

# THE COALITION FOR SEXUAL AND BODILY RIGHTS IN MUSLIM SOCIETIES (CSBR)

The Coalition for Sexual and Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies (CSBR), founded in 2001, is the only international solidarity network in Muslim societies working to promote sexual and bodily rights as human rights. CSBR has a multi-disciplinary character and is composed of a wide array of organizations and academic institutions from the Middle East, North Africa, South Asia and Southeast Asia, engaged in advocacy work including women's human rights, human rights, sexual and reproductive health and rights or LGBT rights at the national, regional and international levels. Women for Women's Human Rights (WWHR) - New Ways based in Turkey acts as the international coordination office of CSBR. Encompassing a geography stretching from Morocco to Indonesia, the Coalition strives to create progressive discourses/spaces to advance sexual, bodily and reproductive health and rights and to counter global conservative politics.

CSBR is founded on the fundamental principle that all people, regardless of their gender, citizenship, class, age, religion, marital status, ethnic identity, sexual orientation, mental and physical ability, have the right to bodily and sexual integrity and autonomy and the right to freely decide on all matters concerning their sexuality and fertility. With members from Algeria, Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Morocco, Pakistan, Palestine, the Philippines, the Sudan, Tunisia, Turkey and Yemen, the CSBR aims to advance a holistic approach to sexuality and sexual rights in member countries through advocacy, publications, training, research and campaigns.

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# Sexual Rights as Human Rights: Experience of the Coalition for Sexual and Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies<sup>1</sup>

It was only a few weeks after September 11, 2001, when 19 NGO representatives and academicians from Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Pakistan, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, and Yemen came together for the landmark meeting *Women, Sexuality and Social Change in the Middle East and the Mediterranean* and discussed the links between sexuality, gender equality, and socio-political struggles. The press statement issued after the meeting stated that “Sexuality is not only a personal and private issue, but it is also linked to systems of power politics and domination in society. Means to control sexuality are institutionalized not only in cultural and social norms and customs, but also in legal policy and practice.”<sup>2</sup> The analysis at the time, that increasing global militarism, conservatism and nationalism would feed into the intricate mechanisms of political, economic, social, legal and cultural manipulation striving to oppress women’s sexuality, proved more than valid in the upcoming years.

The Coalition for Sexual and Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies (CSBR), a bi-regional solidarity network, striving to promote sexual, bodily and reproductive rights as human rights on national, regional and international levels, was founded following the above mentioned meeting. CSBR, including 40 NGOs and academic institutions from the Middle East, North Africa, South and Southeast Asia, is founded on the fundamental principle that all people, regardless of their gender, citizenship, class, age, religion, marital status, ethnic identity, sexual orientation, mental and physical ability, have the right to bodily and sexual integrity and autonomy, and the right to freely decide on all matters concerning their sexuality. To this end, CSBR takes a holistic and affirmative approach to sexuality, recognizing its pivotal role in private, public and political spheres.<sup>3</sup>

Patriarchal social constructs based on genderized notions claim that women’s bodies and sexuality belong to men, the family and society, and uphold constructions of “chastity”, “honor” and “morality”, turning sexuality into a taboo. Human rights violations such as forced and early marriages, “honor” crimes, FGM and virginity testing are legitimized in this context. Various national legislations include discriminatory provisions sanctioning these violations where honor killing perpetrators receive sentence reductions, marital rape is not criminalized, abortion is illegal, same-sex relations are criminalized etc.<sup>4</sup> The implications of these violations extend the realm of sexual, reproductive and bodily rights and gender equality, constituting major impediments to development, social justice and equality as they obstruct access to economic, political, social and educational opportunities.

1 This text was prepared by Pinar Ilkkaracan for the Institute of Development Studies (IDS)

2 *Women, Sexuality and Social Change in The Middle East and the Mediterranean*, September 28-30, 2001, Istanbul, Turkey organized by WWHR – New Ways.

3 For more information on CSBR and WWHR-New Ways’ work on the international level, please see [www.wwhr.org](http://www.wwhr.org)

4 For a detailed account of penal codes and sexuality in the MENA region, please see Sherifa Zuhur, *Gender, Sexuality and Criminal Laws in the Middle East and North Africa* (WWHR-New Ways, Istanbul, 2004). Available online at <http://www.wwhr.org/files/GenderSexualityandCriminalLaws.pdf>

In law and social practice, religion and culture are often misused as powerful instruments of control. In the last decade, we have witnessed a strong alliance of conservative political forces attacking sexual and reproductive rights and health on the international level. The so-called global war on terror led to growing Islamophobia and the tendency of the West to “essentialize” Islam, including ignorance of the diversity of Muslim societies. The increasing militarization and violence such as in Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine, and Lebanon led to unprecedented expansion of Muslim, Christian or Jewish religious and nationalistic ideologies, a drowning of existing liberal voices and spaces in the region and an increasingly masculine culture - not only in the region, but also around the globe.<sup>5</sup>

For the achievement of gender equality, social justice and democratization, it remains essential to revise and/or reinforce legal systems; adopt and implement comprehensive “rights-based” education and health programs and policies; increase budgetary allocations for programs and institutions to ensure gender equality; develop policies and programs that aim to reduce and eliminate feminization of poverty and HIV/AIDS.

Despite the challenging context, CSBR members have succeeded working for these through countering the existent discourse around sexuality, advocating for law reform towards the safeguarding of sexual and reproductive rights, and creating progressive spaces for the promotion of sexual rights.

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<sup>5</sup> *Of War, Siege and Lebanon: Women's voices from the Middle East and South Asia*. Texts by Evelyne Accad, Pinar Ilkkaracan, Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian, Dina M. Siddiqi, Zeina Zaatiri. Compiled by WWHR-New Ways, 2006. Available online at [http://www.wwhr.org/files/2\\_War.pdf](http://www.wwhr.org/files/2_War.pdf)

## CSBR Core Values

- Sexual and bodily rights are universal human rights based on the inherent freedom, dignity and equality of all human beings.
- Sexual and bodily rights are central to the realization of women's human rights and gender equality. The advancement of these rights are crucial for advancement of democracy.
- It is the duty and responsibility of all governments to develop, adopt and implement laws and other measures to eliminate all harmful traditional or customary practices that restrict or violate women's human rights, such as female genital mutilation, crimes committed in the name of honor or in the name of passion, abduction and sale of children and women, early and forced marriages, dowry related violence and deaths, acid attacks, restriction of the right to mobility and temporary marriages.
- It is the duty and responsibility of all governments to develop, adopt and implement laws and other measures to protect women and girls from all forms violence, including sexual violence, such as rape, marital rape, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation and trafficking in girls and women and repeal all laws that lead to the revictimization of women and girls who have been subjected to sexual violence.
- Women's sexuality and bodies belong to themselves. The principle that laws must first and foremost protect the individual's rights and freedoms rather than the public order and general ethics must be reflected into all legal change processes. All laws and policies that legitimize customary practices which put women's bodies and sexuality at the disposal of men, family and society must be repealed.
- All individuals have the equal right to enjoy a sexual life in accordance with their values. This entails not only the right to determine one's sexual behavior, but also the right to sexual pleasure and desire.
- All individuals have the right to sexually associate freely. This includes the right to decide freely whether to be sexually active or not, make free decisions on whether to marry or not, the right to divorce, and the right to sexual orientation.
- All individuals, including adolescents, have the right to equal access to highest attainable standard of safe sexual and reproductive health care and quality services, as well as adequate and affordable sexual and reproductive health information and comprehensive sexuality education.
- Women and adolescents have the right to freely decide on matters related to their fertility and to access safe, effective and affordable methods of regulating their reproductive life.

# SELECT CSBR MEETINGS, CONFERENCES AND WORKSHOPS

*Since 2001 to date*

## II. CSBR Sexuality Institute

*11-18 September, 2009, Istanbul, Turkey*

*Organized by Women for Women's Human Rights (WWHR) – New Ways*

The 2<sup>nd</sup> CSBR Sexuality Institute received around 120 applications from leading members of NGOs and academic institutes. The training brought together 20 leading sexual rights activists, researchers and practitioners from Bangladesh, Canada, Egypt, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Lebanon, Morocco, Pakistan, Palestine, the Philippines, Tunisia, Turkey, and the United Kingdom. Composed of lectures, discussions, group work and exercises, roundtables, and a panel, the training sought to provide a comprehensive overview, while engaging participants' own experiences. The program included an overview of theory and research of human sexuality, sexual diversities and non-conforming sexualities, sexual health, HIV/AIDS, gender and politics, youth sexuality, sexuality education, SRHR and the international law, current debates on SRHR, Sharia and sexuality, and advocacy for SRHR at the local, national and international levels.

## Southern Networks Meeting on Strategies for Global Advocacy on SRHR

*13 April, 2009, Hanoi, Vietnam*

*Organized by Women for Women's Human Rights (WWHR) – New Ways*

Representatives of regional and international networks such as ARROW, GESTOS, LACCASO, APCASO, CSBR and LACHWN participated in the meeting that created a unique opportunity for southern networks to share challenges and strategies for global sexual and reproductive health and rights advocacy and to discuss possible courses for collaborative actions. Enabling NGOs from the Global South to share detailed information on the ICPD+15 process, regional briefs and updates, the meeting also facilitated information exchange and learning from the experiences of each other. The participants discussed opportunities of strengthening the global SRHR advocacy and networking both in terms of UN processes and beyond. As a result of its collective efforts and the collective action letter it sent to the Steering Committee Members of the Global NGO Forum, the group succeeded to ensure the increased representation from the Global South and of youth both in the Steering Committee and at the Global NGO Forum.

## I. CSBR Sexuality Institute

*16-23 August, 2008, Cyberjaya, Malaysia*

*Organized by Women for Women's Human Rights (WWHR) – New Ways and Sisters in Islam (SIS)*

Marking the first international institute on sexuality and sexual rights in Muslim societies, the CSBR Sexuality Institute brought together leading sexual rights activists, academics and researchers from 14 countries throughout Asia, Africa and the Middle East. The participants included a diverse group of representatives of NGOs and academic institutions from Bangladesh, Indonesia, Lebanon, Mali, Malaysia, Morocco, Pakistan, Palestine, the Philippines, South Africa, the Sudan, Tunisia, Turkey, and Uzbekistan. Wide spectrum of the group's areas of work and expertise including sexual health, sexual violence, sexual health and rights advocacy, LGBT, youth, and different backgrounds such as human rights, law, medicine, social sciences, and art resulted in a unique composition, allowing for extensive knowledge and experience exchange within the group itself. The program was designed to cover a holistic curriculum on sexual, bodily

and reproductive health and rights in Muslim societies, combining historical, theoretical and conceptual frameworks of sexuality with emerging issues, contemporary discourses and field experiences.

## **The CSBR International Comparative Research on Sexuality in Muslim Societies: Working Group Meetings**

*23-25 April 2007 & 15-18 November, 2007, Istanbul, Turkey Organized by Women for Women's Human Rights (WWHR) - New Ways*

Since its foundation in 2001, many members of the CSBR have expressed the need for a comparative research project on sexuality, and sexual and bodily rights in Muslim societies, as such research is almost non-existent in our countries. Members have also expressed concerns about external/Western researchers imposing their values on our societies/sexuality and work, and identified a common need for an insiders' research that will further the awareness and analysis of sexual and bodily rights discourses and contribute to the work being done in this field.

The CSBR International Comparative Research is envisioned as a tool for positive social change targeting the broadest range of social actors in each national context, as well as an international audience. The politicization of sexuality has been identified as an underlying theme in all the research case studies. The working group meetings on the research, which will investigate sexuality in the current political landscapes as well as the evolving discourses on sexuality, brought together researchers from Bangladesh, Indonesia, Lebanon, Malaysia, Pakistan, Palestine, Tunisia, and Turkey.

## **The CSBR General Assembly & Strategic Planning Meeting**

*26-29 April, 2007, Istanbul, Turkey*

*Organized by Women for Women's Human Rights (WWHR) - New Ways*

The General Assembly was attended by CSBR members from Algeria, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Lebanon, Malaysia, Pakistan, Palestine, the Philippines, Tunisia, and Turkey. The meeting provided the opportunity to hold an in depth discussion around emerging issues, regional concerns, national, regional and international socio-political contexts. Participants also worked to identify the priority areas for the next few years, to construct a working plan and to evaluate the Coalition's contribution to the work of its members. Coalition members decided to organize a CSBR Sexuality Institute, a comparative international research and an international campaign around the identified issues.

## **Women, Sexual Rights and Reproductive Rights: Gains, Freedoms, Resistances**

*17-19 November, 2006, Tunisia*

*Organized by Association Tunisienne des Femmes Démocrates (ATFD) and Women for Women's Human Rights (WWHR) – New Ways*

The conference that was the first ever sexual rights meeting in Tunisia was a landmark conference where questions of sexuality and sexual rights were discussed publicly for the first time. The international meeting covered a wide array of issues including sexual rights and human rights violations in the domain of sexuality; marginalized groups like sex workers, lesbians; reproductive rights and abortion; law reforms, and discussions on strategies and recommendations to promote sexual rights. The interest in the conference and progressive debates throughout the meeting marked a very promising step forward in publicizing the issue and strengthening the advocacy efforts around sexuality.

## **Inclusive Approaches to Sexualities in Muslim Societies**

*16-18 December, 2005, Beirut, Lebanon Organized by Hurriyat Khasa and Women for Women's Human Rights (WWHR) – New Ways*

The consultation meeting marked the first meeting in the region on issues of sexual orientation, human rights and non-conforming sexualities and brought together 14 NGO representatives and academicians from Bangladesh, Egypt, Lebanon, Pakistan, and Turkey. The consultation aimed at bringing to the forefront issues of non-conforming sexualities and sexual orientation within the broader framework of sexual rights and freedoms, as well as exploring the various forms of alliances, inclusive approaches, and innovative strategies to advocate for sexual and bodily rights in the contexts of Muslim societies.

## **Gender, Sexuality and Law Reform in the Middle East, North Africa and Southeast Asia**

*31 March – 3 April, 2005, Istanbul, Turkey*

*Organized by Women for Women's Human Rights (WWHR) – New Ways*

The conference brought together 40 participants from Algeria, Bangladesh, Egypt, Great Britain, Indonesia, Italy, Lebanon, Malaysia, Morocco, Palestine, Pakistan, Tunisia, Turkey and Yemen. The success of the three years long campaign for the Reform of the Turkish Penal Code from a Gender Perspective coordinated by WWHR-New Ways and the momentum in the MENA and South/Southeast Asia regions towards much needed legislative reform on sexuality issues constituted the driving force of the meeting, where participants exchanged experiences of advocacy for law reform in the domain of sexuality, and discussed challenges and strategies to promote legal reform in the domain of SRHR.

## **Sexuality and Human Rights in Muslim Societies in South / Southeast Asia**

*23-26 September, 2004, Jakarta, Indonesia*

*Organized by Women's Health Foundation and Women for Women's Human Rights (WWHR) - New Ways*

The meeting that was the first South/Southeast Asian conference on sexuality and human rights in Muslim societies brought together 25 NGO representatives and researchers from Muslim societies in South and Southeast Asia to discuss pivotal human rights issues related to sexual and bodily rights, sexual politics, power and gender in Muslim societies. The meeting was attended by prominent activists, scholars and NGO representatives from Bangladesh, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Lebanon, Malaysia, Pakistan, Philippines and Turkey, who are working towards the realization of sexual and bodily rights in Muslim societies in the region and in the Middle East. The participants called upon their states and the entire Muslim world, to take all possible legal, social and political measures to eradicate human rights violations related to sexual rights and bodily integrity. Following this conference, CSBR expanded to become a bi-regional network including organizations from South and South East Asia.

## **Sexual and Bodily Rights as Human Rights in the Middle East and North Africa**

*29 May – 1 June, 2003, Malta*

*Organized by the Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies and Women for Women's Human Rights (WWHR) – New Ways*

The workshop that was designed to exchange information, knowledge and experience in the area of sexual and bodily rights and thus provide a broader regional framework for the ongoing efforts was attended by 22 representatives of NGOs and academic institutions from Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta,

Morocco, Pakistan, Palestine, Tunisia, Turkey, and U.S.A. It also aimed at strengthening the growing network on sexuality in the Middle East and North Africa and promoting regional efforts while maintaining the significance of national contexts and specific characteristics of individual cases. The objective was to establish and/or strengthen the organic and inherent links springing from commonalities in the societies' social, religious, legal and political structures and develop and/or elaborate on strategies to promote sexual and bodily rights as human rights.

## **Deconstructing Masculinity and Femininity in the Middle East and Maghreb**

*22-23 November, 2002, Beirut, Lebanon*

*Organized by Lebanese Council to Resist Violence against Women (LECORVAW) and Women for Women's Human Rights (WWHR) – New Ways*

The meeting aimed to expand and strengthen the regional network for sexual and reproductive rights that emerged out of the Istanbul symposium. The objective was to raise public consciousness and break the silence on issues related to sexuality in Lebanon. The roundtable with 33 participants from Egypt, Lebanon, Pakistan, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey and included discussions on the continuing necessity to deconstruct traditional notions of masculinity and femininity. While “sexual rights” was identified as the main area requiring further work and collaboration for activists and scholars in the region, the impact of political movements, especially fundamentalism(s) on the control of women's bodies, and constructions of masculinities/femininities was identified as a common thread influencing the work of the participants in different countries. Participants concurred that working for the promotion of sexual rights requires addressing the issue simultaneously on the individual, structural/institutional and the policy/legal levels.

## **Women, Sexuality and Social Change in the Middle East and the Mediterranean**

*28-30 September, 2001, Istanbul, Turkey*

*Organized by Women for Women's Human Rights (WWHR) – New Ways*

This landmark symposium was the first meeting in the region on women and sexuality. For the first time women from the Middle East and Maghreb came together to discuss issues related to women's sexual rights. 19 women activists, academicians and representatives of NGOs from Algeria, Egypt, France, Lebanon, Morocco, Pakistan, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, Yemen participated in the meeting. Discussions focused on the repressive common mechanisms imposed upon women's sexuality in the Middle East and the Mediterranean; the mechanisms developed by fundamentalist religious groups to control women's sexuality and the effects of these mechanisms on the society; the link between sexuality and democratization in the region, and strategies to eradicate traditional practices which constitute violations of women's human rights such as virginity testing, honor crimes, forced and early marriages, sexual harassment and marital rape.

The meeting revealed that there is a big need for exchange of information, a common attempt to deconstruct fundamentalist notions of female sexuality and the development of networks and alliances for common strategies and action among women in the region. This symposium established the basis of our bi-regional solidarity network, The Coalition for Sexual and Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies (CSBR).

*Istanbul, September 30, 2001*

## **WOMEN, SEXUALITY AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND THE MEDITERRANEAN SYMPOSIUM**

### **PRESS STATEMENT**

Nineteen women, academicians, representatives of NGOs and international organizations, from Algeria, Egypt, France, Lebanon, Morocco, Pakistan, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, and Yemen gathered in Istanbul between September 28 and 30, 2001 for a conference on **“Women, Sexuality and Social Change in the Middle East and the Mediterranean”** organized by Women for Women’s Human Rights (WWHR) – NEW WAYS.

Using their experience and the results of research conducted in their countries, participants confronted some of the pressing issues that directly affect the lives of women in this region, such as:

- links between sexuality and the politics of power
- virginity
- laws and sexuality
- sexual harassment
- violence against women
- honor crimes
- female genital mutilation
- sexual norms, values and behaviors of men and women
- freedom of mobility
- reproductive and sexual health and human rights
- desire and pleasure
- political movements and sexuality

Participants called for the recognition of the right of individuals, women and men, to enjoy a sexual life in accordance with their values and with respect for others. This entails not only the right to determine one’s sexual behavior, but also the right to seek sexual pleasure.

Sexuality is not only a personal and private issue, but it is also linked to systems of power politics and domination in society. Means to control sexuality are institutionalized not only in cultural and social norms and customs, but also in legal policy and practice. For instance, various legal systems sanction crimes committed against women, such as early and forced marriage, virginity tests, discriminatory divorce laws, female genital mutilation, and even reduction of sentence for murders committed in the name of “family honor”.

Participants felt that during periods of militarization and war, oppression of sexuality is exacerbated, because such systems promote rigid notions of masculinity and femininity and perpetuate a culture of aggression and intolerance. Peace is not just the absence of conflict, it is a state of equality and social justice.

*Jakarta, September 26, 2004*

## **SEXUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN MUSLIM SOCIETIES IN SOUTH / SOUTHEAST ASIA**

### **PRESS STATEMENT**

We, as prominent NGOs and scholars from Bangladesh, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Lebanon, Malaysia, Pakistan, Philippines and Turkey have come together in Jakarta to explore issues concerning “Sexuality and Human Rights in Muslim Societies”.

We are all committed to the realization of human rights and gender equality in our societies. We salute and support the efforts that have been taken by civil society groups in Indonesia to promote women’s human rights.

In a majority of Muslim societies, sexuality, especially women’s bodies and sexuality are increasingly becoming arenas of intense political and social conflict. Conservative and religious right political forces are fiercely trying to reinforce traditional mechanisms of control over women’s sexuality and create new ones. Wide-spread practices such as sexual violence, forced marriages, honor crimes, female genital mutilation, marital rape, unsafe abortion and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity constitute blatant human rights violations.

Social justice and the dignity of women and men are enshrined in the Quran. Sexual oppression cannot be justified by Islam, but results from a combination of political, social and economic inequalities. We strongly protest the misuse of religion to legitimize any human rights violation.

This meeting, a first of its kind in the region, constitutes another step in our determined efforts on the national and international levels to combat all human rights violations related to sexual, bodily and reproductive rights in Muslim societies.

We call upon all states and the entire Muslim world to take all possible legal, social and political measures to eradicate human rights violations related to sexual rights and bodily integrity.

## THE COALITION FOR SEXUAL AND BODILY RIGHTS IN MUSLIM SOCIETIES GENERAL ASSEMBLY & STRATEGIC PLANNING MEETING

### PRESS STATEMENT

Sexuality and sexual and bodily rights continue to be taboos in our countries, regions and across the world. Most severe human rights violations such as the so-called honor killings, forced marriages, marital rape, murder of homosexuals, are legitimized through these taboos, discriminatory approaches and the patriarchal system.

As **The Coalition for Sexual and Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies (CSBR)** we believe that sexual and bodily rights are central to the realization of human rights and gender equality. In 2001 we initiated the foundation of this network consisting of researchers and NGO representatives lobbying and advocating in the Middle East, North Africa and South / Southeast Asia for the realization of sexual and bodily rights as human rights and to prevent the violation of these rights. During the course of the past six years CSBR has grown rapidly and now includes 50 leading NGOs and academicians in 15 countries ranging from Morocco to Indonesia. This Coalition is the only network of its kind and has been playing a leading role working on national, regional and international levels. The coalition continues to struggle for the prevention of human rights violations such as female genital mutilation and so-called honor killings and works on a variety of issues including the right to sexual and bodily integrity and the right to sexual orientation.

#### **The Coalition's work areas include:**

• Sexuality and human rights	• Sexual orientation
• Legal reforms (e.g. Age of marriage, penal codes, family law, Sharia law)	• Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transsexual rights
• Right to abortion	• Sexual and reproductive health
• Sexual violence	• Sexual and reproductive rights
• Sexual harassment	• Human trafficking
• War and armed conflict	• Rights of sex workers
• Sexuality and religion	• HIV/AIDS
• Politics of sexuality	• International advocacy (UN)

#### **Among the successful achievements of the Coalition to date are:**

- Realization of legal reforms in countries like Turkey, Morocco, Pakistan and Indonesia on issues like the Civil Code, Penal Code and the right to safe abortion.
- Pioneering the very first high level international meetings on the right to sexual and reproductive rights in countries like Lebanon and Tunisia where previously sexuality was not an issue to be talked about.
- Realization of significant achievements in various United Nations meetings despite the alliance of conservative Christian forces like USA and Vatican and Islamic conservative states such as Egypt, Sudan and Pakistan that employ religion to attack the human rights of women and girls and homosexuals.

- Rendering the efforts and gains of the struggle for sexual and bodily rights in Middle East, North Africa, South and Southeast Asia visible for the first time at the United Nations (UN) and international platforms.
- Initiating and supporting international campaigns in numerous countries such as Malaysia, Lebanon, Egypt, Pakistan, Palestine, Iran, Iraq on issues including human rights violations, lack of freedom to organize and sexual rights.

This meeting will bring together 35 activists and scholars from Bangladesh, Algeria, Indonesia, Philippines, Morocco, Palestine, Lebanon, Malaysia, Pakistan, Tunisia, and Turkey and constitutes an important step for the continuation of our efforts. In the current global climate of the alarming rise of the conservative right wing, nationalist and militarist forces, we feel our progressive efforts striving for personal freedoms and equality gains even more importance.

Issues such as the impact of war and armed conflict on human rights and gender equality; alarming rise of conservative right wing force in our countries; criminalization of abortion and the spread of HIV/AIDS in our regions and among women and girls make our work a priority and increase the importance of our efforts. The Coalition will also work on the rising need for sexuality education and the improvement of institutions to meet the needs of youth emerging from the change in the demographic structure.

In the course of the next few years, **The Coalition for Sexual and Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies** focus areas will include research on sexual, bodily and reproductive rights, sexuality education, sexual rights and religion, and lobbying and advocacy for legal reform. We believe that our work for the realization of sexual and bodily rights as human rights in Muslim societies will enable for radical progress in equality and human rights, and constitute groundbreaking steps to prevent discrimination and human rights violations.

## CSBR AT INTERNATIONAL PLATFORMS

The lack of representation of activists from Muslim societies at the international arena, and the predominant global conservative atmosphere has been a driving force for CSBR to actively partake in United Nations processes, as well as participate in other international meetings. Given the current conservative global atmosphere and the conventionally limited NGO participation from these regions at the UN, CSBR has strived both to counter the conservative alliances between governments from the region and the right wing forces from North, and to render visible the progressive views and efforts on sexual and reproductive health and rights in Muslim societies.

### **Global NGO Forum on ICPD+15**

*2-4 September, 2009, Berlin, Germany*

The delegation of the Coalition included 7 network representatives from Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Palestine and Turkey, who contributed to the final “Call for Action.”

### **19<sup>th</sup> Congress of the World Association for Sexual Health**

*21-25 June, 2009, Goteborg, Sweden*

CSBR organized a panel entitled “Nonformal Sexual Rights Education and Sexual Pleasure” with Coalition representatives from Lebanon and Turkey.

### **VII. Conference of the International Association for the Study of Sexuality, Culture and Society (IASSCS)**

*15-18 April, 2009, Hanoi, Vietnam*

CSBR organized a panel session on “Remapping Sexualities in Muslim Societies” with presentations from Indonesia, Malaysia and Turkey offering an insight to the CSBR International Comparative Research study.

### **Musawah for Equality in the Family Conference**

*13-17 February, 2009, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia*

The delegation of the Coalition included network representatives from Malaysia, Morocco, Indonesia, Tunisia and Turkey.

### **Association for Women’s Rights in Development (AWID) Forum: The Power of Movements**

*14-17 November, 2008, Cape Town, South Africa*

The delegation of the Coalition included 16 network representatives from Algeria, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Lebanon, Malaysia, Palestine, Tunisia and Turkey. CSBR also organized two panels at the Forum. First panel entitled “Building a diverse and inclusive movement to break new ground: The Experience of CSBR” featured presenters from Bangladesh, Indonesia, Lebanon, Tunisia and Turkey. The second panel entitled “Movements for social change and law reform in Muslim societies: Mobilizing for sexual rights amidst increasing political turmoil, militarization and conservatism” discussed the CSBR International Comparative Research featuring presenters from Indonesia, Lebanon and Malaysia.

### **51<sup>st</sup> Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)**

*26 February – 9 March, 2007, New York, USA*

The delegation of the Coalition included network representatives from Bangladesh, Egypt, Pakistan, Tunisia, and Turkey with WWHR – New Ways on official government delegation. The meeting was a great success for the Coalition as well as other NGOs as the commission included progressive demands with a human rights and gender equality perspective.

## **UN High Level Meeting on HIV/AIDS (UNGASS)**

*28 May – 2 June, 2006, New York, USA*

The delegation of the Coalition included 14 network representatives from Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Lebanon, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippines, Tunisia and Turkey. In addition to advocacy and lobbying efforts our delegation organized two panels entitled *Sexuality and HIV/AIDS in South/Southeast Asia* and *Sexuality Education in Muslim Majority Countries and the Fight against HIV/AIDS*.

## **Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) Forum: How Does Change Happen?**

*27-30 October, 2005, Bangkok, Thailand*

CSBR organized the panel session on “Gender, Sexuality and Law Reform in Muslim Societies” with presentations from Indonesia, Morocco and Turkey on recent law reforms concerning sexual rights.

## **International Women's Health Meeting (IWHM)**

*21-25 September, 2005, New Delhi, India*

CSBR organized the panel session on “Sexual Health and Rights in Muslim Societies: Emerging Challenges” with presentations from Lebanon, Malaysia, Pakistan, Tunisia, and Turkey.

## **Beijing+10: 49<sup>th</sup> Special Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)**

*27 February – 11 March, 2005, New York, USA*

The delegation of the Coalition for Sexual and Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies, coordinated by WWHR - New Ways, consisted of 18 prominent activists from eight countries in the Middle East, North Africa and South/Southeast Asia: Bangladesh, Egypt, Lebanon, Malaysia, the Philippines, Tunisia, Turkey and Yemen. The delegation delivered one of the most progressive NGO statements during the session.

## **ESCWA Arab Population Forum**

*19–21 November, 2004, Beirut, Lebanon*

The Arab Population Forum, co-organized by UNESCWA, UNFPA and LAS, was the final regional meeting within the scope of ICPD+10. CSBR members from Lebanon and Turkey participated at the Forum and issued an NGO statement. Endorsed by 30 leading NGOs from the region, the statement was the first of its kind issued in a regional meeting in the Arab region, declaring sexual rights as human rights and calling on governments to take concrete step to overcome violations.

## **A CALL ON ARAB GOVERNMENTS BY THE COALITION FOR SEXUAL AND BODILY RIGHTS IN MUSLIM SOCIETIES ON THE 10<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF ICPD**

This Forum, marking the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ICPD, which resulted in the landmark agreement and adoption of the ICPD Programme of Action, presents an outstanding opportunity for Arab countries to join their voices and reaffirm their commitment to the PoA and adopt its “rights-based approach” to enhance vital dimensions of population and human life in the Arab region.

As leading non-governmental organizations in the region, working to promote and defend sexual and reproductive rights as human rights, we applaud the reaffirmation by governments of their commitment to the ICPD PoA and ICPD+5 at previous regional meetings, including Asia Pacific in December 2002; the Caribbean in November 2003; Europe and North America in January 2004; Latin America and the Caribbean in March 2004; and Africa in June 2004. We call upon the Arab region to do the same and accelerate the implementation of ICPD and ICPD+5, in conjunction with other agreements and treaties and outcome documents most countries of the region have joined, including CEDAW, Beijing and Beijing+5.

The evolving discourse on health and wellness as encompassing the totality of human dimensions, from the intellectual, physical, social, emotional, and spiritual dimensions, to the biological, socio cultural, economic and political, has further revealed the importance and necessity of the human rights approach to capture and implement sexual and reproductive health and rights.

In order to eradicate the many human rights violations in the region concerning sexual, bodily and reproductive rights, including all forms of sexual and gender based violence, marital rape, FGM, honor crimes, forced and early marriages, trafficking in women or virginity tests; we call upon the governments to revise, enact and/or reinforce penal, civil, labor and administrative sanctions in domestic legislation to address and properly punish such crimes; to provide access to comprehensive, affordable and quality sexual and reproductive health information and services for all people including youth; and to adopt comprehensive “rights-based” programs and policies in the domain of sexual and reproductive health.

To this end, taboos around sexuality education, adolescent sexuality, pre-marital and extra-marital relationships, sexual orientation, unsafe abortion, post-abortion care and HIV/AIDS need to be addressed; and legal, corrective and protective measures must be developed. This can be achieved by promoting comprehensive sexuality education; enhancing affordable, accessible and equitable sexual and reproductive health services; upholding adolescents’ right to information; providing appropriate non-stigmatizing counseling; re-examining the judicial system, and accelerating holistic legal reform to promote sexual and reproductive health, and freedom from all types of coercion and violence.

Ten years after ICPD, we call again on all governments of the region to generate the political will and develop the programs and policies to turn these commitments into concrete realities.

*New York, March 2005*

## **A CALL BY THE COALITION FOR SEXUAL AND BODILY RIGHTS IN MUSLIM SOCIETIES ON THE 10<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE 4<sup>th</sup> WOMEN'S WORLD CONFERENCE**

We, non-governmental organizations and experts from several countries of the Middle East, North Africa and South/Southeast Asia have come together to advance, promote and defend sexual, bodily and reproductive rights as human rights. We believe that the 10th anniversary of the Beijing Conference constitutes an occasion to recall the commitments made by our governments to the Beijing Platform for Action. This decade, having witnessed important achievements in and advancement of women's human rights, marks the culmination of an era that acknowledges women's rights as human rights, and sexual and reproductive health and rights as an integral part of human rights.

However, many governments have fallen short of delivering the outcomes to which they have committed. Lack of democracy and intricate mechanisms of political, economic, social, legal and cultural manipulation that aim to control women's sexuality and the many taboos surrounding sexuality forestall the full implementation of the BPFA and the realization of gender equality in our societies.

Human rights violations such as sexual and gender based violence, marital rape, FGM, honor crimes, forced and early marriages, acid attacks, mass rapes and trafficking in women and virginity tests continue to affect women in our region. Many of these problems are exacerbated by the negative effects of the ongoing wars, military interventions and economic globalization. As we have witnessed in the last decades, religious right ideologies have increasingly misused religion and culture to maintain and extend their power over both public and private domains.

The realization of the right to sexual and bodily integrity, and women's right to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality free from coercion, discrimination and violence are essential for women and girls to realize and enjoy their human rights. This requires that women have full gender equality in the family; access to economic, political, social and educational opportunities; as well as access to high quality health services in particular sexual and reproductive health services.

We call upon our governments to:

- Reaffirm the Beijing Platform for Action without any reservations, and display the political will and allocate sufficient resources for its implementation;
- Withdraw all reservations to the CEDAW and ratify its Optional Protocol;
- Revise, enact and/or reinforce all the legal system, in particular the penal codes and family and personal status codes in order to ensure full gender equality and realize sexual, bodily and reproductive rights;
- Adopt and implement "rights-based" programs and policies to ensure access to comprehensive, affordable and quality sexual and reproductive health services and sexuality education and information for all, including the youth;
- Increase budgetary allocations and financial resources for programs and institutions to ensure gender equality;
- Develop policies and programs that aim to reduce and eliminate feminization of poverty.

We urge the international community to take a stand against the manipulation of political and economic power perpetuating socio-economic and social injustices; increasing political instability; the assertion of military power; ideologies that fuel racism, Islamophobia and constructed "cultural clashes" that lead to aggravation of gender inequality, violations of women's human rights and exploitation of women and girls.

*New York, May 2006*

## **A CALL BY THE COALITION FOR SEXUAL AND BODILY RIGHTS IN MUSLIM SOCIETIES AT THE 2006 HIGH LEVEL MEETING ON HIV/AIDS**

We, non-governmental organizations and experts from 15 countries of the Middle East, North Africa and South/Southeast Asia, believe that the 2006 High Level Meeting on HIV/AIDS constitutes an occasion for reaffirming and enhancing the commitments made by our governments and the international community at the UNGASS 2001.

We strongly believe that the current position taken by some OIC countries at this meeting does not represent the civil society perspectives and best practices regarding HIV/AIDS within our countries, as well as our commitment to the universality and indivisibility of human rights. We as non-governmental organizations, struggle on a daily basis to provide sexual and reproductive health services, reform laws that discriminate or violate human rights, including sexual and reproductive rights, provide comprehensive sexuality education, combat violence against women, including marital rape and sexual abuse, reach out to and protect vulnerable groups and break the taboos associated with sexuality. Full realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all is an essential element in the global response to the pandemic.

We underline that the taboos and the politicization of issues around sexuality are major hindrances to prevention of the epidemic in our countries. The denial of the existence of youth and premarital sexuality, extra-marital sexuality, sex work and same sex practices constitutes a dangerous threat to the well-being and public health in our societies.

We are also concerned that some developed countries are failing to commit to the allocation of sufficient resources for HIV/AIDS programs and to establish measurable and time-bound Monitoring and Evaluation mechanisms.

Given the imminent threat of an outbreak of the epidemic in our countries, we call upon those countries that the OIC claims to represent:

- To adopt and implement programs and policies to ensure access to affordable and quality sexual and reproductive health services and comprehensive sexuality education for all girls and boys;
- To promote and protect sexual and reproductive rights for all;
- To adopt measures to fully empower women and girls;
- To recognize and support active participation of vulnerable groups such as sex workers and men having sex with men and injecting drug users in policy formulation and prevention programs;
- To adopt Harm Reduction programs for injecting drug users, particularly in light of the growing transmission of HIV through drug use in many Muslim-majority countries.

We urge all UN member countries to support a comprehensive, forward-looking, and ambitious political declaration, and demonstrate active leadership in combating HIV/AIDS.

# THE COALITION FOR SEXUAL AND BODILY RIGHTS IN MUSLIM SOCIETIES (CSBR) ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBERS

AAHUNG	PAKISTAN
Association des Femmes Tunisiennes pour la Recherche et le Développement (AFTURD)	TUNISIA
Ahfad University for Women	SUDAN
AMARGI	TURKEY
Association Marocaine des Droits des Femmes (AMDF)	MOROCCO
Asian-Pacific Resource & Research Centre for Women (ARROW)	MALAYSIA
Association Démocratique des Femmes du Maroc (ADFM)	MOROCCO
Association Tunisienne des Femmes Démocrates (ATFD)	TUNISIA
BRAC University	BANGLADESH
Collectif Maghreb Egalité	ALGERIA
Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR)	EGYPT
GAYa NUSANTARA	INDONESIA
HELEM	LEBANON
Indonesian Women's Association for Justice (APIK)	INDONESIA
Institut Pelangi Perempuan (IPP)	INDONESIA
IWRAW-AP	MALAYSIA / INT
Jordanian Women's Union	JORDAN
LAMBDAISTANBUL LGBTT Association	TURKEY
Lebanese Council to Resist Violence Against Women (LECORVAW)	LEBANON
MADA al-CARMEL - Arab Center for Applied Social Research	PALESTINE
Malaysian AIDS Council	MALAYSIA
Meem	LEBANON
Muntada - Arab Forum for Sexuality, Education and Health	PALESTINE
New Woman Foundation (NWF)	EGYPT
Pilipina Legal Resources Center (PLRC)	PHILLIPPINES
Rassemblement Contre la Hogra et pour les Droits des Algériennes (RACHDA)	ALGERIA
RAHIMA	INDONESIA
RESEAU WASSILA	ALGERIA
Sisters Arabic Forum (SAF)	YEMEN
Sisters in Islam (SIS)	MALAYSIA
Synergie Civique	MOROCCO
VISION	PAKISTAN
Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counseling (WCLAC)	PALESTINE
Women Against Violence (WAV)	PALESTINE
Women for Women's Human Rights (WWHR) - New Ways	TURKEY
Women's Aid Organization (WAO)	MALAYSIA
Women's Health Foundation	INDONESIA
ZENID	JORDAN