

Women's rights, really?

Tackling multiple discrimination of Muslim women, inequality and abuse - speaking out against Islamophobia

28 January 2017, London

Introduction

"Islamophobia is an increasing factor of gender inequality, there is a need to increase this recognition and apply more preventive measures to achieve gender justice for all women regardless of their religious affiliation, because all women deserve a life free from discrimination and violence." Women of Faith's statement

Women struggle for generations to have equal rights in public and private spheres and to date much has been achieved. However, when in the 21st century UK a woman can be sent home for refusing to wear high heel shoes, one becomes aware that we are not equal. Women, regardless of their religion, so often study and work harder than men yet their achievements are not equally acknowledged in communities. A woman showing her religious identity, regardless of how many degrees she has and where she is from, has often limited economic opportunities because of the constraints such as intolerance, hatred or misjudgement of her image. These obstacles often prevail judging one's abilities based on intellect.

For Muslim women, especially those wearing the headscarves, there is an additional obstacle. Not only they struggle against common gender bias but also by displaying their faith, they often are subjected to the disgraceful acts of Islamophobia, hence being discriminated also based on their religion, in addition to gender based discrimination. This double discrimination latter becomes day to day reality of Muslim women, regardless whether they work professionally or do day to day shopping. They are an easy target of hate crime, hate speech and suffer from the effects of multiple discrimination.

The issue of GBV on religious grounds, manifested for instance in the form of Islamophobia, needs more public attention, since it seriously endangers the progress made in achieving gender equality and advancing women's rights. For example, the recent ban of the burkini swimwear in France will limit Muslim women's opportunities to practice swimming and leisure on the beach. The increasing acts of violence against women demonstrating their religious identity, committed by both women and men – hate crime and hate speech, violates the fundamental rights and basic freedoms.



At present, the lack of attention on the combined type of GBV (based on religion) and discrimination leaves women of faith marginalised and discriminated. If one is serious about achieving gender equality, the discrimination that women of faith experience in daily lives hindering their achievement of equality, deserves a public debate.

Objectives of the Seminar:

The main objectives of the session are:

- Discuss the inter-sectionality of gender discrimination based on religion and gender equality in different sectors, including employment (also address so called “triple penalty”)
- Demonstrate evidence that intolerance and hatred towards Islam (Islamophobia) is an obstacle to gender equality, limiting opportunities of women demonstrating their religious identity
- Increase awareness of multiple discrimination of Muslim women, who are disproportionately affected by acts of hatred and intolerance
- Raise awareness what are the measures in place to report the incidents of Islamophobia and up to date action against it
- Acknowledge the incidents of gender based violence against women wearing the headscarves (GBV due to religion)
- Create space for open debate about the growing issue of disproportionate impact of Islamophobia on Muslim women, their opportunities and rights
- Promote multi-stakeholder cooperation in the elimination of GBV on religious grounds
- Propose recommendations to tackle the combined gender and religion-based violence

Methodology of the Event:

The seminar will be interactive and consultative. After 10-15 min presentations by the panellists, the open debate will follow in order to work out specific findings for wider public and recommendations to the academia, activists, faith organisations and government. The session of questions and answers will allow any remaining concerns to be addressed by the speakers and guests. The session will be moderated by Iman Sandra Pertek, Chair of Women of Faith & Board Member of EFOMW and a special rapporteur, selected for this event, will provide feedback and observations to the event outcomes.

Speakers:

- **Dr Konrad Pędziwiatr**, Cracow University of Economics - *European Islamophobia and its impact on Polish converts in the UK and in Poland.*



- [Faeza Vaid](#), Executive Director, Muslim Women’s Network UK - *Challenging negative stereotypes of Muslim women in order to combat discrimination faced*
- [Shenaz Bunglawala](#), Head of Research, MEND - *Islamophobia and its disproportionate impact on Muslim women, reporting methods and preventive measures.*
- [Sufia Alam](#), East London Mosque and Maryam Centre
- [Alaa Al-Samarrai](#), Assistant Secretary General, Muslim Council of Britain
- [Imam Fadel Soliman](#), Bridges Foundation - *Women’s rights between culture and religion - how culture affects women in society.*

Partners:

The following partners will be collaborating in hosting the seminar:

- European Forum of Muslim Women
- Women of Faith (Kobiety Wiary)
- Open Society Foundation
- Muslim Women’s Network UK
- MEND

Participants:

The seminar is open to the representatives of the public institutions, Universities including the academia and students, NGOs including women’s organisations, communities and faith organisations, including mosques, community centres of various backgrounds and different communities at large. We expect around 50 – 70 participants.

Date and Venue:

Date: **28 January 2017**

Time: **4:00pm - 7:00pm, 120 min**

Venue: **East London Mosque and Maryam Centre,**
46 Whitechapel Rd, London E1 1JX

For further information please contact: info@kobietywiary.org

Notes:

- Photo exhibition on Islamophobia by MEND will be available on site of the event
- ENAR’s report *“Forgotten Women: the impact of Islamophobia on Muslim women”*



will be disseminated

- "Far Right in Europe" Guide by Cordoba Foundation will be distributed to all participants free of charge

About organisers:

Women of Faith (Kobiety Wiary) is a grassroots women's organisation founded in 2010. Its mission is to unite and support women interested in Islam. Amongst its objectives, is to empower Muslim women to drive changes in their communities by promoting their rights through access to information, active participation and promoting inter-religious dialogue.

European Forum of Muslim Women is a human rights organisation. It was founded in 2006, following a series coordination meetings between European Muslim Women associations active in several European Countries. EFOMW works for the consolidation of bonds and the exchange of experience between its various members in order to support the empowerment and emancipation of Muslim women within society as fully fledged citizens. It also aims at addressing Muslim women's concerns and fight for their rights at the European and International level.

The seminar is part of the EFOMW's project:



Co-organisers:



Supporters:

