladesh

Continued from page 1

The event was held on March 20th, 2010 and had a good crowd from the local LGBT community. The flag was let to fly at 5 pm by the newest community member coming to a BoB event for the first time. The crowd cheered and clapped as the flag unfurled scattering confetti, as if the colors of rainbow were raining from the sky. It was indeed a moment of pride! This was followed by a discussion on the history of the Rainbow Flag and its significance.



BoB believes such an open display of the rainbow flag will inspire the local LGBT community to unite and to become more confident. The community now knows that there flies a rainbow flag proudly somewhere in Dhaka with all its message of diversity and acceptance. And who knows, this small step might inspire the LGBT community to organize a pride march someday!

GLOBAL CONSERVATISM RISING AGAINST SEXUAL RIGHTS

ILGA CONFERENCE: UPDATE FROM HOTEL ROOM 317

By Yogie Wirastra, JOTHI – Indonesia

All photos by Sylvia Tan - Fridae.com

The International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex Association (ILGA) was scheduled to hold its regional Asia conference in Surabaya, Indonesia through 26 – 28 March. Hosted by the CSBR member organization GAYa NUSANTARA, the event that had been expected to attract more than 150 activists representing 100 organizations from 16 Asian countries, was cancelled on March 23rd by the Indonesian police who claimed it could lead to violent protests by conservative Muslim groups.



Radical groups arriving at hotel

Most participants were not aware of the cancellation until their arrival in Surabaya. The Organizing Committee that actually had received the permit for the conference, sent out a press release a week before the conference, which is when the protests started and due to the protests of several religious organizations, the permit was withdrawn. Permit itself was actually required only for the closing parade since it was to take place in a public space. The Plenary did not require any permit, because freedom of association is protected by law.

After the cancellation, most participants had to stay in Surabaya until their departure date, but things did not end here. Today (March 26th) a large number of religious activists* mobbed the hotel where most participants were staying. They demanded the Conference participants to march out of the hotel and leave East Java immediately. There was verbal abuse, and some physical violence in the form of pushing around and slaps on the face. Later we learned that before heading to the hotel, the mob first went to the GAYa NUSANTARA office and when they could not find anyone, they sealed the office and wrote this message on the door: “ILGA – Gay Lesbian; Moral Terrorist”.



Participants discussing options



Participants informing each other on developments

For fear of any further violence most participants left the hotel, struggling to reschedule their flights. Now it is 22:00 and there are still 6 religious activists and a couple of police outside the hotel, they want to make sure that the participants have disbanded. Local organizing committee fears that tomorrow the number of demonstrators will increase.

*Groups from the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI), Center for Indonesian Community Studies, Indonesian Council of Ulema (MUI)

ALARMING PRESSURES ON SISTERS IN ISLAM (SIS)

By Sezen Yalcin , Women for Women's Human Rights (WWHR) - New Ways - Turkey

CSBR member **Sisters in Islam (SIS)**, composed of a group of Muslim women in Malaysia committed to promoting the rights of women within the framework of Islam, is undergoing hard times due to the intimidation policies and pressures of the government and police department following the press statement SIS issued condemning the caning of three Muslim women for Shariah offences.

Founded in 1987, SIS started as a movement from within Islam focusing on the problems of Muslim women with the Shariah courts. One of their major objectives was to challenge discriminatory laws and policies carried out in the name of Islam. Being one of the most prominent NGOs advocating for democracy, human rights and gender equality in Malaysia, SIS has been targeted by conservative Muslim groups enraged by its criticisms of Islamic Shariah laws allowing the caning of women for offenses such as drinking alcohol.

Since Kartika's Case (woman sentenced to whipping for drinking alcohol in public) SIS has been struggling against corporal punishments on the grounds that they constitute further discrimination against Muslim women in Malaysia. They argued that this type of punishment violates Constitutional guarantees of equality and non-discrimination as whipping of women under Shariah Criminal Offences legislation contradicts civil law where women are not punishable by caning under Criminal Procedure Code. Through their press statement, SIS urged the Malaysian government to review caning as a form of punishment since it violates international human rights principles which regard whipping and other forms of corporal punishment as cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.

Voicing dissent cannot be cause for police questioning

In February 2010, the Selangor Islamic Religious Council charged a police report against SIS because of the press statement it issued, and wanted to question SIS under the Penal Code for “causing, etc., disharmony, disunity, or feelings of enmity, hatred or ill-will, or prejudicing, etc., the maintenance of harmony or unity, on grounds of religion”. Dr. Hamidah Marican, Executive Director of SIS, defended their work as “driven by the tenets of the Quran and Islam.” She stated “*The fact that corporal punishments were also carried out in medieval Muslim societies does not mean that such punishments are especially “Islamic” in nature. In contemporary society, to enforce such punishments is merely to retain pre-Islamic understanding of justice and punishment in law.*”

The vital role played by NGOs such as SIS becomes more visible at times like these when the growing intolerance to different views is masked behind claims of morality. SIS stands up bravely against women's human rights violations committed in the name of Islam, and reminds us all that no government has the right or the power to dictate what Islam is. We are deeply concerned about the policies of intimidation undermining the freedom of speech, and condemn such antidemocratic measures considering Malaysia's commitments to international human rights instruments. For more details: www.sistersinislam.org/ml

GLOBAL CONSERVATISM RISING AGAINST SEXUAL RIGHTS

NEW FACE OF BACKLASH IN TURKEY: A HOMOPHOBIC MINISTER OF WOMEN AND FAMILY

By Sezen Yalcin & Irazca Geray, *Women for Women's Human Rights (WWHR) - New Ways - Turkey*

Turkey has been witnessing heated debates following the discriminatory statements of Mrs. Selma Aliye Kavaf, the Minister Responsible for Women and Family who declared in an interview that homosexuality is a disease that should be treated. This statement did not only reflect one minister's personal homophobia but rather revealed the government's overall religious conservative mentality, as there has been no official statement denouncing Kavaf's comments.

Justice and Development Party (JDP), which came to power in 2002 with a considerable success and was re-elected in 2007, is often compared to Christian democrat parties in Europe for attempting to conciliate Islam with democracy. Originating from an Islamist movement, JDP pretends to distance itself from its fundamentalist background and claims to be a center-right party that is initiating a series of democratization attempts on a variety of issues. Meanwhile they are adamant in keeping the civil society out of these reform processes, particularly the women's and LGBT movement, which since 2002 has gained new ground especially with its successful 3 years long campaign for the reform of the Penal Code from a gender perspective which resulted in the adoption of the new Penal Code that now guarantees the sexual and bodily autonomy and rights. Working for the implementation of the Code, NGOs have simultaneously been trying to ward off the threats of backlash, such as the courts that violate women's and LGBT's right to life and bodily autonomy, and Prime Minister's repeated comments that undermine reproductive rights telling all women to have at least 3 children. Minister Kavaf is now becoming the new face of both the threats of backlash and the conservative politics at JDP that does not wish to lose its original constituency.

"Homosexuality threatens the continuity of human life"

The minister's most recent statement on homosexuality created frustration and outrage among LGBT organizations and rights advocates who responded with street protests. While some asked for her resignation, a group of advocates filed a legal complaint against Kavaf for discriminating against homosexuals, and inciting the public to hatred and hostility. They also declared that the actual disease to be treated is not homosexuality but homophobia, transphobia, discrimination, racism and sexism.

On the other hand, some conservative civil society organizations sent letters of support to Kavaf declaring that all divine religions consider homosexuality as a moral deviation and an attitude against human nature. They also accused the organizations protesting Kavaf of "lobbying for homosexuality" and of threatening the continuity of human life and the lives of upcoming generations.

Redefining domestic violence as she sees fit

In her relatively short time in office, the minister has been most successful in attracting the women's human rights organizations' criticisms. Kavaf, who seems to have a unique definition not only of homosexuality but also of domestic violence, continues to argue that the government has "zero tolerance" to domestic violence. In her infamous interview, Kavaf also commented on the June 2009 European Human Rights Court decision on domestic violence in Turkey which constitutes an international landmark, as for the first time in its history the Court sentenced a state on the grounds that it could not prevent violence against women and did not take measures to eradicate gender discrimination.

While the Court held that Turkey violated the right to life, the freedom from torture and the rights to non-discrimination and equality,^[1] Kavaf became the spokesperson of the patriarchal state discourse, claiming "This is not a final decision, Turkey has the right to appeal."^[2] Kavaf's successive statements are troublesome given the fact that in Turkey each day three women are killed by their partners. Kavaf's statements indicate that instead of fulfilling its obligations to its citizens, i.e. protection of our right to life, the State is busy trying to use its right to appeal the Court decision.

Will she say "get well soon" to the German minister?

The minister, who evidently has a long list of announcements she must urgently reveal, has adopted the habit of making a new statement most every week. Recently she managed to accuse women's organizations of *exaggerating the issue of domestic violence*, saying "There are some NGOs that have gone too far; they think that when a husband asks his wife 'Did you prepare the meal?' it creates a sort of pressure on the woman."^[3]

JDP that defines itself as a "conservative democrat" party has definitely done well appointing a woman into the cabinet of a 96% male Parliament though she is yet to discover what domestic violence entails, a minister responsible for women's affairs though she seems responsible for criticizing women's NGOs, a homophobic minister who might say "get well soon" if and when she runs into the German Minister or Foreign Affairs, as a well known film star suggested during her live talk-show on TV. Meanwhile it is yet to be seen when they will tackle the "democrat" part of their self-definition, and how sexual rights advocates will rebuild their front not to lose any more ground to the rising conservatism.

[1] Today's Zaman 09/06/2009

[2] Yeni Safak 10/06/2009

[3] Hurriyet 07/03/2010

INDONESIA'S CONSTITUTIONAL COURT UPHOLDS THE ANTI-PORNOGRAPHY LAW

Despite the relentless efforts of human rights activists and cultural groups, the much debated Anti-Pornography law was upheld by the Constitutional Court decision on March 25, saying that the law's definition of pornography was clear and did not violate the constitution. The only woman judge in the Court with nine members had a dissenting opinion for this ruling. The law originally passed in 2008 by the Indonesian Parliament was backed by the Islamist force in the Parliament, while the women's and human rights groups, LGBT groups, groups working on the issue of pluralisms and communities of indigenous people had been carrying on an intense opposition against the law. These groups challenged it in the Constitutional Court, underlining that the law is against Indonesia's principle of respecting diversity as it enforces a particular code of morality based on a particular interpretation of Islam, and is in violation of the rights and freedom of expression guaranteed by the constitution.

The law as it stands has no clear definition of pornography, which leaves room to criminalize sensuality, and any gesture or clothing suggesting nakedness, drawing strong protest from the predominantly Hindu island of Bali. Anyone caught displaying nudity can be punished with up to 10 years in prison. It also legitimizes "moral policing" by allowing "civil society" to help prevent pornographic acts, which the opponents expect will be used to justify the violent actions of radical groups. The law also criminalizes homosexuality.

GIVE ACEH A CHANCE: HOW TO STRUGGLE AGAINST THE QANUN JINAYAT

By Maria Mustika, GAYa NUSANTARA – Indonesia

For some people in Nanggroe Aceh Darrusalam (NAD) or also known as Aceh, Qanun Jinayat (1) was essential in the process of bringing peace and authenticity back to Aceh. There was a constant mention of return to *fitrah* (our natural state), to an *Acehnese*, and back to *The Real Islam* in order to avoid suffering and punishment from God. This idea continues to be nourished among Muslims in Aceh, some of whom also believe that the 2006 tsunami was a punishment from God for their misconduct against the teachings of Muhammad SAW and against the Muslim leaders in Aceh. (2)

Many people are still trying to understand the need for and the function of this law. In fact, the victims of this law are only the people living in poverty since they cannot pay the officer in order to elude the law. While people with money can avoid the consequences simply by paying the Shariah (3) officer, those who cannot afford it are faced with the threat of being kept in detention for three days and whipping, the injuries of which prevent the person from going to work which results in even more limited income for the family- or in some cases people cannot seek medical help because they cannot go to work.

In addition to discriminating among the people who can and cannot pay, the Shariah police as an official moral guard in Aceh have proven themselves inept in performing their duty. In the latest case in Aceh (23 February 2010) three Shariah police captured a woman and her boyfriend alone in the park. They sent away the man and raped the woman. The only punishment one of these policemen got was whipping, while two of them managed to run away. The captain of the Shariah police meanwhile expressed concern for the victim's loss of virginity and said they need to educate their Shariah police more. Given that even the Shariah police acts against this qanun and is not punished according to this qanun, though legally adopted, the use of Qanun Jinayat is still in question.

Irwandi Yusuf, Governor of NAD, also disapproves of this law but is under the pressure of several Muslim parties, which support the law for political reasons aiming to gain more voters in the next elections since the adoption of rules and laws based in Shariah are considered to be the way to uphold Muslim teachings and the way to the creation of a stronger country. It is significant to note that people in Aceh pay more attention to and approve of parties or people that approve the Shariah law.

For human rights defenders (HRD), this qanun is not only inhumane and in violation of the UN Convention Against Torture (4) but it also violates social justice. A team of HRD brought the Qanun Jinayat to the Constitutional Court (*Mahkamah Konstitusi*) for judicial review, which is still in progress awaiting the appointment of judges to start the review. There are a number of Muslim leaders who also disapprove of the Qanun Jinayat, because the law assumes all people in Aceh as its subjects though as a qanun it should be binding only for Muslim citizens.

Muslim thinkers and feminists alike are against the Qanun Jinayat

Speaking at the panel on this qanun's relevance to present day Indonesia, organized by GAYa NUSANTARA as part of the CSBR campaign *One Day One Struggle*, well-known Muslim thinker Guntur Romli from Jurnal Perempuan discussed the application of Qanun Jinayat as a violation of Islam and the Islamic law because it drops articles on murder and theft despite all classical fiqh recognizing these as crimes; and instead criminalizes *khalwat* (being in close proximity), sodomy, adultery and homosexuality despite the lack of agreement among the ulama on whether these constitute crimes. Romli and the renowned feminist Endah Triwijati underlined that the law is against the freedom and the right to bodily autonomy and expression and violates especially the rights of LGBT and women whose bodies are recognized to be sources of crime as evidenced in the recent use of this law as grounds for replacing women's pants with long skirts in Aceh. During the panel, it was also noted that the law is driven by homophobia since there is no explicit law or physical punishment against homosexuality in Islam.

Meanwhile, organizations like Violet Grey, Legal Aid Aceh (LBH Aceh), KontraS Aceh have been working hard side by side to spread the message to the public about universal human rights and the right to humane treatment for all people of Aceh. But they underline that the hardest part is to undo the Muslim leaders' conviction that human rights is a western concept and as such is another way to westernize Muslim people and to make them forget their religion. In March 2010, Violet Grey, an LGBT organization established in 2007, in cooperation with other organizations managed to organize the competition "**Miss Transgender (Waria) Aceh 2010**", which was a big success, attended not only by LGBT people and the supporters of LGBT rights, but also by their families and the general public. Though some Muslim organizations opposed it there was no physical attack against the competition which was held in the Radio Republik Indonesia building auditorium where there was no seat left unoccupied.

More and more people have started to realize that what they need for a better Aceh is not *The Real Islam* but peace among the people. There are emerging issues about Shariah law and Shariah police that people have started to question. For HRD this is an opportunity to uphold and spread the values and principles of universal human rights among the public. This is our soil and we need to plant the seeds of peace in Aceh after all its people have been through. We also need to develop new strategies on how to approach the Muslim leaders and the public at large.

1. Qanun Jinayat, an Islamic Criminal Bylaw passed by the Aceh Legislative Council in September 2009, that expands the range of punishments for alleged moral and sexual transgressions to include stoning to death for adultery and 100 cane lashes or 100 months of imprisonment for homosexual conduct. Gambling, alcohol consumption, rape and pedophilia are also punished by this law.

2. It is believed that a mosque was not destroyed by the tsunami because it was the will of God. The "mystical" Islam brings a "new understanding" i.e. becoming conservative Muslims is the only way to undo the wrath of God.

3. Islamic Law

4. Ratified by Indonesia in 1998

A BRAVE NEW PHASE FOR PALESTINIAN SEXUALITY EDUCATION

By Safa Tamish, Muntada-The Arab Forum for Sexuality Education and Health

CSBR member **Muntada**, a Palestinian community-based organization, welcomed the year 2010 with a breakthrough in its work. Last year, Muntada had launched on the national level a wide range of sexuality education training and community activities, run by highly qualified male and female volunteers and professional staff. This year, it increased its scale of operations, while the demand for its services also grew immensely. Here are some updates and highlights from Muntada's work:

A first for Palestinian teachers in the West Bank

After having worked only with Palestinians in Israel, Muntada has now expanded its reach to Palestinians in the occupied West Bank. Muntada has been conducting professional training for groups of educators in four different locations (Ramallah, Hebron, Nablus and Jenin), in addition to a fifth group of school counselors. This experience was the first of its kind, because teachers in the West Bank have never been exposed to any kind of structured and comprehensive sexuality awareness program. The training is one component of a larger project led by Women's Studies Center



located in Jerusalem. The project's title is *Amaan* which translates to "safety" in English; it aims at the protection of children from sexual abuse. As part of the program, the educational staff will be provided with knowledge and professional skills to work with the students and their families.

Leading to this step was a thorough needs assessment on the subject, conducted with the Bethlehem University faculty members and students; it revealed that sexuality is not systematically addressed in the curriculum, and that there is a clear lack of information, resources and other counseling services available to the students and the community at large. Consequently, graduates of the Faculty of Education, Nursing and Health Sciences, and Social Work were not exposed to nor had participated in any sexuality education course, and found it very difficult to deal with the issue during their fieldwork with different communities, and especially children and parents. To tackle the issue, a steering committee was established at the University and a survey was conducted to assess the actual needs of students. Following the data analyses, an open discussion session was held, attended by 140 students from the Faculties of Education, Nursing and Health Sciences, and the Social Science Department.

Finally the sexuality education course was launched in February with mixed-gender groups of students from several departments, and is a pilot study which includes pre-test and post-test questionnaires to examine the effects of the course on the knowledge, attitudes and professional behavior of participants.

GLOBAL CONSULT ON SEXUAL HEALTH

By Dr Faysal El-Kak, Lebanese American University & LFPA - Lebanon

The World Health Organization (WHO) meeting held in Geneva on January 2010, convened 13 sexual health experts from different regions of the world, including the CSBR member **Dr Faysal El-Kak** from the Arab Region. Aim of the consultation meeting was to provide guidance, and advise WHO on how to lead global work on sexual health that was started initially by WHO in 1974. Discussions mainly focused around two basic documents: The *status and stand of WHO* regarding sexual health and the expectations from WHO regarding sexual health promotion, based on interviews of a number of relevant persons; and a *framework document* pointing at the importance of programming for sexual health across five domains: laws and policies, education, society and culture, economics and health. Using a multisectoral, rights-based approach, this model outlines the essential elements of a comprehensive sexual health program-based response, together with entry points for the promotion of sexual health information and support, in both broad-based and targeted community education initiatives.

Many of the work that CSBR has undertaken to date was also brought to the discussions; especially on laws and policies, training, and sexuality education promotion, as well as local, regional and UN level advocacy. Interesting and wide scope discussions highlighted the importance of continuous evidence building on the consequences of poor sexual health (poverty, MDGs, etc) through research, and especially multidisciplinary research. There was strong recommendation for advocacy on sexuality education and development of sexual health content for health care providers. Consultants urged WHO to review documents and compile a new one on sexuality and sexual health, a rights-based global document to be translated and made available to all partners, stakeholders, and the public.

Trainees are expected to acquire professional skills to be able to work with members of their communities on sexual and gender issues, including sexual violence and abuse, sexually transmitted diseases, high risk sexual behaviors, gender equality, positive communication between parents and children, women's empowerment, sexual identity, as well as basic concepts in group dynamics and facilitation.

Film of women defining their true dreams

Muntada is also preparing a 15-minute documentary film on the real stories of two women who participated in its training workshops on sexuality and how their participation affected their lives. Through the process of self exploration, these women were able to discover their inner powers and define their true aspirations. The debut of the film is scheduled for the end of May 2010, where a large event is planned to take place in a central theatre in Haifa.



Muntada's website also becomes an important tool of advocacy, debate and education, providing scientific, accurate and non-judgmental information and analyses on sexual behavior and dysfunctions. Due to the lack of scientific research on sexuality in Arabic, Muntada is also translating research papers that address the effects of sexuality education on adolescents' sexual behavior as well as women's sexual pleasure. (www.iensaneva.org)

FEATURE PUBLICATIONS & UPCOMING EVENTS

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES & TRAININGS ON SEXUALITY

3rd CSBR Sexuality Institute

Call for applications to the 2010 CSBR Sexuality Institute will soon be online. Please keep an eye on our website: www.wwhr.org

Sexuality, Gender and Rights Institute

CREA's 4th Global Sexuality, Gender and Rights Institute: Exploring Theory & Practice will be held in June 12-19, 2010, in Istanbul, Turkey. Deadline for applications is April 18. www.creaworld.org

Women's Human Rights Institutes in 2010

Women's Human Rights: Building a Peaceful World in an Era of Globalization offered in association with Fundación Justicia y Género, Costa Rica will be held through July 19 - August 26, 2010 in Toronto, Canada.

Women's Rights are Human Rights! CEDAW for Change offered in association with IWRAP-AP will take place through August 16–20, 2010 in Toronto, Canada. www.learnwhr.wordpress.com

XVIII International AIDS Conference: July 18-23, 2010, Vienna, Austria

Millennium Development Goals (MDG) Summit: September 20-22, 2010, New York, USA

GENDER AND TWO MAJOR TRAUMAS OF OUR CENTURY: WAR AND BREAST CANCER

By Evelyne Accad; University of California Press, forthcoming

In her forthcoming article entitled "Gender and two major traumas of our century", CSBR founding member and writer Professor **Evelyne Accad** explores the interlinkages between cancer and war in the Middle Eastern geography taking the wars in Lebanon as a background of her account. "*Having suffered in my body through the war in Lebanon and through breast cancer, having witnessed the agony and death of loved ones during the bombing of the city, and at the bedside of friends succumbing to cancer, I began to get the feeling that the two were connected*" says the author underlining that the wars of mass destruction and the aggressive fight against cancer are the touchstones of our century.

In an era in which burying nuclear waste products under the soil, destroying the whole infrastructure of the enemy, polluting the air, sea and land and leaving behind millions of fragmentation bombs are becoming most popular strategies of war, Accad is drawing parallels between the methods of the fight against the breast cancer and the broader context of Lebanon which has had its share of war and destruction in the last decades. She shows, for example, how in the treatment of cancer, military metaphors and violent images abound. Writing about the war, Accad affirms the importance of incorporating a discourse on sexuality when formulating a revolutionary feminist theory since the whole range of oppression that women suffered from in the Middle East such as forced marriage, virginity, and the codes of honour, claustration, the veil, polygamy, repudiation, beating, lack of freedom and the denial of the possibility to achieve their aims and desires were closely connected to the internal war in Lebanon.

Drawing from her own field research, Accad examines the recent sociological, anthropological, and political studies dealing with aggression, violence, war and the role of women in the Middle East and underlines the centrality of sexuality, sexual relations and male domination to the political and national struggles in the region. She also analyzes the aspects of nationalism and how they relate to sexuality and to women's traditional roles in society. This article provides an important resource making visible the connections between sexuality, war, nationalism, feminism, violence, love and power.

"Gender and Two Major Traumas of our Century: War and Breast Cancer," *Gender and Trauma: Some Attempts at Critical Intervention into the Past*. Ed. Fatima Festic (forthcoming, University of California Press).

Prepared by
WWHR - New Ways

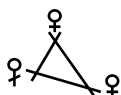
Edit and Layout by
Irazca Geray
Sezen Yalcin
Karin Ronge

Original Design by
Sinem Sinan Goknur
Liz Ercevik Amado

E-mail: newways@wwhr.org

Visit our website at

www.wwhr.org



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GLOBAL VIRTUAL KNOWLEDGE CENTRE TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

United Nations, New York — UNIFEM has launched a *Global Virtual Knowledge Centre to End Violence against Women and Girls* in March, 2010. The one-stop centre will support practitioners around the world in effective design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes.

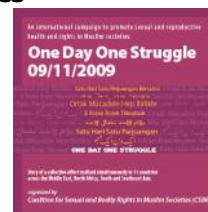
The web-based site brings together lessons learned to date and recommended practices learned from initiatives on ending violence against women and girls, whether originating from the women's movement, civil society organizations, governments, the United Nations system or other actors. www.endvawnow.org

OUR JOINT STRUGGLE NOW HAS A FILM!

Documentation of CSBR's international and simultaneous 1-day campaign

One Day One Struggle held on

November 9, 2009, is now available in a CD, with films, photos and briefs on all 16 events held in 11 countries.



To receive a copy please email us at newways@wwhr.org