



## OWL The voice of the third pole in European Social Forum

*Another world is possible!*



The 5<sup>th</sup> European Social Forum took place in Malmo, Sweden from 17 to 21 September 2008. Around 20000 people and 400 organisations from around the world registered to participate in the forum. The forum was inaugurated among music and festivities on the evening of the 17th and in the next four days around 700 seminars, workshops and cultural events took place around Malmo. ESF is a place where thousands of people who aspire to a better and more just and free world come together to share their experiences and to exchange ideas and views.



Azar Majedi



Shahla Noori



Karim Noori

Organisation for Women's Liberation actively participated in the forum. A three member delegation, including Azar Majedi, Shahla Noori and Karim Noori voiced the necessity of the creation of a 3<sup>rd</sup> Pole in opposition to the two poles of terrorism i.e. state terrorism and Islamic one; to inform the participants of the vibrant women's liberation movement in Iran; and the daily battle of people of Iran against the Islamic Republic of Iran. OWL succeeded in spreading the message of freedom, equality and secularism.

OWL organised a seminar, participated in panel discussions, demonstration, Women's Assembly, organised a book stall, sold many copies of two books by Mansoor Hekmat "No to the war of

terrorists, the third alternative speaks out” and Azar Majedi’s “Women’s Rights vs Political Islam” and distributed more than 4000 copies of leaflets and pamphletes to introduce OWL, its aims and its activities.

### **Political Islam, women’s rights and international conflict**

On the morning of Thursday 19th a seminar was organised with the above title. Despite difficulties to find the venue, around 150 people participated in the seminar, all seats were taken, so people were sitting on the floor in the hall and out in the corridor to listen. This seminar was warmly and enthusiastically received by the audience. At the end of the seminar many, particularly young people came to the table to buy the two books by Mansoor Hekmat and Azar Majedi. Many asked for contacts information and showed interest to contact OWL.

Azar Majedi first gave a brief introduction on formation of political Islam as a contemporary movement. She then talked about the situation of the world after September 11 and dwelt on the so-called “war on terror” waged by state terrorism led by the USA, which in reality is the war among two poles of terrorism. This war has reinforced political Islam as a false “liberation ideology” among sections of population world wide, particularly in the Middle East.

Azar stated that Islamic movement, thanks to this destructive war, has been able to portray itself as an anti-imperialist force and has found backing and support among sections of young

generation, leading to a voluntary veiling of some young women for political reasons, rather than religious ones. She maintained that there are two decisive factors in order to marginalize political Islam.

- 1) Solving the Palestinian issue in a just way;
  - 2) overthrow of the Islamic Republic in Iran by mass movement.
- Finally she discussed the necessity and urgency of the creation of the third pole by the decent, civilized and freedom loving people in the world. Azar’s speech was applauded warmly by the audience.

At the end questions were raised by the floor which opened an interesting debate. One of the issues discussed

European Feminist Initiative (IFE), and Network against Honour crimes on the above theme. Azar Majedi, Maj Britt Theorin, a member European



parliament from Sweden, Lillian Halls-French from IFE, France and Ulla Kloster, Waging Peace, Finland took part in the panel. The panelists talked



was the Kurdish question and its role in this conflict. The video of this seminar will be available on OWL’s website in the near future.

### **Security for Europe, security for whom, no to the bomb!**

On Sunday morning a panel discussion was organised by Women’s for Peace,

about the danger of the atomic bombs and its new development, about reactionary and militaristic treaties signed by the European Union, e.g. the Lisbon treaty, the role of women in safeguarding peace, the destruction of Iraq, Afghanistan and Lebanon as a result of the ongoing terroristic war and the necessity of creation of the third pole.

In the second part the discussion was opened to the floor. An interesting and heated debate started. The issue of biological deterministic presented by



one of the panelists was challenged by Azar Majedi. She disagreed that the setting of quotas for women's participation in such negotiations will make the world a safer place. She maintained that it is one's political views and world outlook that determines one's position not their gender. She stated that Even if Hillary Clinton were to win the presidential election in USA, the militarist policies of the US would not change significantly. The panel ended by wording a statement to the forum. The idea of forming a third pole against the two poles of terrorism was formulated in this statement.

### Women's Assembly

For the first time, there was a women's assembly on the first day of the forum. Many different feminist organisations had participated in organisation of the assembly, among them IFE, the Network against Honour Crimes and Women for Peace. OWL was invited to participate in this assembly and took part in the discussion. Around 100 activists were present at this assembly. At the end a brief resolution was formulated to demand the more visible

presence of Women's organisations and feminist issues in future social forums.

### Demonstration

On Saturday a huge demonstration was organised. Around 10 thousand people participated with their banners condemning capitalism, demanding a more just, freer and more egalitarian world. The demonstration took 4 hours to reach the end. An atmosphere of festivities, activism, determination and protest was visible throughout the demonstration. After a long walk



people gathered in Pildamns Park in Malmo. There were many stalls presenting different literature and music. We presented OWL's literature among

the people and discussed our views. Independent European TV interviewed Azar Majedi on the Forum and OWL. We are proud to announce that we played an active and positive role in ESF. We participated in many debates and were able to voice our message for a better world, a free and egalitarian world. We called upon the participants to join us to build a strong movement to oppose the chaotic situation created by the war of terrorists. The idea of the creation of the third pole was very well received by many and we hope we will continue toward forming this movement. OWL made contacts with many new organisations and found new comrades. OWL worked closely with IFE and Network against Honour crimes. On Saturday Azar Majedi participated in the coordination meeting of IFE.

### Organization for Women's Liberation

24 September 2008



# Iran Parliamentary bill to curb female students from entering universities

*Join our campaign*

**Condemn Islamic Republic of Iran!  
Support Women's Liberation movement!**

According to official sources, Islamic Republic of Iran is reviewing the higher education entrance regulations for female students in Iran. The government Education Commission has introduced a bill to the Islamic parliament which states that female students can only apply to universities in their town/city of residence where their parents or husbands live. This means that female students will be denied their right to freely apply to their university of choice. It is reactionary and totally anti-women. It must be opposed.



It is a well known fact that all Islamic laws and regulations in Iran which in fact constitute the law of the land are reactionary, discriminatory and violate human rights. This bill is yet another attempt by the Islamic Republic to impose even further discrimination against women.

This proposed bill is an insult to women and people of Iran. It is in total contradiction to the culture of people who not only hate the religious laws, but actually defy it. More than 65% of higher education students in Iran are presently women. If approved, this bill will mean that female students from small towns will be denied further education (since most universities are in bigger cities) and those in cities will

not have the right to choose their universities.

Islamic Republic of Iran considers women properties of men. According to Islam, women should not be seen or heard and should not be considered as individuals and independent beings. Freedom of residence and education are part of basic human rights for all. That is what women in Iran want and strive to achieve. Women are forced to endure reactionary laws such as the veil but they have not accepted the Islamic way of life. Women demand the abolition of all Islamic laws and oppose this recent bill strongly. Women's Liberation movement in Iran demands an end to discrimination, gender apartheid; and demands establishment of a secular state.

Join us in our campaign to condemn the Islamic Republic of Iran for violating women's universal human rights and stop this bill. Sign our online petition.

<http://www.PetitionOnline.com/nsin2008/petition.html>



## International Conference in London/ England on the occasion of 8 March 2009

### Why is secularism essential?

Organisation for Women's Liberation is organising a one day conference in commemoration of 8 March, International women's day on the impact of religion on the situation and status of women. Why is secularism essential? In this conference veteran women's right activists and scholars are coming together to analyse the devastating effects of rise of religious movements and religion's influence in the running of state in many countries on the situation of women: the effect of catholic church, orthodox church, Judaism and political Islam will be discussed.

#### **Guest speakers so far confirmed:**

**Homa Arjomand;** coordinator of No Sharia Campaign; Canada/Iran

**Soad Baba Aissa;** European Feminist Initiative; France/Algeria

**Julie Bindle Journalist;** a founder of feminist law reform NGO Justice for Women, and of the Feminist Coalition against Prostitution England

**Malene Busk;** Center for Inquiry Denmark

**Buthina Canaan Khoury;** Film maker Palestine

**Caroline Fourest;** writer; columnist, activist and a Member of Libre Pense; France

**Maria Hagberg;** Psychologist, Network against Honour Crimes Sweden

**Lilian Halls-French;** Sociologist, coordinator of EFI France

**Parvin Kaboli;** coordinator of White Carnation, an organisation against honour crimes and OWL Sweden/Iran

**Azar Majedi;** Chair of OWL, writer England/Iran

**Nina Sankari;** Polish Rationalist Organisation and EFI Poland

Moderator: **Maryam Kousha;** editor of Women's Liberation.

On Sunday 8 March we organise a march in the centre of London to voice the concern regarding the increasing influence of religious movements and organisations in the running of society, the establishment of arbitrary tribunals to deal with family and civil dispute on the basis of religious traditions, such as the Sharia law.

We invite all concerned feminists, secularists and human right activists to participate in these events. We need to demonstrate a show of secularist force against religious inroads in the society.

Details of the events will be published as soon as they become available.

For more information or to register please Write to: [Majedi.azar@gmail.com](mailto:Majedi.azar@gmail.com); Phone: +44 (0)7886973423

Or visit our website: [www.womensliberation.net](http://www.womensliberation.net)



# 10<sup>th</sup> October, International Day against Capital Punishment

On this day many NGOs and Amnesty International submitted a resolution to the United Nations demanding an end to capital punishment. Let us change the world on this day.

Although in 2002, under the pressure of human rights organisations, the Islamic Republic of Iran suspended death sentence by stoning in Iran, there has still been executions in Iran. Two men and a woman were stoned to death in 2006 and 9 women and 2 men are awaiting execution in the dungeons of the regime.

Amnesty International leads an international campaign to stop execution of 7 women in Iran. The Human Rights Commission of the United Nations has also declared that stoning of people for having sexual relations outside marriage is in contradiction to international convention of human rights. Hence Islamic Republic is violating the UN convention.



Capital punishment is an organised crime by the government and is against human rights. It is state murder and is used to control the society and crush protests. No government has the right, under any circumstances to take a person's life. One of the fundamental part of our movement for a free, equal, just and humane society is to stop capital punishment and executions. In Iran, even juveniles are executed because under Islamic laws, puberty is the age of consent, 15 years of age for boys and 9 for girls. According to Amnesty International this alone, 6 juveniles have been executed in Iran and at least 132 juveniles are in jail awaiting execution. This year, a total of people have been executed in Iran.



Join us on 11<sup>th</sup> October event and show your unity with us and your protest against Islamic Republic of Iran. While you are reading this text, hundreds of people are in Islamic regime's prisons awaiting execution. Every attempt to put pressure on the Islamic Republic of Iran to retract execution orders is a milestone in the international movement against capital punishment.

We will be holding an information stall on Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> October in Brunsparken in Gothenburg in the afternoon (13.00-18.00 hours). Let us all join forces and chant "a World without Capital Punishment!"

For more information please contact Shahla Nouri, the coordinator of the event.

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## Against Gender Apartheid in Iran!



Gender apartheid and segregation of people according to their gender is one of the ugliest faces of anti women acts and discrimination between people in some societies, in particular Islamic Republic of Iran. Gender apartheid is a system by which governments and especially political Islam currents impose suppression on people. Sexual apartheid, the same as racial apartheid, is despicable and must be destroyed in the same way.

Men and women must enjoy equal economic, political, social and cultural rights. The civilized humanity must not allow such criminal behavior being exercised against people any where in the world. Thus, we the undersigned demand:

- 1. Condemnation of gender apartheid by the international community and human rights authorities.**
- 2. Condemnation of Islamic Republic of Iran as the symbol of the system of gender apartheid in the world.**
- 3. Expulsion of all governments ruling on the system of gender apartheid from the international community.**



Organisation for Women's Liberation at the  
**International Book Fair**  
**Gothenburg, Sweden**  
*25-29 September 2008*

The largest Book Fair in the Nordic region will be held in Gothenburg. OWL will be having a book stall with photo exhibition about the situation of women in Iran. There will be literature in English, Swedish and Farsi to buy and take away. The Theme of our book stall is "Pictures talk and literatures tell the differences!" Come and visit us at stall number C01:09. We will be happy to exchange ideas and will appreciate your feedbacks.

# Our aims

Women's freedom is the measure of freedom in society. There is still a great deal left to accomplish in order to eliminate inequality between men and women, not only in Iran where misogyny brutally rules, but in the most advanced societies as well. The Organisation for Women's Liberation (OWL) sees itself as part of the immense historical and international struggle for women's liberation.

The OWL's aim is the unconditional liberation of women and complete equality between women and men in Iran. The OWL, therefore, must fight for the following demands:

- 1- *Complete equal rights for women and men; abolition of discriminatory laws, particularly laws in relation to family, marriage, divorce, and parental responsibility, for children;*
- 2- *Abolition of compulsory veiling and freedom of dress;*
- 3- *Complete abolition of segregation;*
- 4- *Access to equal resources in education, employment, sports and cultural activities;*
- 5- *Separation of religion from the state and education.*

## Women in Iran

**Women are banned from a wide range of social, economic and political activities; Islamic veil is compulsory. Women are separated from men in buses, universities, and many public places. Husbands and fathers are their guardians, at home and outside. Women cannot travel, even within the country, without permission from their male guardians. They have no right to divorce, or custody of their children. The list is endless.**

**We can change this. The Organisation for Women's Liberation-Iran is the organisation with the vision and dedication to make a difference in the life of millions of women in Iran. Progression in Iran will mean progression in the region.**

**Join us, make donation, distribute our paper, and contact us. Together we can make a difference.**

### **Related links:**

Medusa, Journal of Women and Socialism  
[www.medusa2000.com](http://www.medusa2000.com)  
International Committee against Stoning  
[www.stopstoningnow.com](http://www.stopstoningnow.com)  
International Campaign to End Sharia Court in Canada  
[www.nosharia.com](http://www.nosharia.com)  
International Campaign in Defense of Women's Rights in Iran  
[www.irandwr.org](http://www.irandwr.org)

### **The Organisation for Women's Liberation-Iran**

[www.azadizan.com](http://www.azadizan.com)

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### **Financial contributions**

We need your support and donations. Please send your contributions to the following bank account and let us know by email. We urge all individuals and organisations to help us in our efforts to make a difference in the lives of women in Iran.

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