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المجلس الكندي للنساء المسلمات

CANADIAN COUNCIL OF MUSLIM WOMEN  
LE CONSEIL CANADIEN DES FEMMES MUSULMANES

IN THE NAME OF GOD

The Canadian Council of Muslim Women is a national non-profit organization established to assist Muslim women in participating effectively in Canadian Society and to promote mutual understanding between Canadian Muslim women and women of other faiths.



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*"Invite people to the path of your Lord with wisdom and kindly exhortation. Reason with them in the most courteous manner. Your Lord knows best who strays from his path & those who are rightly guided."*

*Quran 16:125*

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## **CCMW VISION STATEMENT**

To strive for Canadian Muslim Women's equality, equity and empowerment.

These goals are Canadian and Islamic values and we, as Muslim women, envision our identity within the context of the principles of Islam and the laws of Canada.

We value our roles and responsibilities in the family and in the community. We believe in the interdependency of each member, so that there is a balance between the needs and the responsibilities of individuals.

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## **SPEECH AT 1995 NATIONAL CONFERENCE: ZOHRA HUSAINI**

Looking back at the day's deliberations, what I see is a challenge before us. . . for all Muslim women, in fact for all women. The challenge is embodied in the Conference theme of "Equality of Women" [and today women have spoken of their concerns and frustrations] and I reckon that Canadian Muslim women are singularly well equipped to take up this challenge. This Conference marks but one step in meeting the challenge.

The challenge is to give voice to the centuries' old silence of women, particularly Muslim women; a challenge to create our own history. We need to tell our own story in our own words, to look at the world and at our religion through our own eyes and through our understandings and insights and our research.

Now that is hard to do, because we do not even have a language to express our experiences and our understanding of the world and our religion. We have to create a language . . . a language richer and deeper than the language of control, oppression and exploitation. It must be a language which can express what is of significance in the experience of Muslim women and to see that our insights and understandings of the world is legitimized as significant.

We face a challenge to help create a world where we have power, without replicating the existing world of power of oppression and violence, but power to restore dignity and equality to all women. We need power to wipe away the misery from every face on this earth through care and nurture, through compassion and cultivation in a world of global peace, equality and justice.

In doing so, what is it that we will be doing? We shall only be restarting and continuing a task undertaken by the Prophet of Islam 1400 years ago for women and men. We know that he fought for equality and dignity and justice for all humanity. What we don't remember is that by declaring all human beings as equal he struck at the heart of the patriarchal system which had inferiorized women.

But unfortunately, the patriarchal hold was too strong to be severed irrevocably, and so soon after the Prophet's death women started losing whatever rights they had gained at the beginning of Islam, during the lifetime of the Prophet. Most of us have forgotten or probably never knew or were never told what the Prophet intended for us women. But it is possible to educate ourselves about this and I claim that it is up to us to continue where he left off.

We can do it! We can do it because now at the end of the 20th century, we are poised at a unique moment in history the likes of which never existed before. We Canadian Muslim women are the proud heirs of the finest traditions and values of world civilization. We inherit the Islamic tradition of justice, equality, compassion and mercy as the true message of Islam. We carry the traditions of our diverse cultures of peace, freedom from violence, of spirituality, of fortitude and through our education and participation we also inherit the values of Enlightenment. The democratic principles of respect for the individual, intellectual and political freedom, scientific temper and adherence to truth are also our legacy as Canadians.

Who, I ask you, has such a wealth of resources to dream, to have a vision and to make changes? I claim that it is us, particularly the young women, privileged with these resources who can take up this challenge. We can do it! Let us do it!

Thank you.

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## **WOMEN AND ISLAM: BY TYSEER ABOULNASR, Ph.D.**

(reprinted with permission)

### ***IMAGE OF MUSLIM WOMEN***

As a Muslim woman, I found myself thrown right into the controversy of women's role in today's society. Over and over I had to explain that what you see in a Hollywood movie about Islam has nothing to do with Islam. For years and years, the average western person has been subjected to one image of a Muslim woman: mysteriously veiled, heavily guarded, living in a harem with a brutal sex maniac for a husband. One can't really blame this person if he or she accepts this image as true especially if he or she never saw Muslim women in any other light.

So how can one start this preconceived image and get this person those where a woman fits in a truly Muslim society? I can only try to highlight the ***status of women*** in the actual teachings of Islam apart from the practices of many so-called Muslim countries and the misrepresentation of Hollywood movies. Then, it would be up to the individual to pass a fair judgment on where women stand in a truly Muslim society.

### ***MEN AND WOMEN ARE EQUAL***

Let us start right from the beginning, the creation of Adam and Eve as revealed by God in the Qur'an. Adam and Eve were forbidden to eat fruit from the tree but both were tempted by Satan to taste it. They ***both*** sinned and later regretted it. God repeatedly reprimanded them ***both***. Thus, in no way was Eve ***and subsequently all women*** held responsible for the ***original sin*** nor was she considered as Satan's way to get to Adam ***and all his male descendants***. That, to start with, breaks to pieces the general belief that women are the cause of men's suffering on earth, that they are Satan's temptation, an evil to be avoided if at all possible. In Islam, men and women are created equal as human beings though obviously not identical. Throughout the Qur'an, it is repeated over and over that men and women are created as companions on earth to complement and comfort one another. They are both held accountable for their deeds, individually. Both are rewarded or punished equally for their deeds. Muslims have been spared the debate about whether a woman had a soul or whether she was a person or not. That was never questioned while it was a hot issue in western societies up to the 1930's when the Supreme Court of Canada passed a judgment that women really are persons! This was simply a fact asserted by a religion that was born in a society where burying newborn girls alive, out of shame, as common practice. Sons were a source of pride while girls brought along disgrace. Islam immediately prohibited such a brutal discrimination. It was spelled out clearly that one person, be it male or female, can be better than another by virtue of his or her piety alone, not sex, not origin.

### ***ACTIVE PARTICIPATION***

However, Islam's regard for women is not simply giving her a chance to survive. Muslims, men and women, are told to seek knowledge and education wherever they find it and to use this knowledge to help fellow human beings. This is a duty about which they will be asked on Judgment Day. When the Prophet himself could not read or write, his wife Hafsa, taught others to read and write. History tells us about the immense contribution of women to the Islamic community. The first believer in the message of the Prophet Muhammad was a woman. She was his wife, Khadija, and his source of protection from the pagans of Mecca in the early years. The Prophet himself was later actually physically saved by a woman during one of the battles after having been isolated by the pagans. Later, after he died, many of his sayings and teachings were narrated by another woman, his second wife Aisha. These sayings are an essential part of Islamic teachings. So what does that say about how Islam views woman, to entrust her with these roles? The Muslim woman's active participation in community affairs was established from the earliest days. This includes the right to vote. She has always been a separate individual with a separate vote. She had to swear allegiance independently of her husband and father.

## **MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE**

Now what happened if this Muslim woman got married. For starters, she couldn't be married against her will, her consent was essential. If she did accept, she did not give up her family name for her husband's name. She did not have to be a staunch *feminist* or proclaim *I am not a property to be passed on from father to husband*. She simply was never expected to change her name. Important as that may be symbolically, it is even more important, on a practical level, that she was always considered a separate financial entity. When she married, her property remained her own and her husband had no access to it without her consent. She wasn't even required to share in the family's expenses even if she were a lot richer than the man. She was entitled to an explicit share of inheritance from family members. That share might be less than her male counterpart but that was only fair considering that her money was hers to keep while his money belongs to his whole family including his wife and any other women in his family who need financial support. All this was established more than 1400 years ago even before people in Europe realized it was unfair to shut daughters out of their father's inheritance or for the man to automatically acquire his wife's wealth upon her marriage.

If the marriage relationship fails and a divorce becomes the only option, a woman's rights are protected. A Muslim woman is entitled to maintain the right to divorce her husband if she specifies that right in the marriage contract. Otherwise, he retains that right. In any case, whoever has this right does not change the fact that divorce is considered a last resort, highly discouraged and to be used only if attempts for reconciliation by family members and even the judge have failed.

### **A MOTHER**

As a mother, she is held in the highest regard. We are told that our mothers are the most worthy of our care, love and companionship. Fathers come in a distant second. Because God knows his own creation, he knows that men would be tempted to abuse their physical strength when dealing with women. Repeatedly, throughout the Qur'an and in the Prophet's sayings, men are reminded of their responsibility to be kind and compassionate to women. That was again stressed by the Prophet in his last public address where he highlighted the essentials of Islam. Men are told that the *best among you are the kindest to the women in their families*. They are often reminded not to take advantage of the woman's relative physical weakness since they will eventually have to answer to an even stronger Being, God himself.

### **WOMEN'S DRESS**

All this seems to paint such a beautiful picture of women in Islam but what about the *veil* or, less romantic but more real, the Muslim dress code? Islam, as a whole, is described in the Qur'an as a religion of the *centre* balancing the needs and freedom of the individual with the good of the society. This is the general rule which also governs the relationship between men and women in society. They have the right to work and mix together as long as that right is not abused, hurting the society as a whole. This implies that the environment in which they see and talk to one another should be a clean respectable environment where sexual temptation is practically eliminated. Some westerners, and regrettably, some Muslims, take this to imply locking up the women or hiding them in *veils*. However, that contradicts the practices in the Prophet's life when women fought in battles, nursed the wounded, argued with the Caliph and even taught religion. The whole idea of modesty in dress is to ensure that both sides are not distracted by physical appearances. The dress code applies equally to men and women. Both should not look *sexually inviting*. That might not seem like too much fun, it certainly will not allow for Dallas-like episodes, but it would improve the chances for a better family-oriented society where men and women treat each other with mutual respect as human beings, rather than as sex objects. These are the general requirements for the Muslim dress code for men and women. How women actually dress in specific Muslim countries has a lot to do with the local culture and not just with Islam.

### **FACT OR FICTION: YOUR CHOICE**

One can't help but wonder, if Islam is so good for women, how come what we see in countries with Muslim majorities is utterly different? If it makes things any easier to understand, without, justifying them, the same applies to all other religions. I am sure Jesus would be appalled to see how his teachings have been twisted around for ages to the extent of promoting slavery or tolerating exploitation through *turning the other cheek*.

Muslims, like people of other beliefs have done a super job of twisting their religion to suit the needs of the more powerful in their society by generalizing specific rules on the one hand and limiting general rules on the other as they find convenient. Add this to innovations added onto the religion to suit the local cultures and you get something that mayor may not represent the original. If on top of that you have a media that is either too ignorant or too hostile then the end product that reaches the average unbiased non-Muslim definitely has nothing to do with the real teachings of Islam. The only hope lies in people realizing that before one judges anything, one has to separate fact from fiction, opinions from actual happenings, etc. . . . The true image of a true Muslim woman in a true Muslim society may not be as fascinating as what we see in the movies. However, if given a choice between this image and any other alternative available to date, I doubt it will be a hard choice.

The Toronto Chapter and the National Board are in the planning process for the 1996 Conference. *Insha Allah* it will be held in Toronto in mid October 1996.

The theme is "*Inclusion & Participation: Social Justice for Women*". The workshops are on violence against women; racism & discrimination; Canadian laws & policies applicable to women and young women's issues.

We have invited many organizations including mosques, to participate with us and we look forward to a truly worthwhile conference.

Our National Conferences allows us to build a work plan for the following year and to take actions which benefit Canadian Muslim women. Our chapters have been very active in achieving the objectives we had set.

It is true that the Conference focuses on women, however we emphasize that we see our family and community roles as important and therefore we want our men to also attend.

We extend a warm invitation to our men folk to come to the National Conference.

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## **CHAPTERS NEWS**

Chapters and the National Board developed the 1995 work plan and agreed to specific activities. We were able to do this via three teleconferences across the country, in January 1996.

In May 1996, the chapters provided the Board with updates on their activities. The detailed report of the chapters' updates has been submitted to our federal funders, as part of our application for the upcoming conference.

The update report has also been forwarded to each chapter.

It is impressive to see how much has been achieved in the last six months, *Masha Allah*.

Chapters have joined other organizations in their communities to address common objectives; they have done some imaginative fundraising; have contacted various levels of government to improve the visibility of Muslim women; have held workshops and discussions on women's human right and violence's. women.

They have assisted local service providers so that the needs of Muslim women are met; chapters have written to the media regarding degrading imaging of Muslim women; written articles and newsletters; have participated in activities to promote women's health and have collaborated with other Muslim organizations to project positive Islamic values.

Chapters have listed themselves in local phone books and other resources so that they are more widely known. Membership has also been increased.

As an example," Edmonton Chapter has received funding to plan an event to commemorate the International Day or the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. The United Nations declared, in 1996, March 21st as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in commemoration of the tragedy of the Sharpeville Massacre six years earlier.

The Northern Alberta Alliance on Race Relations (NAARR) has committed itself to action and invites northern Alberta organizations to apply for funds to organize events during this month. What makes NAARR's project unique is that events take place during the month in various communities and arenas - the screening of an anti-racism video, public debates, lectures, guest speakers, music and dance recitals, workshops, etc.

On March 14th a launch was held at the Alberta Legislature Buildings. His Excellency Billy I.L. Modise (High Commissioner for the Republic of South Africa) presented Albertans with a special address. It was a pleasure to hear His Excellency speak of the new South Africa. He briefly touched upon the legacy of apartheid, but focused mainly on the changes that his government has made. It was a clear statement that the new South Africa looks towards this challenge in terms of reconciliation and forgiveness of the old regime, not of revenge nor of creating a nation of new racism. He spoke in terms of healing, growth and the future, and invited all Canadians to remain vigilant and to fight racism at all fronts."

A sub-committee formed of CCMW Edmonton members led by Mahenaz Layton and Mumtaz Ebrahim, has organized a program entitled, "Breaking Down Racial Barriers Through Art" which will take place on April 18th, 1996. It promises to be an exciting event.

(reported by Zaheera Jiwaji)

Another example from Niagara: "Some of our sisters have volunteered to knit squares which will be sent to Zambia, where they will be put together to form blankets to be used for the benefits of the disabled. In November 1995 we had a workshop led by Sr. Reem, on ghusul for the benefit of the younger members of our community."

(reported by Angela Valli)

## WORK PLAN UPDATE: NATIONAL BOARD

These are some examples of the work being done to achieve the objectives.

To strengthen CCMW as an organization, records were organized and to save rental funds, they were transferred to a member's house for storage and ready access.

Chapters are notified of the board's meetings in advance, so that if a member wants to attend, they can notify us. Approved minutes of each meeting are sent to chapters.

We have applied to join three organizations - National Organization of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women, National Council of Women of Canada and Media Watch.

We have collaborated with the government and other organizations by participating in the Status of Women Pan. Cdn. Consultation and have responded in writing to the consultation paper "Working Together Towards Women's Equality".

We are represented on the Canadian Labour Force Development Board's National Visible Minority Council. This federal board provides the government with policy advice on labour market issues. It represents diverse groups and advocates for employment equity, recognition of foreign qualifications, etc. We have invited a variety of organizations to participate in the National Conference.

We will also join Media Watch, a women's organization which advocates for positive portrayal of women, depiction of diverse women and of women as full contributors to society.

Media Watch will be in a workshop at the 1996 Conference.

CCMW has registered in Sources, a reference manual for journalists. We are under a number of headings and we have listed chapters' members across the country as contacts.

Libraries and international women's groups have requested our reports.

For the Objective: Promoting Universality of Women's Human Rights, CCMW is collaborating with Muslim Research Foundation on Facts & Myths re Islam.

This will be a part of a workshop at the 1996 Conference.

Ottawa Chapter is taking the lead in writing a handbook on Canadian Laws and Policies and *Insha Allah*, this too will be presented at the Conference.

The project on the Hijab, in collaboration with McGill University is proceeding. Young women have completed questionnaires which will be analyzed by McGill and the funding presented at the Conference.

### Please Note:

**CCMW's newsletters are now on a Home Page of the Internet. Our address is:**

**<http://www.ccmw.com/newsletters.htm>**

**If you would like to contact us by Internet, please email us: [info@ccmw.com](mailto:info@ccmw.com)**

**There is also a women's web which provides all sorts of services. Their address is:**

**<http://crc.web.apc.org/womensweb>**

### ELDER ABUSE

The Canadian Association of Social Workers have completed a report on Elder Abuse in Ethno cultural Communities: Suggestions to Interventions and Prevention, March 1995.

Copies are available from:

383 Parkdale Ave., #402  
Ottawa, ON  
K1Y 4R4  
Tel. #: (613) 729-6668

The intent of the study is to assist service providers to provide culturally appropriate care and to facilitate

the development of programs to prevent elder abuse in these communities.

Statistics in 1991, show that 5.3 million Canadians are over 55 plus 1.4 million are of ethnic origins other than British, French Canadian or Aboriginal. In 1989, a nation wide study found that 4% of Canadian seniors living in private dwellings, had been abused by a close relative.

The report acknowledges that the topic is a complex and new one and little research has been done. No study of elder abuse in ethno cultural communities has been undertaken.

The hypothesis is that factors which lead to elder abuse include:

- a) history of family violence
- b) intricate network of dependencies between the victim and abuser
- c) personality traits of the abuser
- d) long standing, unresolved parent/child conflict
- e) stresses of caring for a dependent person
- f) social isolation
- g) societal attitudes about aging and elderly
- h) role of the family
- i) financial and emotional dependency

In addition, factors for ethno cultural groups are immigration, aging in a new society, discrimination and language barriers. It has been found that in these groups, financial, emotional and neglect occur more frequently than physical or sexual abuse.

The report recommends that the topic should be included in the curricula schools of social work and that links have to be made with these communities. Prevention strategies to be via public education, policy and legislature changes.

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## OF INTEREST

**Eid ul Adha** There was a gathering of Muslims for the Eid ul Adha celebration, May 2, 1996 at the House of Commons. It was organized by a number of Muslim groups and MP Dan McTeague. Senators, MP's and the Minister of Finance attended this significant dinner, which is the first time Muslims celebrated an Eid at Parliament Hill.

CCMW was represented and was recognized by the chair . There was a lot of interest in our organization, *Masha Allah*. Duriya Patel, a young lawyer, member of CCMW and other groups gave a speech and she was given a standing ovation. Her speech will be in our next newsletter, *InshaAllah*.

**Wife Assault** pamphlets, in many languages including Farsi, Arabic, Punjabi, are available.

Please contact: Ontario Women's Directorate, 2 Carlton Street, 12th Floor, Toronto, ON, M5B 2M9 Phone No.: (416) 314-0300

### **DID YOU KNOW?**

- **After the Quran was compiled by Khalifa Omar, he gave it to his daughter, Hafsa for safe keeping?**
- **The Prophet's wife Aisha is the transmitter of a large number of Hadith?**
- **The Prophet's first wife, Khadija was the first Muslim?**
- **Ammar bin Yassar was the seventh person to embrace Islam and the first martyr?**
- **Umm Amarah formed the first organized group of Muslims called Bai atl Uqbah. She fought in several battles?**
- **Nasay bah bint Kaab lost her arm in the battle of Uhud, defending the Prophet?**

## **BOOKS**

Lemu, Aisha B: Laxity & Extremism in Islam, Islamic Education Trust, Niger State, Nigeria, 1994.

A concise booklet by a prominent English Nigerian woman. Although headdresses issues specific to Nigeria, her plea for tolerance and moderation is applicable to Muslims everywhere.

Al Qaradawi, Yusuf: Islamic Awakening Between Rejection and Extremism, International Institute of Islamic Thought, Herndon, Va, 1995.

A very interesting book by a scholar who many view as projecting a narrow perspective of Islam. He is wary of targeting the Islamic movement; however he decided to clarify the truth by clarifying Islam's message of tolerance and moderation, especially to young Muslims. He warns against extremism and wants to direct Islamic awakening towards the goals of moderation.

Qaradawi still remains an advocate of the establishment of an Islamic State, application of the Shariah and does not address issues for women.

Canadian Council on Social Development: Vis a Vis Newsletter

It is full of information on family violence and is published three to four times a year.

The winter 1996 newsletter has an excellent article on "Churches Taking Action on Family Violence".

Our mosques will find it worthwhile to pursue obtaining the total teaching program called "Fire in the Rose" which deals with religion, and strengthening of families on the issues of violence.

Copies are available from:

Church Council on Justice and Corrections  
507 Bank Street  
Ottawa, ON  
K2P 1Z7  
Tel. #: (613) 563-1688

Al Alwani, Taha Jabir: The Ethics of Disagreement in Islam, International Institute of Islamic Thought, Herndon, VA, 1993.

Another interesting publication from I.I.I.T., a publishing house with headquarters in Saudi Arabia. The scholar now lives in the States and has taught in Riyadh for ten years. Al Alwani provides innumerable examples of the diversity amongst the interpreters of the Shariah and reasons that disagreements did not lead to conflicts but rather to a richness for the Muslim community. He thinks the ethics of disagreement has been lost to us.

Siddiqui, Mohammad Ahmadullah, ed., Islam: A Contemporary Perspective, North American Association of Muslim Professionals and Scholars, Macomb, Illinois, 1994.

A publication of a group of Muslims whose worthwhile aim is to strengthen Muslims in North America. The book is a series of articles on a number of subjects.

Lazreg, Marnia: The Eloquence of Silence, Routledge, London, 1994.

An Algerian sociologist writing about Algerian women's history and role through the periods of colonization, nationalism and the present. She is one of the new Muslim women writers who object to the western feminist analysis of women. She writes about the links between historical events, structures and their impact on women.

Lazreg thinks the term "fundamentalism" is a misnomer and uses the concept of "religiosity in politics" - "religiose" meaning the "manipulation of religion" as a tool of justification and acquisition of political power". It is also an act of "cultural self assertion". Her fears are that there is little room for women as full fledged members and that the leaders focus on work outside the home and the Hijab for women does not auger well. She thinks of the Algerian women's silence as a failure to engage in self criticism and lack of education in the language and history of Islam. Women have allowed an exclusive male religiose leadership to claim authority.

Al Faruq, Lanya: Women, Muslim Society and Islam, American Trust Publications, Plainfield, Indiana,



1994.

A collection of essays. Mrs. Al Faruq presents the status of women through Islamic periods and speaks of the decline during certain periods. She doesn't see these as related to the teachings of the Quran. The book offers a good traditional explanation of the various issues relating to women.

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## **MEDIA**

London Free Press, January 22, 1996: **"Minorities Takes Ontario to Court"**.

Ottawa's religious minorities are going to the Supreme Court to argue that their schools should also be funded by the province (Ontario).

London Free Press, January 19, 1996: **"Ramadan No Chore For Muslim Teens"**.

Young Muslims talk about fasting and how sometimes non Muslim youth do not understand. The young Muslims explain about the value of Ramadan and what they gain from fasting.

Toronto Star, February 18, 1996: **"Younger Muslims Find Peace in Old Ways"**.

Interview with university students in Toronto about their religious life.

New York Times, March 6, 1996: **"Above the City's Din, Always Allah's Voice"**.

The article is about Cairo and its various recordings of the reading/chanting of the Quran. The cassettes are heard all over Cairo and people listen to these in shops, cars and mosques.

New York Times, March 20, 1996: **"Jackson Deal with a Prime"**.

An unlikely union of Michael Jackson and Prince Walid bin Talal of Saudi Arabia has formed a venture to promote entertainment. They stressed their commitment to traditional values.

Globe and Mail, March 8, 1996: **"Patriarchal Iranian Politician Calls for Opposition Grant"**

A new political party, Hezbeh Mellat Iran has been formed by Foruhar, a lawyer who has become a symbol of the struggle for democracy.

Kingston Whig-Standard, February 23, 1996: **"Farrakhan Calls for Muslim Superpower"**.

Nation of Islam leader called on all Muslims to unite and become a "superpower". He has been traveling in countries such as Malaysia, Iran and Libya.

London Free Press, February 28, 1996: **"Video Helps Somali Immigrants Adapt to Canada"**.

Somali parents fear that their children are abandoning their heritage. Waris Jana, an Ottawa parent, has helped produce a video to initiate discussion between parents and children. Approximately 10,000 Somalis have settled in the Ottawa area.

London Free Press, February 29, 1996: **"Store Refuses to Relax Ruling Over Head Scarf"**.

A Moncton, New Brunswick grocery store manager won't relax the store's dress code to accommodate a Muslim girl who wears a head scarf.

Toronto Star, April 17, 1996: **"Donation to Help Immigrants Adjust"**.

An Egyptian, Sam Ghazouli has donated \$75,000.00 to a Toronto program called "Skills for Change" which helps ease immigrants and refugees into the Canadian work force.

Kingston Whig-Standard, April 27, 1996: **"Bardot Under Fire for Blasting Muslims"**.

Bardot, a film star turned campaigner for animal rights, wrote an angry article vs. the Muslim ritual slaughter of animals. She also attacked the "invasion of a foreign over population".

London Free Press, April 24, 1996: **"Arab Community Calls for Cease Fire"**.

The London Arab community marched in protest vs. the bombing by Israel of Lebanese civilians.

Kingston Whig-Standard, May 3, 1996: **"Militant Muslims Attack Cyclists"**.

In Iran, some Muslims are advocating the banning of women cyclists. The women are only allowed to cycle in a complex in Tehran but the place was ransacked and police would not intervene. The issue of whether women should be permitted to participate in sports has been fiercely debated.

Globe & Mail, May 10, 1996: **"Iran's Muslim Militants Attack Liberalization"**.

Militants Ansare-Hezbollah have a campaign vs. what they see as western influence. They smashed glass doors at a movie theatre and beat the patrons. They have entered private parties and intimidated people.

After parliamentary elections this spring there has been tension between conservatives and the more pragmatic group of President Hashemi Rafsanjani.

New York Times, May 12, 1996: **"Women's Rights Gaining Attention Within Islam"**.

Globe and Mail, May 18, 1996: **"Islamic Women Creating Momentum for Real Change"**

There was a conference in Washington, sponsored by the Sisterhood is Global Institute, a private international organization. There were Muslim women from all over the world and scholars such as Fatima Mernisi of Morocco and Deniz Kandiyoti of Turkey attended.

The encouraging signs are that women themselves are leading movements in their countries to create change for Muslim women. They draw on universal concepts of human rights while insisting that they are Muslims and work towards changes within Islam.

For example, Yasmeen Murshed from Bangladesh heads the Asia Pacific Network for Women in Politics. In Malaysia, Norani Othman leads a movement to reinterpret Muslim law. The women want the right to education, to work, to share in family decision making and reforms to family laws. "Weave to claim our rights as Muslim women, to claim our Muslimhood, we cannot be outside." They want to argue their case from within the Shari and want access to religious education. They agreed that there is a rough road ahead for them.

Toronto Star, April 29, 1996: **"Historic Day for Muslims"**.

The story covers the Toronto celebration of Eid al Adha. Almost 25,000 Muslims jammed the Skydome for prayers and the Adhan was given from then Tower. Other Muslims gathered at the CNE.

Some local Imans who are quoted in this article make statements about women.

Yusuf Patel, Imam of the Islamic Society of Peel stated, "Women are segregated because of the extra ordinary respect and dignity they evoke."

Aslam Kalait says one of God's commandments and ways of the Prophet is "not encouraging women to go to prayers in a mosque"

According to Patel, the Islamic code is to cover hands and faces and he encourages women to dress like this, adding "It is not discrimination. They pray at home and will receive some kind of reward".

These sentiments from two "leaders" have caused heartache for many Muslims. CCMW has been asked to write to Kalait and Patel, expressing concern.

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## **MEMBERSHIP FORM**

Mail or Phone or Email CCMW for a copy.

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## **CHAPTERS CONTACTS**

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Edmonton	Mumtaz Ibrahim
Halifax	Munawar Ahmed
London	Amne Al Khateeb
Montreal	Sajida Hussain
Montreal	Fahmida Khan
Niagara	Hasna Tayab
Ottawa	Farhat Rehman Kurd
Regina	Zia Afsar
Toronto	Wegdan Azzam
Vancouver	Shelina Neallani

## **BOARD:**

Solmaz Sahin  
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Razia Jaffer  
Nina Karachi Khaled

**Canadian Council of Muslim Women**  
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