



With the support of the **United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)**

Women's Learning Partnership (WLP) presents

an International Symposium

LEADING TO CHANGE:
ELIMINATING VIOLENCE
AGAINST WOMEN IN MUSLIM SOCIETIES
March 1, 2005

“Violence against women is an obstacle to the achievement of the objectives of equality, development, and peace. Violence against women both violates and impairs or nullifies the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms. The long-standing failure to protect and promote those rights and freedoms in the case of violence against women is a matter of concern to all States and should be addressed...In all societies, to a greater or lesser degree, women and girls are subjected to physical, sexual and psychological abuse that cuts across lines of income, class, and culture.”

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women

**Plaza Room – 2nd Floor
The Church Center
777 UN Plaza
New York, NY**

Violence against women, a manifestation of the historically unequal power relations between men and women, today remains one of the primary obstacles to empowering women and achieving peace and security for all. Women have been systematically deprived of knowledge and skills that might help them to become better equipped to protect themselves against violence, including knowledge of the existing laws, religious texts, positive cultural resources, international injunctions on human rights, and the demands made by other women for rights in their community and elsewhere. In the WLP Symposium, speakers will address major challenges to eliminating violence against women and girls and discuss grassroots, national, and regional measures needed to raise awareness, initiate reform legislation, and create synergy for ongoing efforts to prevent violence and to promote women's human rights.

About the Organizer

Women's Learning Partnership for Rights, Development, and Peace (WLP) is an international, non-governmental organization in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations that helps to empower women and girls in the Global South to re-imagine and re-structure their roles in their families, communities, and societies. WLP achieves this goal through providing leadership training, supporting capacity building, and helping women use new technologies to generate and receive information and knowledge. WLP conducts its work in collaboration with partner organizations located in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, and with members of an international network of experts.



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Tuesday, March 1

9:30 – 10:00	Registration and Coffee
10:00 – 10:30	Welcome
	Opening Remarks: Mahnaz Afkhami Founder and President, Women’s Learning Partnership
10:30 – 12:30	<p>Session 1 <i>Breaking the Silence: Culture, Conflict, and Extremism</i></p> <p>Chair: Noeleen Heyzer Executive Director, United Nations Development Fund for Women</p> <p>Panelists: Ayesha Imam Chief of Culture, Gender, and Human Rights Branch, United Nations Population Fund</p> <p>Sakena Yacoobi Founder and President, Afghan Institute of Learning</p> <p>Asma Khader Minister of Culture and Government Spokesperson, Jordan</p> <p>Open Discussion</p>
12:30 – 1:30	Lunch
1:30 – 3:00	<p>Session 2 <i>Shaping the Future Together: International Perspectives</i></p> <p>Chair: Yakin Ertürk United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, Its Causes and Consequences</p> <p>Panelists: Hilary Fisher Director of “Stop Violence Against Women” Campaign, Amnesty International</p> <p>Charlotte Bunch Founder and Executive Director, Center for Women’s Global Leadership</p> <p>Devaki Jain Founding Member, Development Alternatives for Women for a New Era</p> <p>Open Discussion</p>
3:00 – 3:15	Break
3:15 – 4:45	<p>Session 3 <i>Leading to Change: Women, Empowerment, and Justice</i></p> <p>Chair: Mahnaz Afkhami Founder and President, Women’s Learning Partnership</p> <p>Panelists: Hafsat Abiola Founder and Executive Director, Kudirat Initiative for Democracy</p> <p>Rabéa Naciri President, Association Démocratique des Femme du Maroc, Rabat</p> <p>Amina Lemrini Board Member, Association Démocratique des Femmes du Maroc, Rabat</p> <p>Zainah Anwar Executive Director, Sisters in Islam</p> <p>Open Discussion</p>
4:45 – 5:00	Closing Remarks

About the Speakers

Hafsat Abiola (Nigeria) is Founder and Executive Director of the Kudirat Initiative for Democracy (KIND), which seeks to strengthen civil society and promote democracy in Nigeria. In recognition of her work to promote democracy, youth, and women's leadership, Ms. Abiola was selected as a Global Leader of Tomorrow by the World Economic Forum in 2001 and as an Ashoka Fellow in 2003. She serves on several boards including Educate Girls Globally and Women's Learning Partnership, among others.

Mahnaz Afkhami (Iran/USA) is Founder and President of Women's Learning Partnership (WLP), Executive Director of the Foundation for Iranian Studies, and former Minister of State for Women's Affairs in Iran. She serves on advisory boards for Global Fund for Women, World Movement for Democracy, and Human Rights Watch. Her numerous publications have been widely translated and distributed internationally. In addition to her seminal work on training manuals, Ms. Afkhami is author of *Faith and Freedom: Women's Human Rights in the Muslim World*, *Muslim Women and The Politics of Participation*, *Women in Exile*, and *Women and the Law in Iran*.

Zainah Anwar (Malaysia) is Executive Director of Sisters in Islam (SIS), a group of professional Muslim women committed to promoting the rights of Muslim women. An advocate for women's rights under Islam and the possibilities for alternative interpretation of the Qur'an, she was formerly a member of the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia, a Chief Programme Officer for the Political Division at the Commonwealth Secretariat in London, and a Senior Analyst at the Institute of Strategic and International Studies. She was also a political and diplomatic writer for the *The New Straits Times* in Kuala Lumpur. Her book *Islamic Revivalism in Malaysia: Dakwah Among the Students* is a standard reference in the study of Islam in Malaysia.

Charlotte Bunch (USA) is Founder and Executive Director of the Center for Women's Global Leadership. Her publications include the Center's reports on the UN Beijing Plus 5 Review process in 2000 and the World Conference Against Racism in 2001. She is on the Advisory Committee for the Women's Rights Division of Human Rights Watch, the Board of the International Council on Human Rights Policy, and the Advisory Council for the Ethical Globalization Initiative. Ms. Bunch is a Distinguished Professor in the Women's and Gender Studies Department at Rutgers University.

Yakin Ertürk (Turkey) is the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences in the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. Ms. Ertürk is Chair of the Gender and Women's Study Programme in the Department of Sociology at the Middle East Technical University in Ankara, Turkey. Previously, Ms. Ertürk was Director of the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), New York, 1999 - 2001 and Director of the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), Santo Domingo, 1997-1999.

Hilary Fisher (United Kingdom) is the Director of Amnesty International's "Stop Violence Against Women" campaign and thus responsible for the strategy and delivery of the campaign across the movement. She has been engaged in research and action on women's human rights and human rights defenders for many years and represented Amnesty International at numerous external meetings including the recent UNIFEM/ILAC conference on Gender Justice in Post-Conflict situations, September 2004, and the United Nations meeting on developing Gender Sensitive Guidelines for the United Nations in 1995. Her previous posts at Amnesty International have included Head of the Office of the Secretary General and Researcher on Eastern Africa.

Noeleen Heyzer (Singapore) is Director of the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) where she serves as the UN's chief advocate for gender mainstreaming within the institution and internationally. She is the former head of the Gender and Development Programme in the Asian and Pacific

Development Centre in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and founding member of Development Alternatives for Women for a New Era, a network of women leaders. She has lectured and published extensively, most recently on the subject of women and the process of globalization.

Ayesha Imam (Nigeria) is a women's human rights activist, as well as a researcher, writer, and trainer on gender issues. She currently serves as Chief of the Culture, Gender, and Human Rights Branch of the UNFPA. She is the former Executive Director of BAOBAB for Women's Human Rights, a Nigeria-based non-profit organization working for women's human rights and legal rights under customary, religious, and secular law in Africa and internationally. In 2002, Ms. Imam and BAOBAB won the Humphrey Freedom Award for their work defending and promoting women's rights under Muslim criminal laws enacted in northern Nigeria. She also works actively as part of the core group of Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUML), an international solidarity network.

Devaki Jain (India) is a Founding Member of Development Alternatives for Women for a New Era India. She is a women's rights advocate and development economist. She was a member of the government of Karnataka's State Planning Board and has been a member of several expert groups of both the Government of India and UN agencies. She is Former Director of the Institute of Social Studies Trust and has taught in Delhi University.

Asma Khader (Jordan) is Minister of Culture and Government Spokesperson for the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. She is also Coordinator of Sisterhood Is Global Institute/Jordan (www.amanjordan.org) and former President of the Jordanian Women's Union. Ms. Khader is a member of the Arab Lawyer's Union, the Arab Organization for Human Rights, the Executive Committee of the International Commission of Jurists, and the Advisory Committee of the Women's Division of Human Rights Watch. She was instrumental in creating a Legal Literacy/Legal Assistance program for Jordanian women, as well as establishing the Jordanian Children's Parliament.

Amina Lemrini (Morocco) is a Founder and Member of the Moroccan Human Rights Organization (OMDH) and a member of the Executive Committee of the Association Démocratique des Femmes du Maroc (ADFM), a non-governmental organization working for the promotion and defense of women's rights in Morocco. She is on the Board of Directors of Collectif 95 Maghreb-Egalité, a women's regional NGO working in Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia. Ms. Lemrini has lectured and published on a variety of issues dealing with human rights, particularly on the rights of the child and women's rights.

Rabéa Naciri (Morocco) is President of the Association Démocratique du Femmes du Maroc (ADFM) Rabat, one of the largest Moroccan NGOs focused on the rights of women. Ms. Naciri is the former Executive Director of the Collectif 95 Maghreb Egalité, a network of women's associations and women researchers from Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia committed to preventing violence against women. Trained as a geomorphologist, she is a Professor in the Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines at the University of Rabat in Morocco. Ms. Naciri has written several articles and other publications on Arab women and poverty, women and Islam, capacity-building for women, and strategy development for the promotion of women's rights.

Sakena Yacoobi (Afghanistan) is Founder and President of the Afghan Institute of Learning (AIL), an Afghan women's NGO. Using inclusive, culturally sensitive principles of community engagement, AIL's programs provide teacher training, health education, school support, women's leadership and human rights training, and literacy programs for Afghan women and girls in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Ms. Yacoobi has directed the training of over 8,000 female Afghan teachers. She is Vice-President of Creating Hope International, a Michigan-based non-profit organization. She was awarded the 2004 Women's Rights Prize of the Peter Gruber Foundation for her courageous efforts to advance women's rights and opportunities for girls in Afghanistan and in refugee camps in Pakistan.