

'ISIS' IS NO ONE'S REPRESENTATIVE.

Interview with Houzan Mahmoud

Interview with Nira Yuval-Davis

*The Unfolding of a
Human Tragedy:
On the Israel-Palestine Issue*

campaigns

*Reyhaneh Jabbari's stay
of execution;
Keep the pressure on*



editorial

*Murder Can Never
Be Justified.*

arts

*Street Art by Black Hand –
“Iran’s Banksy”*

interviews

THE UNFOLDING OF A HUMAN TRAGEDY: ON THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN ISSUE

Interview with Nira Yuval-Davis

Maryam Namazie: *I wanted to ask you about the Israeli-Palestinian issue; it's a human tragedy unfolding before our eyes.*

Nira Yuval-Davis: It is a human tragedy and it's more than that. It's important to emphasise that this is not something that has started now or even in 1967 or 1948. This is something that has been going on in different ways (and not to the terrible way that it is now though it has always been in many ways horrible) since the beginning of the settler-colonial project of the Zionist movement. The Zionist movement sought to solve the so-called 'Jewish problem' - the terrible persecution and pogroms of Jews and anti-Semitism in Europe that culminated in the extermination and genocide of Jews under the Nazis. They sought national liberation but because of the dispersal of the Jewish population did it in a manner that was popular during that time - of settler-colonialism.

In such projects, the indigenous people, in this case the Palestinians, were completely invisible, or when they were visible, there were all kinds of assumptions that either they will disappear (and settlers were always happy to 'help' the indigenous people to 'disappear' by various acts of genocide), assimilate or like, in the utopian Altneuland (Old New Land) of Hertzl, they would willingly become second-rate citizens.

What's happening now in Gaza is of course the latest manifestation and the whole evolution and various dislocations that this country has had during more than 100 years, and with all its national, regional and global implications.

Maryam Namazie: *When you look at this situation, you find people mainly either siding with the Israeli state or siding with Hamas and the Islamists, whereas in fact*

"In a way [people in Gaza have] almost nothing to lose... There is no alternative unless Israel and the world, by exerting pressure on Israel, will allow the space for alternatives to emerge."



Gaza air strikes. Photo: Corbis, via [Telegraph](#)

there are so many people who are opposed to both and who want real peace.

Nira Yuval-Davis: We should not forget that Israeli security originally helped to bring about the birth of Hamas in the same way that the Taliban was helped and supported by the CIA. This is because they thought that the British imperial policy of 'divide-and-rule' would be the best weapon to weaken the PLO and divide the Palestinian resistance. Unfortunately, they succeeded too well but, of course, in their kind of racist superiority they didn't think that Hamas and the Palestinians in general are not just puppets; they have their own agency and would use the support that had been given to them to promote their own project, which was Muslim Fundamentalism.

And unfortunately now, this is a rising political project of belonging and we see for the first time in the history of the Middle East a series of territories controlled by Muslim Fundamentalists – ISIS in Syria, what is happening in Iraq and Libya, the ongoing fight in Egypt... So we shouldn't see the rule of Hamas in Gaza in isolation. And this is one of the reasons that once the PLO was willing to have a unity government with Hamas, Israel became so scared by this.

In a way, what is happening now is a direct result of the Israeli government being absolutely determined not to facilitate this unity government and in this sense they achieved this immediate goal, At least for now, but at what cost? The other goal was to end



A Palestinian woman sees her destroyed house in Beit Hanoun town, in the northern Gaza Strip. Photo: Reuters/Suhaib Salem via [IBTimes](#).

Palestinian resistance, especially in Gaza, which has faced a complete blockade especially now that the military Junta in Egypt is cooperating so closely with Israel. Gaza has no outlets on the Egyptian side, Israeli side or via the sea. In a way they have almost nothing to lose, except, of course those they are very willing to sacrifice – women and children and the people. But, on the other hand, people will not resist them because there is no alternative unless Israel and the world, by exerting pressure on Israel, will allow the space for alternatives to emerge. Otherwise, they are not going to exist.

Maryam Namazie: *When you look at the situation, you get a sense that neither the Israeli government nor Hamas want peace. They don't want a solution because they feed off of each other and use the situation for their own legitimisation.*

Nira Yuval-Davis: When people say peace (and in Israel I grew up with this kind of notion of peace), each side wants peace on condition that nothing else changes. Israel wants peace with its privileged position intact. And the Palestinians may agree to peace when they're in a dominant position – when the whole settler project ends.

Yet, you cannot solve one calamity by creating another in the same way that the persecution of Jews should not have been solved by the establishment of a Zionist settler-colonial state. The reality is that there are a people who have had no other homeland for more than 100 years and

Children in Gaza. Photo via [NYmag](#).





A Tribute By Israeli Artist Amir Schiby To Four Boys Killed On A Beach In Gaza , via [Daily KOS](#).

they belong to that country like other settler-colonial populations in the United States, Australia, Canada and South Africa. The people are there and need to continue to be able to live there.

Unfortunately unlike in South Africa there hasn't been an emergence of a counter-ideology in which both the indigenous people and the settlers want co-existence and peace on equal terms. There have been beginnings, some years ago, but, of course, at the moment people don't see the space.

One of the differences that one can see is that in 1982 when Israel invaded Beirut, there was a mass demonstration of more than 40,000 Israelis, most of whom still saw themselves as Zionists, who protested against the war. Now, there are several hundreds and they are often beaten up. The extreme-Right in Israel is now in a mode of terrible celebratory rationalisation like never before. I saw videos of people dancing 'death to the Arabs' and celebrating the killing of children who were killed in the UN school in Gaza, chanting that Palestinians (and Israeli Leftists) are not human beings. I also heard that extreme-Right activists were beating up people in the street if they refused to say 'death to the Arabs'. This is a fascisation in a way that is unprecedented in the history of Israel. Although racist ideology has been

there from the beginning, it has never ever been so horrific. And this is why it is so frightening. The other side, too, is not going to see sudden enlightenment and humanism and tolerance. Everything is just going to reinforce each other. This is really bleak.

Maryam Namazie: *It's bleak; do you see any hope for the resistance?*

Nira Yuval-Davis: I think the politics of hope is very important in order for us not to completely despair and give up. In this sense, Gramsci's pessimism of the intellect and optimism of the will is very important. And there are youngsters as well as older people who see the paradoxes - the horrible catch-22 situation - and they do want a way out. But emotions are not enough. You need to have some kind of a lever of power to be able to change things. And this is why, unfortunately, the way things are now only the superpowers are going to be able to put enough pressure on Israel in order to do it.

However, today there was a declaration of 72 hours of so-called humanitarian ceasefire that was broken by both sides after 2 hours. They were all supposed to meet in Egypt. Very interestingly also in these recent rounds, we see a much closer intervention by the Gulf regimes of Qatar and Saudi Arabia and as well



Mothers in Israel and Gaza 'want the same thing' - via [BBC](#)

So probably, eventually, like in South Africa, like in other settler societies, people will have to learn to live with each other or create some kind of equitable and agreed process. But at the moment the underlying conditions for either solution does not exist. You need a process of rapprochement in which some trust will be built. There was a historical window of opportunity after the first Gulf war, in the Madrid conference, in which Israel for the first time realised that

as Turkey. The interests of the regional powers in oil economies are much more focused on Gaza these days, at least partly because Gas has been discovered in the Mediterranean, near Israel, Gaza and Cyprus.

Maryam Namazie: *What do you think the solution is to the situation? How can you get a two-state solution?*

Nira Yuval-Davis: Most of those who promote a two-state solution see the conflict between Israel and Palestine as a question of territories and borders. Indeed in Gaza it does look as if it's a territorial conflict, after the Israeli settlements were dismantled by the withdrawal under Sharon because they didn't want to continue a direct role in Gaza as it is such a horrible mess for them. Although what Israel has declared to be a so-called buffer zone is already more than a third of this very tiny territory of Gaza in which millions live, This in itself is horrible, but beyond this we need to remember that more than 20% of Israeli citizens are Palestinians and there are so many settlers on the West Bank since 1967 - almost 50 years. So you cannot solve it by simply dividing the country into two-states unless you are going to generate a tremendous expulsion or at least exchange of population.

Of course something like this has happened in the Nakba of 1948 during the creation of the state of Israel and of the Palestinian refugee problem. Importantly, in the so-called Oslo peace process in which the two-state solution was discussed, the refugees were kept completely out of the picture. So, where are they going to live? Most of the people have loyalty and a feeling of belonging to their own village or to their own region. Israel does not have borders in the conventional sense of the term nor does Palestine.

it cannot solve the conflict in a military way; in which they realised that the United States is their ally but in the Gulf war they were embarrassed by them; they forbade them to fight and they felt completely powerless. So, at this time was an historical opportunity and negotiations started in Washington. However, at the same time, in the backrooms in Oslo, they had a parallel process in which peace was used as a continuation of the war in order to crystallise Israeli domination over the Palestinians. And, as we all know, eventually all this broke down and with it the beginnings of trust and the beginnings of hope... and broken trust and hope are much more difficult to re-establish.

So in some way, when we were all a bit more innocent (before the beginning of the Oslo process), it was easier than it is now. But of course, eventually we are part of history so there will be some kind of a resolution even if this resolution will be the continuation of Israel as a warfare society and the continuation of the Palestinian society as a refugee society. Or the other way around... But there is no end of history, unlike in chess when a game is finished. History never finishes; it always continues to move and metamorphose in a way that all too often - for us on the Left, feminists, anti-racists and anti-fundamentalists, - is not what we would like to see or struggle to achieve. But that's one of my down moments...

The above is an edited transcript of a [Bread and Roses TV interview](#) with [Nira Yuval-Davis](#), an Israeli Diasporic Jewish dissident.

interviews

'ISIS' is No ONE'S REPRESENTATIVE.

Interview with Houzan Mahmoud

Maryam Namazie: What is the situation in Iraq for women today with the attacks by ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Sham)? There have been reports of increasing rapes and sexual Jihad.

Houzan Mahmoud: In any conflict situation, the first received reports are of attacks on women, restrictions on their movement as well as rape. These are not new of such Jihadist movements or groups, which are heavily armed and extremely primitive. They have no respect for human rights or women's rights. According to news reports, Islamists are going to houses and to families and marrying young girls or children in what they call Jihadist Nikah - which is basically child abuse and against children's rights and human rights. They are also carrying out lots of killings and public executions. And they are carrying out terror at all levels - which is really dangerous.

Maryam Namazie: In new situations like this, the clash between the general population and the Islamists can be seen clearly. After a while, we are told that people want Islamists and Sharia law, but at the beginning you can see the masses of people fleeing and how very much Islamist values are at odds with the local population.

Houzan Mahmoud: Thousands of people from day one of the attacks have fled to Kurdistan; Kurdistan is full of refugees from the south part of Iraq particularly from Mosul and the surrounding areas. They are seeking refuge in our areas because it is actually the only place that is safe for them. If they were happy with these groups, why would they leave? On the other hand, there has been news that some people in the city welcomed ISIS and that goes back to the Maliki government's treatment of people in Mosul



(which is apparently, according to what is officially said in Iraq, a Sunni majority area). This goes back to the erroneous politics where human beings are reduced to religious beings – sects of religion, for example, Sunni, Shia...

People in Iraq are no longer citizens. You are either: Sunni, Shia, Turkman, Kurd or Arab...even Arab doesn't have much meaning anymore, in my opinion, because they are divided between Sunnis and Shias.

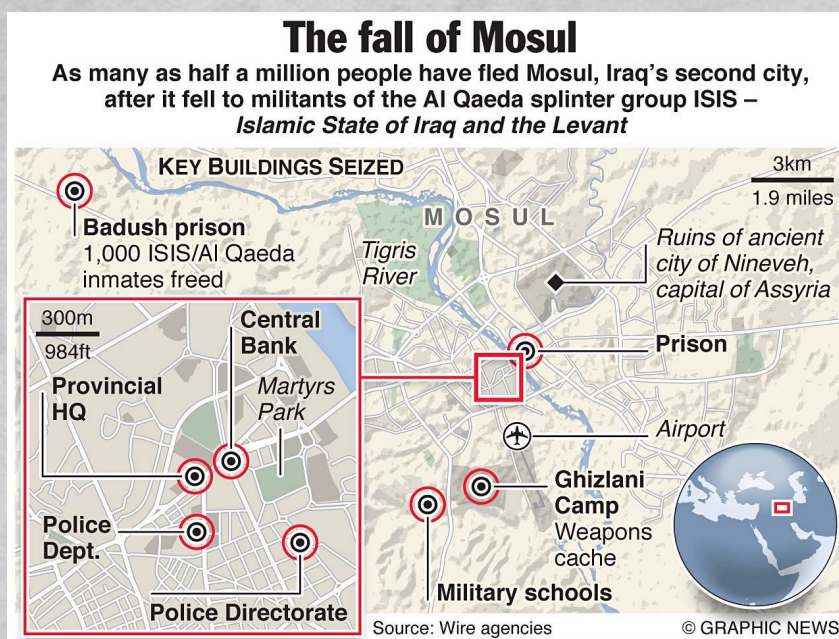
ISIS doesn't really represent the Sunni population, that's if we can call it the "Sunni" population. I myself don't think religion is something that people should identify with but let's say that people call themselves Sunnis, still ISIS is not a representative of the Sunni population in Iraq. We must make a very huge distinction between politicized Islam, politicized religion, and the actual faith where people pray or fast and don't actually want to politicize it, where religion is a personal matter. There is a huge gap between that wrong politicized representation and religion as we know it in society, which is practised by most of our families, my mum and your mum and other people. They never want to see groups like ISIS or Al Qaeda or anybody like that actually represent them and speak on their behalf and kill on their behalf. So I think this is the reality and that's where the story is lost; that ISIS is nobody's representative!

Maryam Namazie: You make a good point about the fact that there are no longer citizens in Iraq and in many countries actually. Part of the problem is the ethno-cisation and religion-isation of Iraq. A large part

of it has to do with how it was brought into being after the US attack. How much of a role do you think that the US attack has played on the situation that we're seeing today?

Houzan Mahmoud:

Certainly it has a lot to do with the US invasion of Afghanistan previously, and later on of Iraq, whereby these various political Islamic groups were created or supported or backed against the other. So there has been a Western or an imperialist hand behind the situation, whereas also there is a history to the ancient feud or conflict between the Sunnis and Shias. Let's not forget that Islam was never secularised in our countries and it was never pushed back to where it belongs. And most governments, even from the Ottoman Empire or the Persian Empire before or many other empires before, religion or Islam were endorsed and some sort of Sharia law was in place. But after the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the remapping of this so-called Middle East and the division of Kurdistan into four pieces – one to Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Syria - we have seen a lot of trouble there. For example, let's say Kurds are known to be Sunnis but we have never had a fundamentalist religious movement in our country. There were some political Islamic groups but actually because of elections now they got very low votes this time. So Kurdish society, in my opinion, has always been secular in one way or another; it had never condoned fundamentalist or the kind of Islamists that we know. Whereas in the South, even during Saddam's regime, there were political Islamic groups, which were highly oppressed by Saddam's regime and they were really highly controlled. So they could never gain momentum and popularity but after the invasion they were unleashed. They came out of everywhere – from Iran, from Europe... They came back. They are a kind of political merchants or warlords playing with people's feelings by saying all Sunnis have been oppressed; Saddam was Sunni and he oppressed the Shias. Now the Shias mobilise and rally people behind them with Saddam as a symbol of Sunnis. So you see



there's a lot of these Sunni-Shia problems. And there are a lot of political parties inside and outside power who are actually using this. That's where the problem is.

I think both the US and UK have had a very negative role on the Middle East for a very long time and specifically from 2003 onwards. They

have created this puppet regime in Baghdad, a regime that is made up of ethno-sectarian groups whereby actually nobody agrees with the other and nobody talks to each other. And there are almost fights between the fractions – between the Parliamentary groups, because they are Sunni or Shia or they are Kurd so they don't agree on anything. Corruption is widespread as is political violence. Maliki has his own prisons torturing people; other groups carry out their own paramilitary killing and kidnappings. So it's a zone of terror. And nobody knows why or who is behind all of this. Iran plays a very negative role; Turkey too. There is oil in Kurdistan; they have a very big eye on that. And they are actually benefitting from it; Iran the same. And on the question of independence for Kurdistan, of course, I can say the majority of Kurdish people want independence.

Maryam Namazie: Do you think independence is a possible solution now?

Houzan Mahmoud: I think it has to be a possible solution. Kurdish people or the political groups, at

"We must make a very huge distinction between politicized Islam, politicized religion, and the actual faith where people pray or fast and don't actually want to politicize it, where religion is a personal matter."

least, helped re-create Iraq after 2003. But it doesn't work; this government has to fall, in my opinion. A government that is based on the concept of ethno-sectarianism and religious sects and conflicts and ignores the people has to collapse. If people can no longer tolerate each other and can no longer live because this is Sunni or Kurd or what have you. I mean the Kurdish question is a very different question from the Sunni-Shia issue. It's much more historical and it's the legitimate right of people to actually have a say about their own future.



I am Kurdish, of course, Leftist and Internationalist. I don't like borders whatsoever and I don't think they have helped humanity at all. We are all made enemies of each other just because you are Iranian; he is Iraqi, she is Kurdish... And now we are being reduced to religious sects and, within religions, to Shia/Sunni... This liberal post-modernist creation of so many values and identities has led humanity to a very tragic situation where we can no longer talk within the same religion. I mean Sunni-Shia - what the hell is that? It's part of the same religion so each of you go to your own mosque. Now this one wants to blow up that

"We are in the 21st century but we are actually going back to the ancient times whereby tribes are killing each other.."

one's mosque. You know it is just crazy where human beings are going in this day and age... in 21st century whereby humanity, social movements, political movements have gained a lot in terms of human rights, children's rights, women's rights. This is not the 19th century whereby it's the beginning of these concepts. We are in the 21st century but we are actually going back to the ancient times whereby tribes are killing each other. And it's actually what I see in Iraq. It's a kind of ancient conflict coming back to the fore, but in a different context and a different format.

As for the Kurdish question, it is absolutely a different question and I personally support an independent Kurdish state and that is the legitimate right of the Kurdish people. It is the right of 4 or 5 million people, particularly in Iraqi Kurdistan, but of course all other parts as well. In Syria, Kurds have been denied their rights; Turkey the same. 10,000 political prisoners and Turkey claims to be a democratic country but actually has 10,000 Kurdish political prisoners; that's not little. Iran is the same of course.

Maryam Namazie: *How can people support Iraqi people, Kurdish people?*

Houzan Mahmoud: I think it is important not to fall into these divisions of religious sects; there are secular-progressive forces in this region and in these areas as well. And there are a lot of Kurdish people who want Independence for Kurdistan and their



of or much of this fascism that we were subjected to as Kurds. And that's not easy really and we never want that to be repeated under the Maliki government. And I think that he's going in the same direction as well. He's another fascist but in a different time.

Maryam Namazie: *Women are not just victims; they are also active in resisting and defending basic rights. OWFI – Organisation of*

rights; these legitimate rights should be supported by the international community because in Iraq we have had genocides. Over 180,000 people were subjected to genocide whereby today we don't even have their corpses, let alone the political imprisonments and violence. I lived under Saddam's regime. My family were all peshmarga fighters. And, so I witnessed some

Women's Freedom in Iraq – which you are active with has been instrumental in defending women's rights there. Tell us some of the things that you have been doing on the ground there. I heard that you're even doing work in areas that have been under ISIS control.

Houzan Mahmoud: Yes, I'm an activist for the Organisation of Women's Freedom in Iraq from the very beginning. From 2003 until now they have been providing shelters for battered women and uncovering all kinds of crimes and violence against women in Iraq even at risk to their lives to get this information out on the rapes and tortures in prison and by the Maliki regime to the killings by the US and to the using of chemical weapons whereby a lot of Iraqi children have been ill and also to the recent situation whereby a lot of women are fleeing the Islamic attacks to the southern cities as well as to Kurdistan. OWFI tries within its limits to basically support these women as much as possible; they go to some of the camps to provide basic necessities to women and children in particular and to document some of the violations as well and to get news out on what is actually happening on the ground.

The above is an edited transcript of a Bread and Roses TV interview with Houzan Mahmoud, International Spokesperson for Organisation of Women's Freedom in Iraq.

Campaigning for women's rights in Iraq

Early Moun gives an account of her life with Houzan Mahmoud of the Organisation of Women's Freedom in Iraq (OWFI)

When you meet an activist in the field, it's often a surprise. It's not just the name, it's the way they speak, the way they think, the way they act. It's a mix of the personal and the political, the individual and the collective. It's a mix of the past and the present, the memory and the hope. It's a mix of the pain and the joy, the loss and the gain. It's a mix of the struggle and the triumph, the resistance and the defiance. It's a mix of the courage and the fear, the strength and the weakness. It's a mix of the love and the hate, the compassion and the anger. It's a mix of the light and the dark, the good and the evil. It's a mix of the human and the divine, the mortal and the immortal. It's a mix of the finite and the infinite, the limited and the unlimited. It's a mix of the known and the unknown, the seen and the unseen. It's a mix of the real and the ideal, the actual and the potential. It's a mix of the concrete and the abstract, the tangible and the intangible. It's a mix of the physical and the spiritual, the material and the immaterial. It's a mix of the temporal and the eternal, the transient and the permanent. It's a mix of the temporal and the eternal, the transient and the permanent. It's a mix of the temporal and the eternal, the transient and the permanent.

How did OWFI begin?

OWFI was founded in 2003, after the invasion of Iraq by the US-led coalition forces. It was founded by a group of women who were active in the resistance against Saddam's regime. They were women who had experienced the violence and oppression of the regime, and who were determined to continue the struggle for women's rights in Iraq.

What are the main issues that OWFI campaigns for?

OWFI campaigns for a wide range of issues, including women's rights, human rights, and the rights of children. We are particularly concerned about the violence against women, the sexual violence, and the discrimination against women in Iraq.

How do you see the situation for women's rights in Iraq?

The situation for women's rights in Iraq is very difficult. There is a lot of violence against women, and women are being discriminated against in many ways. We are working to raise awareness of these issues and to support women who are being oppressed.

How do you see the role of women's organisations in Iraq?

Women's organisations in Iraq play a crucial role in the struggle for women's rights. They provide a platform for women to voice their concerns and to demand change. They also provide support and resources for women who are being oppressed.

How do you see the role of the international community in Iraq?

The international community has a responsibility to support the struggle for women's rights in Iraq. We need more resources and more attention from the international community to help us in our work.

How do you see the role of the media in Iraq?

The media has a crucial role to play in the struggle for women's rights in Iraq. We need more women's voices in the media, and we need more coverage of women's issues. We are working to raise awareness of these issues and to support women who are being oppressed.

How do you see the role of the youth in Iraq?

The youth in Iraq have a crucial role to play in the struggle for women's rights. We need more young women who are active in the struggle, and we need more support for young women who are being oppressed.

How do you see the role of the religious community in Iraq?

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newsflash

AGHANISTAN

Taliban gunmen stopped two vehicles in central [Afghanistan](#) and shot dead 10 men, four women and one child police in Ghor province said. Most of the slain were labourers heading to Kabul. "They ordered all passengers to stand in one line, and then they shot them dead one by one". A newly-wed couple amongst those killed. The group may have been on the way back from celebrating the marriage.

women's activists that she was likely to be killed. The head of the Women for Afghan Women shelter where the girl took refuge, Dr. Hassina Sarwari, was at one point driven into hiding by death threats from the girl's family and other mullahs. The doctor said she now wanted to flee Afghanistan. The head of the women's affairs office in Kunduz, Nederah Geyah, who actively campaigned to have the young girl protected from her family and the mullah prosecuted, resigned on May 21 and moved to another part of the country.



Via www.rawa.org: Dr. Hassina Sarwari, the head of Women for Afghan Women, showed photos of a girl who reported being raped by a mullah. (Photo: Bryan Denton/The New York Times)

A 10 year old girl was [raped](#) in a mosque by a mullah who invoked the familiar defence that it had been consensual. The authorities said her family members openly planned to carry out an "honour killing" against the young girl. The mullah offered to marry his victim instead. The police then removed the girl from the shelter that had given her refuge and returned her to her family despite complaints from

The government of Afghanistan should adopt [recommendations](#) to abolish prosecution of women for "moral crimes." Afghanistan rejected the recommendations in its Universal Periodic Review Outcome Report at the UN Human Rights Council. The government's rejection of the recommendations to end prosecutions for "moral crimes" undercuts its

acceptance of recommendations supporting women's rights. The action also runs counter to directives from Afghanistan's attorney general and Justice Ministry to decriminalize "running away" and "attempted zina," or sex outside marriage.

EGYPT

On June 29, 2014, the first session of the case of the 7 women [human rights defenders](#) was conducted, among others, known as the Ittihadia Presidential Palace Case; the judge postponed the session. The seven women human rights defenders are Yara Sallam, Sanaa Seif, Hanan Mustafa Mohamed, Salwa Mihriz, Samar Ibrahim, Nahid Sherif (known as Nahid Bebo) and Fikreya Mohamed (known as Rania El-Sheikh). The women were arrested on 21 June 2014 along with others for protesting peacefully against the Protest and Public Assembly Law.

INDIA

When her brother was accused of sexually molesting a woman the head of the village council ordered that the brother of the victimized woman [rape](#) the 10-year-old sister of the man accused. The little girl was dragged out of her house and raped. The entire village witnessed the crime but no one intervened, and most are refusing to speak out.



IRAN

A number of female employees were recently fired by the [Tehran](#) municipality for their own "well-being." Citing long hours and possible disruptions to family life, officials at the Tehran municipality have replaced female secretarial workers with men. Farzad Khalafi, media affairs deputy for the Tehran municipality, said: "Secretarial work and office management is time consuming and lengthy, and for the comfort and well-being of women, this decision was adopted that the office manager and secretary be a gentleman".



The ban on [Iranian women](#) entering stadiums once again caused an uproar as police forces didn't allow women to attend the International Federation of Volleyball World League games in Tehran. Police dispersed women's rights activists and female volleyball fans who were gathered in front of the entrance of Azadi Stadium when Iran played Italy in the first leg on June 20. According to eyewitness reports, some were beaten and detained. The ban originally came after the establishment of an Islamic regime in Iran as mixed crowds enjoying games was deemed un-Islamic. "In the current conditions, the mixing of men and women in stadiums is not in the public interest", said Iran's police chief, Esmail Ahmadi Moghadam. "The stance taken by religious

scholars and the supreme leader remains unchanged, and as the enforcer of law, we cannot allow women to enter stadiums".

Iranian woman faces the 'Morality Police'.
Photo via [WomenNewsNetwork](#).



In the latest case of [Iranian](#) authorities cracking down on fashion they deem “un-Islamic,” clothing design institute called “Khaneh Mode” or Mode House was shut down in Tehran. It caused a controversy when it held a show with models wearing coats which appeared to be made of the Iranian flag—minus its religious symbols. Nor did it help that the show had allowed men among its audience, which violates Islamic rules. The shutting down of the fashion house is just the latest instance of an endless tug of war between authorities and women in Iran, one that has been fought since an Islamic dress code was enforced since establishment of Islamic regime. This clash comes to the forefront every summer, when the latest female attire trends pick up with a tendency towards shorter and skimpier coats and ever tighter legwear, which has been epitomized this year in leggings. The authorities react every year by

escalating their “Morality Patrols.” The outcome is a cat and mouse game between more fashionably dressed women and the authorities. The results can be

bizarre—women sporting trendy attire will sometimes take taxis from one side to the other side of squares and junctions just to bypass the morality police. But over time the will of Iranian women has slowly but surely prevailed, with acceptable dress these days now far beyond the harsh codes of the first years of the Islamic regime, when practically no makeup was tolerated and anything less than a chador—a loose robe that covers the body from head to toe—was frowned upon. Officially there has been no relaxation, in fact the authorities have tried everything they could think of to counter it. But in practice it’s a losing battle.

IRAQ

ISIS has [warned](#) women in the city of Mosul to wear full-face veils or risk severe punishment. They also listed guidelines on how veils and clothes should be worn. "The conditions imposed on her clothes and grooming was only to end the pretext of debauchery resulting from grooming and overdressing" the group said in a statement. "This is not a restriction on her freedom but to prevent her from falling into humiliation and vulgarity or to be a theatre for the eyes of those who are looking". A cleric in Mosul said ISIS gunmen had shown up at his mosque and ordered him to read their warning on loudspeakers when worshippers gather. "Anyone who is not committed to this duty and is motivated by glamour will be subject to accountability and severe punishment to protect

society from harm and to maintain the necessities of religion and protect it from debauchery" it said. The guidelines said women's hands and feet must be covered, shapeless clothes that don't hug the body must be worn and perfume is prohibited. Women have also been told to never walk unaccompanied by a male guardian. ISIS has even ordered shopkeepers to cover their store mannequins with full-face veils. The insurgents run vice patrols in Mosul that answer to a morality committee, which has shut the city's college of fine arts and physical education, knocked down statues of famous poets and banned smoking and waterpipes. ISIS militants view Iraq's majority Shias as infidels who deserve to be killed and have told Christians to either convert to Islam, pay a religious levy or face death. Their views have alarmed Iraqis.

Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) executing dozens of captured Iraqi security forces members at an unknown location in the Salaheddin province. (AFP Photo)



Islamists killed 29 people – [20 of them women](#) – in Baghdad. One officer said he "found bodies everywhere". Writing left on the door of one of the buildings read: "This is the fate of any prostitution". Locals in Zayouna have accused Shia militias of killing women thought to be prostitutes. The neighbourhood is a mixed district of Sunni and Shia Muslims.

much of their face. An official in the northern Syrian city of Raqqa said that the brigade was established to raise awareness of Islam among women, and to punish women who do not abide by the law. The group came up with the new rule saying that doing so was in line with Sharia law. Members of the group assert that the human form is not to be depicted in statues or artwork. One of Iraq's prominent Christian politicians, Yonadam Kanna, said that this was ethnic cleansing but nobody was speaking up.

ISIS has [formed](#) an all-female brigade called the 'al-Khansaa' to ensure strict adherence to Sharia law by the Iraqi and Syrian women. A local activist said that the al-Khansaa have detained and whipped women for wearing veils that are too thin, wearing hair clips under veils, walking alone and exposing too



Islamist women of 'ISIS' patrol & punish women. Photo via [ABC news](#).

Amid worsening armed violence in [Iraq](#), the Baghdad-based Organisation of Women's Freedom in Iraq is working to help women who have been harmed and driven out of their homes. The group is reaching out to cities with the largest numbers of women displaced by the fighting. While men on both sides of

the conflict in Iraq are being shot by militants or taken by force and sent to the front lines with the army, women are being kidnapped and raped. The group is also concerned about the situation in the northern city of Mosul, where atrocities against women have been concentrated. The city was seized on June 10 by ISIS. Women "are being kidnapped from their house by the ISIS warriors and forced into what they call into a 'jihad marriage'" says Yanar Mohamed, the organisation's president. Jihad marriage, also known as "sexual jihad", is a term for women who offer sexual comfort to fighters to assist the cause of establishing Islamic rule. In the cases to which Mohammed refers, however, the women are not volunteers. They are forced. Over the past week, 18 women were taken from their houses and raped by ISIS in Mosul. Large media outlets have reported that four women who were raped have committed suicide. More than 500,000 of Mosul residents have fled since the surprise of the attack, according to U.N. agencies. Consequences of the establishment of an Islamic state by the ISIS, is associated with the restriction of movement by women, rape, abductions, forced prostitutions and increase in forced and child marriages. Reports of mass killings committed by ISIS have been emerging.

LIBYA

Libyan lawyer, politician and human rights activist [Salwa Bugaighis](#) was assassinated at her home on June 25, 2014. Salwa Bugaighis played an active part in Libya's 2011 revolution, which overthrew the regime of Muammar Gaddafi. She was appointed a

member of the National Transitional Council but soon resigned because of the lack of progress in women's rights. Thereafter she was the vice-president of a preparatory committee for national dialogue in Libya. Salwa Bugaighis was one of the driving forces behind the political transition in the post-Gaddafi era and continued with passion and courage to fight for the role of women in this transition.



Salwa Bugaighis, Libyan human rights activist, shot dead in Benghazi. Photo via [The Guardian](#).

NIGERIA

Nearly a dozen parents of the more than 200 kidnapped [Nigerian](#) schoolgirls will never see their daughters again. Since the mass abduction of the schoolgirls by Boko Haram three months ago, at least 11 of their parents have died and their hometown, Chibok, is under siege from the Islamists. Seven fathers of kidnapped girls were among 51 bodies brought to Chibok hospital after an attack on the nearby village of Kautakari this month, said a health worker who insisted on anonymity for fear of reprisals by the extremists. At least four more parents have died of heart failure, high blood pressure and other illnesses that the community blames on trauma due to the mass abduction 100 days ago. A

presidential committee investigating the kidnappings said 219 girls still are missing. Boko Haram filmed a video in which they threatened to sell the students into slavery and as child brides. It also showed a couple of the girls describing their "conversion" from Christianity to Islam. At least two have died of snake bites, a mediator who was liaising with Boko Haram told AP. At that time he said at least 20 of the girls were ill — not surprising given that they are probably being held in an area infested with malarial mosquitoes, poisonous snakes and spiders, and relying on unclean water from rivers.

PAKISTAN

Four women were critically injured in an acid attack in southwest [Pakistan](#). The women were shopping at a popular retail centre in Quetta when two men approached on motorcycle and threw the acid at the women's faces. The women are being treated in the burn unit of the Bolan Medical Complex.

A pregnant 25-year-old was stoned to death by her own family in a so-called "honour" killing for marrying the man she loved in [Pakistan](#), police said. Farzana Iqbal was attacked outside the Lahore High Court building. She had been engaged to her cousin but married Mohammad Iqbal instead.

PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES

The Israeli state [offensive](#) has killed 663 Palestinians, of whom 541 are civilians, including 161 children and 91 women, and 3,457 others wounded, mostly civilians, including 991 children and 703 women. 491 houses have been targeted and destroyed and hundreds of others extensively damaged with thousands of Palestinian civilians forcibly displaced.

See Maryam Namazie's statement in defence of the children and people of Israel and Palestine on [Bread and Roses TV](#).



Relatives weep over the death of Farzana, who was three months pregnant. Photo via [Huffington Post UK](#).

AP

SOMALIA

Popular [Somali](#) musician and member of parliament Saado Ali Warsame has been shot dead along with a civil servant in a drive-by shooting in Mogadishu by the Islamist group, al-Shabab . She is the fourth MP to be killed this year. Ms Warsame rose to fame during the time of former President Siad Barre, who was overthrown in 1991, with her songs which were critical of his rule. She was one of the few Somali female musicians to go on stage without covering her head and she sometimes wore trousers. The singer-songwriter continued to perform even after taking up her position in parliament.



Somali musician and MP Saado Ali Warsame. Photo via [BBC](#).

SUDAN

Meriam Yahia Ibrahim Ishag, a [Sudanese](#) woman reached Italy with her family after being spared a death sentence for apostasy after more than a month in the US embassy in Khartoum. Mrs Ibrahim's father is Muslim so according to Sudan's Islamic law she is also Muslim and cannot convert. She was raised by her Christian mother and says she has never been Muslim. Ibrahim's husband, Daniel Wani, also a Christian, is from South Sudan and has US nationality. Their daughter Maya was born in prison in May, shortly after Mrs Ibrahim was sentenced to hang for apostasy. Under intense

international pressure, her conviction was quashed and she was freed in June. She was given South Sudanese travel documents but was arrested at Khartoum airport, with Sudanese officials saying the travel documents were fake. These new charges meant she was not allowed to leave the country but she was released into the custody of the US embassy in Khartoum. Last week, her father's family filed a lawsuit trying to have her marriage annulled, on the basis that a Muslim woman is not allowed to marry a non-Muslim.

SYRIA

Militants with black masks stand by as 15-year-old [Mohammed](#) watches a video of fighters cutting off a man's head. "This is jihad for the sake of God" the men with rifles say. Mohammed begins to feel lost, confused. "Does God want me to do jihad?" he wonders.

This is Mohammed's eyewitness account told to CNN. He was one of the more than 140 Kurdish schoolboys kidnapped in Syria last month by ISIS and forced to take daily lessons in Islamist theology. Armed fighters in pickup trucks on May 29 stopped



buses driving children back to their hometown of Ayn al-Arab from their junior high final exams in Aleppo. "How can you sit with the girls? It is forbidden!" the men, many with foreign accents, yelled as they separated the female students and took only the boys. The convoy of fighters then forcibly escorted the all-male group to the ISIS-controlled city of Manbij in northern Syria, Mohammed told CNN. Nearly a month later, all the boys, ranging in age from 14 to 16, remain hostages, except for Mohammed and three others who made a harrowing escape.

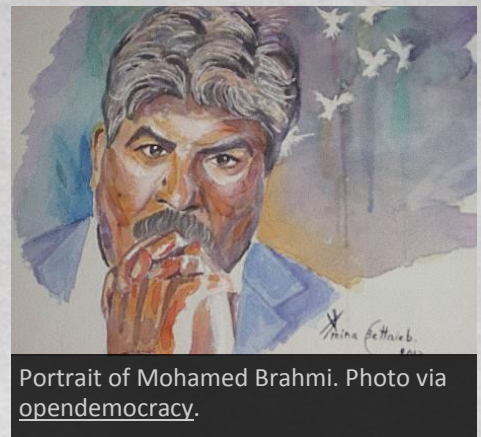
From the initial uprisings against the government of Bashar al-Assad in spring 2011, women in [Syria](#) have organised and participated in peaceful demonstrations and provided vital humanitarian assistance to those in need. Like their male counterparts, Syrian women who take part in protests or provide aid are targets of abuse, harassment, detention, and even torture by government forces and some armed groups opposed to the government. At the same time, general insecurity and discriminatory restrictions imposed by some armed groups opposed to the government have curtailed women's dress and freedom of movement. Many women have become de facto household heads, both inside Syria and in refugee settings, when male family members have been killed, detained, forcibly disappeared, injured, disabled, or unable to find steady employment.

TUNISIA

On the first anniversary of Mohamed Brahmi's assassination, his widow denounces fundamentalism and terrorism in [Tunisia](#). In memory of her husband, a left-wing politician, Mbarka Brahmi

urges Tunisians not to support the Ennahdha party in the autumn elections, and appeals for peace. Mbarka Brahmi, 47,

mother of five, has become a key spokesperson for the fight against fundamentalism and terror in Tunisia since the assassination of her husband Mohamed Brahmi a year ago at their Tunis home on 25 July 2013.



Portrait of Mohamed Brahmi. Photo via [opendemocracy](#).

TURKEY

On a single day -- July 2 -- three women were murdered by their husbands in [Turkey](#). The following day, a young woman was killed by her 16-year-old brother. Since then, there have been several murders of women by their husband or a close male relative. The Turkish government continuously fails to tackle the issue, and instead tries to defend itself from any responsibility or blame.



Protesters hold pictures of the murdered women in Turkey-byDHA

arts corner

Street Art by Black Hand – “Iran’s Banksy”

A striking piece of graffiti in Tehran showing a woman holding up a World Cup in the shape of a washing-up liquid bottle has gone viral. It’s by [Black Hand](#) who is sometimes referred to as “Iran’s Banksy”. It’s unclear whether it’s a man, a woman, or a group of artists behind the work, but the graffiti keeps springing up around the Iranian capital.

The graffiti is the image of a woman in the national team kit, holding a bottle of washing-up liquid. It’s in response to women being banned from matches in stadiums.

The graffiti has been painted over.



upcoming events



The Religious Right, Secularism & Civil Rights

OCTOBER 11-12, 2014 | TOWER HILL HOTEL, LONDON, UK

Join a **weekend of discussions and debates** on the religious right, its attacks on civil rights and freedoms, and the role of secularism for 21st century humanity.

The Arab uprisings; Sharia and religious laws; the burqa and conspicuous religious symbols; freedom of expression and its limits; apostasy, blasphemy and free thought; "Islamophobia" and racism; honour crimes; faith schools and religious education; reproductive rights and secular values will be amongst the **topics discussed**.

The conference is **endorsed by** Atheist Alliance International; Children First Now; Council of Ex-Muslims of Britain; Equal Rights Now; Fitnah; International Committee against Stoning; International Committee against Execution; International Federation of Iranian Refugees; Iran Solidarity; One Law for All; Secularism is a Women's Issue; The Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason and Science UK; & Women Living Under Muslim Laws, amongst others.

**FOR ORGANISATIONS OR VENDORS WISHING TO BOOKS STALLS,
FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO PURCHASE TICKETS, PLEASE CONTACT:**

Post: BM Box 2387, London, WC1N 3XX, United Kingdom
Tel: +44 (0) 7719166731

E-mail: onelawforall@gmail.com or fitnah.movement@gmail.com

Web: <http://www.onelawforall.org.uk> or <http://www.fitnah.org>

For up to date information on the conference, please visit www.secularconference.com

upcoming events



The Religious Right, Secularism & Civil Rights

WEEKEND ADMISSION

2-day conference, including lunches, a cocktail reception and a Saturday evening dinner and entertainment.

UNWAGED £150

WAGED £160

ORGANISATIONS £170

PRICE AFTER 1 MAY 2014: UNWAGED £155, WAGED £170, ORGANISATIONS £180.

SINGLE ADMISSION

Admission to **either** Saturday or Saturday conference (including lunch), **or** Saturday dinner & entertainment.

UNWAGED £50

WAGED £60

ORGANISATIONS £70

PRICE AFTER 1 MAY 2014: UNWAGED £55, WAGED £70, ORGANISATIONS £80.

REGISTRATION FEES ARE NON-REFUNDABLE AFTER MAY 1, 2014.

For up to date information on the conference, please visit www.secularconference.com

PHOTO CREDIT: Ezequiel Scagnetti © European Union (Front)

upcoming events

Conference update

**Historic International Conference
On the Religious-Right, Secularism and Civil
Rights**
11-12 October 2014
The Tower Hotel, St Katharine's Way, London
E1W 1LD, UK

REGISTER TODAY AT
www.secularconference.com

Join notable free-thinkers, atheists and secularists from around the world for a weekend of discussions and debates on the religious-Right, its attacks on civil rights and freedoms, and the role of secularism for 21st century humanity. The exciting two-day conference will discuss the Arab Spring, Sharia and religious laws, the limits of religion's role in society, free expression, honour killings, apostasy and blasphemy laws, faith schools, women's rights, secular values and much more.

The conference will be held at the [Tower Hotel](#) with spectacular views of the River Thames and the Tower of London. On the evening of 11 October, participants will enjoy cocktails followed by a delicious three-course meal and entertainment in the company of our speakers.

Distinguished speakers and acts:

- **AC Grayling** is a Philosopher, Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and the Royal Society of Arts, Honorary Associate of the National Secular Society and author and commentator.
- **Amal Farah** is Spokesperson for the Council of Ex-Muslims of Britain and One Law for All. She is Somali-born and was raised in a conservative and literalist Muslim household.
- **Amel Grami** is Professor at the Tunisian University of Manouba; she was on the frontlines of Manouba's successful struggle to defy a Salafist siege last year and is a leading expert on Religion and Women's Studies.
- **Amina Sboui** is a Tunisian activist threatened and imprisoned after posting topless photos of herself on Facebook carrying the slogan: "My Body is not the Source of Anyone's Honour".
- **Bahram Soroush** is Public Relations Officer of the Free Them Now! Campaign to Free Jailed Workers in Iran and a co-host of Bread and Roses TV Programme.
- **Ben Baz Aziz** is a Presenter at Arab Atheist broadcasting and a blogger focusing on LGBT and atheist rights in the Middle East who was imprisoned in Kuwait for blasphemy.
- **Caroline Fourest** is a French writer, editor of the magazine ProChoix, and author of Frère Tariq, a critical look at the works of Tariq Ramadan and books on topics such as the conservative right, the pro-life movement and the fundamentalist trends in the Abrahamic religions.
- **Chetan Bhatt** is the director of the Centre for the Study of Human rights at LSE. His current projects include work on the emergence of virtue in modern political ideologies, new forms of the regional state in South Asia and the sociology of religious paramilitia groups.
- **Chris Moos** is a secular student activist who has led a successful campaign for the right to wear 'Jesus and Mo' t-shirts after being harassed and threatened with removal at his university. He was a nominee for the NSS' Secularist of the Year 2014 award.
- **Elham Manea** is a Yemeni associate professor specialized in the Middle East, a writer, and a human rights activist. Her concept of humanistic Islam was first published in a series of articles in Arabic.
- **Faisal Saeed Al-Mutar** is an Iraqi born writer and a social activist living in the United States. He is the founder of the Global Secular Humanist Movement and Secular Post.
- **Fariborz Pooya** is the founder of the Iranian Secular Society, was one of the founding members of the Council of Ex-Muslims of Britain and is a co-host of Bread and Roses TV.
- **Fatou Sow** is a Senegalese Sociologist, and a member of a number of African and international associations as well as the International Director of Women Living Under Muslim Laws.
- **Gita Sahgal** is an Indian-born writer, journalist, film-maker and rights activist, Director of Centre for Secular Space who was suspended by Amnesty International as head of its Gender Unit in 2010 for criticising the organisation's relations with an Islamist group.
- **Hamid Taqvaee** is the Secretary of the Worker-Communist Party of Iran's Central Committee and a leading Marxist opposition figure to the Islamic

upcoming events

regime of Iran.

- **Houzan Mahmoud** is a Kurdish women's rights campaigner and the Spokesperson of the Organisations of Women's Freedom in Iraq. She has written and campaigned extensively on women's rights issues.
- **Horia Mosadiq** has been Director of the Afghanistan Human Rights Research and Advocacy Consortium and an advisor to the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, as well as a journalist in Afghanistan and Pakistan.
- **Imad Iddine Habib** is a Moroccan atheist threatened for his atheism, founder of the Council of Ex-Muslims of Morocco, the first public atheist organisation in a country with Islam as the state religion.
- **Inna Shevchenko** is leader of FEMEN topless activists who was kidnapped and threatened by the Belarus KGB in 2011 for her activism. She was granted political asylum in France.
- **Julie Bindel** is an English writer, feminist and co-founder of the group Justice for Women. She was listed in the Independent's "Pink List" as one of the top 101 most influential gay and lesbian people in the UK.
- **Kacem El Ghazzali** is a Moroccan secularist writer, blogger, activist and atheist. He was the head of the Moroccan Center for Human Rights' Youth Chapter and is a member of the Executive Board of the Moroccan Bloggers Association.
- **Karima Bennoune** is a law professor at the University of California Davis School of Law, and author of "Your Fatwa Does Not Apply Here: Untold Stories from the Fight Against Muslim Fundamentalism".
- **Kate Smurthwaite** is a stand-up comedian and political activist. She has appeared on more than 500 TV and radio shows including This Morning, The Big Questions, Woman's Hour and The Moral Maze.
- **Kenan Malik** is a writer, lecturer and broadcaster, a presenter of BBC Radio 4's Analysis and a panellist on The Moral Maze. His book From Fatwa to Jihad was shortlisted for the Orwell Prize.
- **Kiran Opal** is a Pakistani-born human rights activist, writer, and editor living in Canada. She is co-founder of Ex-Muslims of North America and Editor of ExMuslimBlogs.
- **Layla Saleem** spent 6 years in an Islamic school in Britain and now campaigns for secular education.
- **LCP** is a multimedia and multiethnic dance company which emphasises human rights issues mainly human trafficking.
- **Lila Ghobady** is an Iranian writer-journalist and documentary filmmaker. Her first independent release, Forbidden Sun Dance, was banned by the Islamic Republic of Iran.
- **Maha Kamal** is an ex-Muslim who was disowned by her parents for leaving Islam, President of the Colorado Prison Law Project, and Commissioner at the Colorado Supreme Court Chief Justice's Commission on Inclusiveness.
- **Magdulien Abaida** is a Libyan Activist and president of Hakki (My Right) Organization for Women Rights. She was kidnapped by Islamists in Benghazi in August 2012 and fled after her release three days later.
- **Marieme Helie Lucas** is an Algerian sociologist, founder and former International Coordinator of the Women Living Under Muslim Laws. She is also the founder of Secularism Is A Women's Issue.
- **Maryam Namazie** is Spokesperson for Fitnah, One Law for All and Council of Ex-Muslims of Britain; editor of Fitnah's Unveiled; and producer and co-host of Bread and Roses.
- **Nadia El Fani** is a Tunisian filmmaker who risks arrest and up to five years in prison if she returns to Tunisia after Islamists filed a complaint against her film "Neither Allah nor Master".
- **Nahla Mahmoud** is an environmentalist and human right activist originally from Sudan. She leads the Sudanese Humanists Group and is Spokesperson for the Council of Ex-Muslims of Britain.
- **Nina Sankari** is President of the European Feminist Initiative in Poland, and Vice-President of the Polish Rationalist Association.
- **Pervez Hoodbhoy** is a Pakistani nuclear physicist and recipient of a number of awards. He is also a prominent environmentalist and social activist.
- **Peter Tatchell** has been campaigning for rights and global justice since 1967. New Statesman readers voted him sixth on their list of "Heroes of our time". He was Campaigner of the Year in The Observer Ethical Awards.
- **Pragna Patel** is a founding member of the Southall Black Sisters and Women Against Fundamentalism. She was listed in The Guardian's Top 100 women: activists and campaigners.
- **Ramin Forghani** is founder of the Ex-Muslims of

upcoming events

Scotland and Vice-Chair of the Scottish Secular Society.

- **Randa Kassis** is President and founder of the Movement for a Pluralistic Society. She was a member of the Syrian National Council until she was excluded for her warnings against Muslim fundamentalists in 2012.
- **Rumy Hassan** is Senior Lecturer at University of Sussex and author of “Dangerous Liaisons: The Clash between Islamism and Zionism” and “Multiculturalism: Some Inconvenient Truths”.
- **Salil Tripathi** is an award-winning journalist, a contributing editor at Mint and at Caravan in India. He was board member of English PEN from 2009 to 2013, and co-chaired PEN’s Writers-at-Risk Committee.
- **Sanal Edamaruku** is an author and founder-president of Rationalist International and the Indian Rationalist Association. In 2012, he was charged with hurting religious sentiments for his role in examining a claimed miracle at a local Catholic Church.
- **Shelley Segal** is a Melbourne based singer-songwriter involved in secular activism. ‘An Atheist Album’ is a passionate response to dogmatic belief, inequality, religious oppression and the idea that only the devout can be grateful and good.
- **Siba Shakib** is an Iranian/German film-maker, writer and political activist. She was born and raised in Tehran, Iran. Her international best-seller Afghanistan, Where God Only Comes to Weep has been translated into 27 languages and won a P.E.N. prize.
- **Sue Cox** is the co-founder of Survivors Voice Europe, an international organisation that has at its heart the support and empowerment of catholic clergy abuse survivors of which she is one.
- **Taj Hargey** is South African Muslim scholar. He was an anti-apartheid activist in South Africa and founder of the Muslim Education Centre of Oxford and the Imam of the Summertown Islamic congregation.
- **Tarek Fatah** is a Pakistani born Canadian writer, broadcaster and a secular activist. He is the author of “Chasing a Mirage: The Tragic Illusion of an Islamic State” and founder of the Muslim Canadian Congress.
- **Taslima Nasrin** is a Bangladeshi-born award-winning writer, physician, and activist, known for her powerful writings on women oppression and unflinching criticism of religion, despite forced exile and multiple fatwas calling for her death.
- **Terry Sanderson** is a writer and journalist and current President of the National Secular Society, which campaigns for the separation of church and state.
- **Waleed Hussein** is a Palestinian blogger arrested in 2010 by the Palestinian Authority for blaspheming against Islam on Facebook and in his blog. He founded the Council of Ex-Muslims of France in 2013.

An International Secular Manifesto and the establishment of a united front of secularists to meet future challenges will be the final outcome of the Conference. Conference contributions will also be published in a book.

The conference is endorsed by Atheist Alliance International; Children First Now; Center for Inquiry; Council of Ex-Muslims of Britain; Equal Rights Now – Organisation against Women’s Discrimination in Iran; Fitnah – Movement for Women’s Liberation; International Committee against Stoning; International Committee against Execution; International Federation of Iranian Refugees; Iran Solidarity; National Secular Society; One Law for All; Secularism is a Women’s Issue; The Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason and Science UK; and Women Living Under Muslim Laws amongst others.

For full details of the conference, including on registration and obtaining tickets, visit the event’s dedicated website: www.secularconference.com/ or email maryamnamazie@gmail.com. Please also join the event’s Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/events/630996160274751/> and follow the conference on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/SecularConf> or Tweet [@secularconf](https://twitter.com/SecularConf).

editorial

MURDER CAN NEVER BE JUSTIFIED — ON THE ISRAELI OFFENSIVE ON GAZA

MARYAM NAMAZIE

Murder can never be justified whatever the reason – security, a cause, or strongly held beliefs.

The pummelling of Gaza by the Israeli state – from schools to hospitals – is nothing short of murder. It’s a war crime. It’s state-sponsored terrorism, no better or worse than Hamas’ terrorism and crimes.

Those who side with the Israeli state because they despise the Islamists as well as those who side with Hamas because they despise Israeli government war-mongering forget one thing. They do more of what each side does to the other. They justify the mass dehumanisation and collective blame on countless innocent people caught in the crossfire of terrorists.

Whilst many more Palestinians have been killed than Israelis (1,800 Palestinians - mainly civilians to 67 Israelis - 3 civilians), it’s not because Hamas hasn’t tried. It’s just that Israeli military defences are better. Nonetheless, all those killed are human first before they are Israeli or Palestinian. Many of them, like people everywhere, want to see themselves and their children live another day.

We must too.



In taking sides with those committing war crimes, we fail to see the humanity of those no longer with us and in the process, begin to lose our own humanity.

In this latest Israeli offensive on Gaza, the world truly does “stand [disgraced](#)”.

Photo: Majdi Fathi/Zumapress/Keystone via [Macleans](#).



our campaigns

REYHANEH JABBARI'S STAY OF EXECUTION WE MUST KEEP THE PRESSURE ON



her. She was forced to confess under torture and threats to her family. She has suffered unbearable mistreatment in the hands of a system that has been insistent on sending a young girl to the gallows until now.

Reyhaneh has lived under the shadow of death for far too long. She must be immediately released and any charges against her quashed.

To find out more about her case and help keep the pressure on, and join over 200,000 people who have signed a [petition](#) calling for Reyhaneh's freedom and an end to her execution.

Reyhaneh Jabbari's lawyer, Mohammad Ali Jadari Foroghi, has said that Reyhaneh's name has been removed from the execution list and her file is scheduled for review. The worldwide protest in support of Reyhaneh has forced a review of her case and brought the unfair and corrupt judiciary system of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the attention of international public opinion.

26 year old Reyhaneh Jabbari has been in prison for the past 7 years for stabbing a man attempting to rape



عکس کودکی ریحاته یا خواهران کوچکترش

letters to the editor

Send questions and comments to fitnah.movement@gmail.com and we will respond in the next issue of the publication.

contact us

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Fitnah – Movement for Women’s Liberation is a protest movement demanding freedom, equality, and secularism and calling for an end to misogynist cultural, religious and moral laws and customs, compulsory veiling, sex apartheid, sex trafficking, and violence against women. We remind the Islamic regime of Iran and Islamists everywhere that the women’s liberation movement is a source of fitnah for their rule alone. We are Islamism’s worst fitnah!

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