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The Organization for Emancipation of Women

Rahai Zan

Editorial: Why "Rahai Zan"?

A group of world citizen men and women, including the Editor of "Rahai zan" founded "The Organization for Emancipation of Women," in September 2004 aiming to deploy egalitarians and freedom lovers around the world to defend women movement in Iran and other Islam stricken countries and communities for equal rights and recruit them for "A Better World!" Rahai Zan is the English publication of this organization, and will be published monthly.

We try our best through "Rahai Zan" to be the voice for everyone who feels s/he can make a change by questioning and protesting against discrimination and gender inequality not only in their own societies but also in other countries. con.on.5

Celebrate March 8th, International Women's Day

International International tional Day to mark the Women's Day is a Women's Day (IWD) strike of garment International celebration of stands and fights for a workers in the United Women's Day we women's movement. society that puts hu- States. The proposal pronounce to the It is a special day. It man being in the first was welcomed with world that the inva- sion by US govern- ment and its allies in Iraq, is creating a very intolerable life for women in this region. This invasion strengthens the political Islam. Women's rights are under attack by the back-warded Islamic ruling system. Women in the region are fighting for having basic civil rights. Their shelters, their health, their society's structures are all destroyed. Political Islam has made people's lives a misery in many other places like Iran, Afghanistan, etc. In IWD we reveal Islamic Republic of Iran's compulsory Hejab and all type of punishments including execution, stoning, retaliation and torture that are practiced for many years to restrain women in slavery. IWD is a day to remember Zhilaa and Baxtyar, 13 and 15 years old children who have been flogged con.on p.2

On the occasion of International Women's Day we pronounce to the world that the invasion by US government and its allies in Iraq, is creating a very intolerable life for women in this region. This invasion strengthens the political Islam. Women's rights are under attack by the back-warded Islamic ruling system. Women in the region are fighting for having basic civil rights. Their shelters, their health, their society's structures are all destroyed. Political Islam has made people's lives a misery in many other places like Iran, Afghanistan, etc. In IWD we reveal Islamic Republic of Iran's compulsory Hejab and all type of punishments including execution, stoning, retaliation and torture that are practiced for many years to restrain women in slavery. IWD is a day to remember Zhilaa and Baxtyar, 13 and 15 years old children who have been flogged con.on p.2



this protest is important. Women's day is a time to get together. We celebrate our solidarity in struggle, and encourage the organized movement that can make a difference in women's lives. We demand our rights. We have different demands to struggle for and continue with great effort. textile industry fought for their rights and were killed for seeking their demands. In 1910, the conference of the Socialist International proposed a Women's Day. The proposal of international women's day initially came from Clara Zetkin, a socialist woman, who suggested an International movement for women's rights. From then on the struggle for obtaining equality between women and men has not stopped. Now women are not only demanding equal rights in the work place, they are also demanding eradication of all patriarchy and misogynist ruling systems.

Long Live March 8th

Formation of the Organization for Emancipation of Women

To all freedom loving men and women

We, a group of women's movement activists held a meeting on September the 5th 2004 and established the Organization for Emancipation of Women to lead the struggle against gender discrimination in existing oppressive and patriarchal ruling systems. We struggle for a better world. Our aim is to eradicate suppression, discrimination and violence against women. Our aim is emancipation of society from inequality and gender apartheid. Our aim is also to wipe out discriminative and oppressive

regulations against women. We want to put an end to the humiliation of women. We endeavor to achieve freedom, equality and complete women's rights. A temporary central council is formed to take the responsibility for building different sections of the organization such as publication, radio, TV, finance etc... The central committee members include, Mehrnoush Mousavi, Nahid Ryazi, Soraya Shahabi, Azam Kamgoyan, Ladan Davar, Minoos Hemati, Galavig Qadryan, Houzan Mahmoud,

Maryam Afrasyab-pour, Malakeh Ezaty, Minoos Homayli, Fozzieh Khaledian, Fakhry Nadery Ryga Raouf, Shabboo Mohamadi, Fatemeh Eqdami, Sara Mohamad, Galavyzh Mostafapour and Azar Mousavi. The founders of the Organization for Emancipation of Women include: Mehrnoush Mousavi, Nahid Ryazi, Soraya Shahabi, Azam Kamgoyan, Ladan Davar, Minoos Hemati, Galavig Qadryan, Houzan Mahmoud,

Fozzieh Khaledian, Fakhry Nadery Ryga Raouf, Shabboo Mohamadi, Fatemeh Eqdami, Sara Mohamad, Galavezh Mostafapour and Azar Mousavi. Korosh Moudaresi, Maryam Shahabian, Mozafar Mohamadi, Ala Faraj, Nasryn Amiry, Golbakh Salimy, Soraya Khezry, Shahnaz Khandanai, Nasym Rahnama, Nasryn Parvaz, Arezou Mohammady, Mahmood Rahbary, Parasto Mahajer, Halaleh Rafeh, Laleh Zandy, Pary Zare, Shiva Farahmand, Anita Farzaneh, Nahyd Partovi, Parvin Maazy, Shahyn

Masnava, Pershang Bahramy, Nasrat Salyimi, Afaq Vakily, Shabboo Morady, Ozra Adamy, Xanom Safary, Fateh Shykh, Bahar Rabiey. The founders also have elected Mehrnoush Mousavi as the secretary of the organization. We invite all freedom loving men, women, human rights activists to support this organization and struggle for women's emancipation. September 5th 2004 **Long live freedom and equality**

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Celebrate...from p.1 for having a sexual relationship. IWD is a day to remember Lyla, 19, who was only 8 when she had been forced in to prostitution. Lyla was only 9 when she became a mother and experienced life in prison and at 18 she has been sentenced to death. In the past year many more young girls and women are tortured and imprisoned by Islamic reactionary government. IWD is a day to protest against unequal pay based on gender discrimination. This day is a day of protest

against gender apartheid in the work place, schools, streets and all aspects of women's political, social and personal life. We protest against poverty and prostitution, which are the products of back-warded ideology of political Islam and the capitalist system. On IWD we oppose the ideology of cultural relativism that is the only justification of practicing laws and policies that validate inferiority of women and girls in the so called secular system in western countries. In the heart of a mod-

ern society we see growth of gender discrimination based on the cultural differences. Establishment of Shariah court in Canada based on the cultural relativism philosophy nourishes political Islam locally and abroad. In the Islam-stricken countries, people are not allowed to celebrate IWD. The Islamic government in Iran has changed IWD to a religious celebration based on a Muslim woman's birthday (Fatimeh Zahra). But people are not following imposed Islamic ideas. Every year In-

ternational Women's day is celebrated in many different cities in Iran. Women organize themselves to protest against the ruling system. They demand equal rights in every aspect of life. They throw away hejab, which is the symbol of contempt. They want change. They move towards change. On Women's Day all the barriers of women's liberty need to be revealed and we call on all freedom loving women and men to be in solidarity to struggle for women's liberation

and join us to eradicate inequality. This is an important task. We have to act now to prevent more destruction of human rights. Be united in this important matter. Women's rights are human rights. Women's rights are universal. We can make a big difference. **In solidarity Long Live International Women's Day The Organization for Emancipation of Women**

Interview with Yanar Mohamad



Rahai Zan: Yanar Mohamad is one of the well known women activists in Iraq. She and the network of equality seeking movement leaders like Houzan Mahmoud, Nadia Mahmoud, Sakar Ahmad, and Alla Farag are very familiar to international observers of the movements' struggles. In our short visit I would like to introduce you to our readers and learn more about successes achieved and obstacles faced by the women movement in Iraq.

First let us know more about you. How old are you? What is your occupation? And how long you have been women's rights activists?

Yanar Mohammad: I am 44 years old. I am an architect and have been working in Iraq, Lebanon and Canada. Prior to initiating my struggle for women's rights, I was living in Iraq. I lived there until 1993. Up to that time women liberty was impossible and not even imaginable. Livings for women have been very difficult for generations. Women thought there is no way to make change. After meeting exiled women in Canada I recognized that the changes are possible. These changes need people who want to struggle

for women's liberty and equality. After learning about a women's shelter which was established by women's rights activists in Iraq, and about a young woman who had got a second chance to live through this women shelter I decided to join this movement and work for changes. After that I learned that there is need for a bigger group to achieve a better world.

Rahai Zan : After the US invasion of Iraq women's movement entered a new arena of struggle. What was your role at that time?

Yanar Mohammad: Even though the structure of the society has been destroyed, we tried to make some changes. Many women got together and founded the Organization of Women's Freedom (OWFI) in 2003.

Rahai Zan: What were the problems afterward?

Yanar Mohammad: In that time women's rights were under the impact of the war. Our main problem was group kidnapping of women for individual rape or group rape. The existing social and political groups are not taking any serious action regard of this issue. Because of the insecurity of women's life, women as groups and individu-

als had imprisoned themselves in their houses. Our organization decided to act and make change. We met and decided to go to Ferdos Square in Bagdad (the square where Saddam Hosain's statue had been brought down) and protest against women's situation. Many international journalists had gathered in the square. We demonstrated against the kidnapping of women. We stated that the occupiers were the cause of the kidnapping of 400 women from the streets. The news of our demonstration was broadcast worldwide. The public was supporting us against the occupiers. In a short period of time we participated in 137 seminars, meetings, demonstrations and press conferences. We attacked on political Islam. We were advocating human values, in opposition of political Islam and US occupation. The Islamic groups tried to impose the sharia laws through the governing council in Iraq. We protested against it. They threatened me with death and they stated that they would explode the OWFI head quarter's office before March 8th 2003. A comprehensive campaign against Islamic group was organized and fought them back.

Rahi Zan: For the first time in many years, you had a very successful women's day celebration. Tell us about it.

Yanar Mohammad: Many different groups attended in the conference. At the conference we gathered all the basic documents on women's rights issues and had discussion and debate on them. The conference was held on December the 15th 2003. We formed coalition with the other groups to achieve more power in discussing our demands with present government. This coalition strengthens our demands for civil rights from the government. The first accomplishment was increasing the numbers of women right activists in the movement. This conference was held in Bagdad when every corner of the city was under bombardment. Even though this created a very difficult circumstance and we had to change the conference's place many times yet many women attended the conference and participated in the discussion telling their own experiences of struggle against the occupiers and Islamic groups.

Rahai Zan: How would you describe your relationship with the women's movement in Iran?

Yanar Mohammad: Political Islam is the most dangerous enemy for Middle Eastern women. But our common point of view is Mansour Hekmat's ideas of women's emancipation and women's movement. Women's liberation has significant value to Mansour Hemakt. He saw this movement as one of his priorities. The women's movement in Iran has assisted us greatly. Any time we needed them they were there to help.

Rahai zan: Recently you organized an important conference in Iraq. Please tell us what happened at that conference?

Yanar Mohammad: The government's regu-

lating the government's regulation of the conference. At the conference we gathered all the basic documents on women's rights issues and had discussion and debate on them. The conference was held on December the 15th 2003. We formed coalition with the other groups to achieve more power in discussing our demands with present government. This coalition strengthens our demands for civil rights from the government. The first accomplishment was increasing the numbers of women right activists in the movement. This conference was held in Bagdad when every corner of the city was under bombardment. Even though this created a very difficult circumstance and we had to change the conference's place many times yet many women attended the conference and participated in the discussion telling their own experiences of struggle against the occupiers and Islamic groups.

Rahai zan: What is your plan for this year's March the 8th?

Yanar Mohammad: The most dangerous thing attacking women's rights is the constitution that considers women as a second class citizen. This law is going to be passed officially by 275 members of parliament that are going to be elected in the "election" at the end of this month. Two third of the candidates in the "election" are from Islamic groups. The government's regu-

Support the Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq in a battle for setting up a secular law

The Iraqi society's destiny is a mirror for the probability of Iran's future political crises. People's victory or disappointment in Iraq is going to have direct effect on victory or failure of people's struggle in Iran. This is the reason that the Islamic movement has been organized and has been assisted from Iran's and other Islamic-stricken countries government to make achievable conquest over secularism, and equality seeking movements. Also in addition to western countries, nationalists and the right wing opposition in Iraq are supporting Bush's policy. The west also displays Iraq current circumstance to restrain people's struggle in Iran. Freedom loving women and men, if the equality seeking movement succeeds to defeat political Islam and shariah law in Iraq, we have moved an important step forward in returning civil life in to Iraq's society. A defeated political Islam will be a defenseless enemy for the women's emancipation movement in Iran, Afghanistan,

Pakistan and other Middle East countries. Current battle in Iraq is on passing the country's fundamental constitution. After the ridiculous election the main groups that are planning to shape Iraq's future, have started there competition in enacting the

women is the guarantee for this ultimatum. In Kurdistan the nationalists who proclaim to be the federal alternative for Iraq are working in the same direction as political Islam for ruling the society. These existing forces in Iraq are in favor of enacting back

humanist, freedom loving and secular force. The Organization for Women's Freedom (OWFI) is the pioneer of Iraqi people's hope. The OWFI has a platform to defend women's rights in Iraq. On the call of the OWFI tens of well known women's rights

Mohammad the chair person of OWFI has organized a congress to voice the OWFI's secular platform. The OWF is demanding: Immediate withdrawal of the occupiers and the Islamic terrorists Abolition of all Islamic punishments against women.



Yanar Mohammad in Iraq

The complete separation of religion from the state and education.

Unconditional freedom of expression, organization and gathering Recognition of full equal rights between women and men

Women's participation in political, social and economic steer

Support the OWFI's secular and progressive platform. On March 8th, on women's day celebrations make the OWFI known to equal rights seeking organizations and foundations. Acquire support from international authorities for the platform of secularism, equality, and

against political Islam's terror. The Organization for Emancipation of Women defends Yanar Mohammad and the strengthening of OWFI in this battle.

countries constitution. Hakim, the chair person of the Iraq's Islamic supreme Council, has declared that Iraq's constitution is going to be Islamic. Perhaps killing and beheading unveiled

wards and patriarchal rules. Under the power of the nationalists in Kurdistan, thousands of women have been slaughtered. The only hope for Iraqi people is the civilized,

activists and women's rights organizations have supported their platform. The OWFI's first effort is to defeat the attempts of creating an Islamic constitution. In this year's March 8th, Yanar

talk to women and recruit them in to social activities which are related to their own and society's destiny. As a result of our social activities such as: providing shelters publishing Equality, organizing meetings, and also our attention on international activities, many women have joined us., con.on p.5

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Interview... from p.3

lation and constitution are going to be written by them. They will officially pass the law of inequality for women. This event may affect women's rights for many years. Civil rights will be set based on Islam's shariah laws. Therefore our first priority for

March the 8th is organizing a coalition of many different women rights organizations to strengthen demands for a secular society and equal rights for women. To complete this task we are calling on all organizations and individuals who are defending women's rights to join us. After that we will

arrange a congress called "Voice Freedom for women" in Bagdad. Basically this congress will demand a secular law for Iraq. Our slogans for this congress include: Unconditional equal rights for women and men; abolish all discriminative laws and regulations against women; passing a secu-

lar law that can guarantee equality between men and women.

Rahai Zan: Could you please tell us how women are being recruited to your organization?

Yanar Mohammad: We visit residential areas, working places, factories, universities, hospitals, and offices to

Why Rahai Zan from P.1

Discrimination against women is not another invention of capitalism system, but capitalism systematically reproduce and reconstruct discrimination via its socio-economic and cultural institutes to generate gender division of labor because it has direct impact on the productivity of the working class and so is vital to profitability. Women all over the world experience social oppression and gender discrimination to the length of history itself. Ruling classes maintain and regenerate oppression and gender inequality imposed on half of the population through culture, tradition and religion. Culture in any era is created and dictated by the ruling class for supporting and continuing that system's controlling and dominating power. Obviously no one is borne with culture rather everybody learns from society and the position of woman in each society is a measure to the development of that society. Culture is

produced and reproduced by the ruling classes within social institutions such as education, religion, economy, and entertainment. In the second half of the twenty century civil rights activist in the Western countries, especially within United States tried to compensate for ethno-racial discrimination by providing the philosophy of diversity and multiculturalism to challenge the western dominant culture of "white-male." They were dreaming if multiculturalism were being prevailed" the white-male unique culture" in the west, then they would remove racism from these societies. The governments also agreed with this idea and they allocated millions of dollars to build the multicultural infrastructures in different western nations. It's more than two decades of building multiculturalism to the reality, instead of removing racial discrimination, the idea, brought backwardness to western society, especially to the immigrant women and children;

they were exposed to obvious oppression and discrimination. Violation of children and women rights based on the culture is excused because those cultures do allow such violation. Within the Western societies, we witness Gatos communities built to enforce the patriarchy and misogyny because their cultures believe women and children are the properties of their male relatives, husband, fathers, brothers and even male cousins! Just to mention a few. Religious tradition plays one of the main roles in suppressing women. Political Islam's oppression and harassment on women's rights is the first weapon to control other aspects of human rights in the society. In this governing ideology women are always the first target. Hejab is a symbol of slavery that is imposed on women from the very early age in childhood. Inferiority of women in law system, barbaric punishments like stoning, execution or honor killing for having relationship outside of

marriage and many more injustice are present in women's life. This has to be changed. Today women don't want to be ruled by ideologies which belong to past centuries history. The ruling system makes women's life a nightmare as well. Unequal pay, unequal employment opportunity, child labor, sex trades and many more horrific ways of exploiting women are characteristics of a gender discriminated system which is in power world-wide. The oppression and patriarchy character in ruling systems also intensifies the other types of discriminations which are based on race, nationality and religion. Another issue that is strengthening the gender inequality is the growth of cultural relativism. Women have always been in battle with inequality. Our publication is a part of this battle. Our publication's attempt is to reflect and direct these struggles to make a difference. Our great effort is to eradicate inequality and

women's suffering. We try to reflect women's social, political and cultural issues on our publication. We reveal hejab and other symbols of contempt on women. We radically call for change in women's life. We want public to be aware of what is happening with women, why is happening and what can be done. "Rahai Zan" is a political, social and cultural publication. Rahai Zan is advocating for unconditional equality of gender regardless of their race, nationality and religion. We advocate for secularism. We demand unconditional freedom of speech and opinion. We want to be in touch with women, women's rights activists and all freedom loving people. We want to be a pronounced voice for women. We want to reflect the need for radical changes in many aspects of women's life. Hands in hands, to build a better world for women.

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Interview... from p.4
Rahai zan: could you please tell us more about your international activities.
Yanar Mohammad: We have initiated an

enormous struggle to become Iraqi women's voice internationally. We want to end discrimination against women and to accomplish equal rights regard-

less of race, nationality, religion and gender. Our organization is well known internationally. In order to raise women's knowledge and demands we practically

opened centers for the Women's Freedom. Furthermore we have opened shelters to prevent honor killing. We are also publishing

Equality, and distributing 10 thousand copies in many different areas within Iraq. Internationally we are going to broaden our equal rights movement.

Canada's Secular Values under Attack



Saeed Keramat
Keramat@rogers.com

The Canadian society is going to be surprised by an ancient "gift": the Islamic Law or Shari'a. Islamic groups have, unfortunately, already convinced the Ontario justice system to allow them to establish Islamic tribunals across the province. These tribunals are supposed to allow them to deal with small business and family disputes within the so-called Muslim communities. This move might be embraced by supporters of multiculturalism, or cultural relativism, i.e. the idea that everything in every culture is good, even if it violates human rights, provided its victims are "members" of the re-

spective "community". However, as someone who was born into a Muslim family and raised in Iran, I believe giving legal status to Islamic shari'a will produce two parallel outcomes: chaining Muslim women and children to Islamic laws and unleashing racism.

The current attempts by Islamist groupings to establish Islamic courts in Canada are not their initial step towards Islamization of a large portion of the Canadian society. They have been practicing gender apartheid in their schools forever: boys and girls are segregated in Islamic institutions. Even in non-Islamic institutions, such as public schools, females, especially young girls, are forced to observe the Islamic code of chastity, the veil, or Hijab. It is the first step towards their suppression; quite comparable, in fact, to chastity belt. These girls are not, for example, allowed to play with their boy peers or

participate in activities such as swimming, bicycling, and so on. Despite such violations of their children's basic human rights, Islamic groups have now disclosed another ambitious plan. This one, if implemented, is sure to undermine the civic, secular values of Canada; or any country for that matter. Enforcing Islamic laws is a clear violation of human rights.

According to Islamic shari'a women have to obey their husbands. If a woman refused to obey, her husband has the right to punish her, including beating.

Now, let us ask ourselves, are we going to provide a ground for our fellow citizens to be legally beaten? According to the Islamic laws, a Muslim man has the right to have up to four permanent wives and unlimited number of temporary ones. Will polygamy be integrated in Canada's legal system?

Islamic law reserves the right to divorce for men only. Are women going to lose the right

to divorce as a result of establishment of Islamic tribunals?

I think setting up Islamic tribunals in Canada, if we let this happen, will be equal to making human rights relative to religion and/or ethnicity. They are, however, universal. Just like Europeans and North Americans, people originally from the so-called Muslim societies deserve, and do embrace, the latest civil achievements in the West. Many new Canadians have been banished from their birth places precisely because they would not bear living under Islamic laws. They have chosen to rebuild their lives in Canada mainly because of its relatively secular laws, defending civil and personal freedoms. They would not dream that some day, at some place, half a world away from the rule of religion, they would be put back, by the Ontario government, at the mercy of Islamic groups seeking con-

cessions for Islam after September 11!

If we let Islamic laws and values be officially institutionalized, this will provide a most fertile ground for the growth of racism, first and foremost within the traditional Right wing of the Canadian society in general, regardless of such people's religion or ethnicity. It will also pave the way for the re-incarnation of the general and creeping interference of religion in the people's lives in Canada. In a nutshell, the effect of this Islamic groups' first initiative in Ontario will be the loss of peace, freedom, and sense of community all over Canada.

I would like to reiterate that human rights are universal. And one of the pillars of universal human rights is the right of the individual to be protected from the encroachments of religion; any religion.

Let us defend secularism in Canada, and everywhere else

Contact address: Editor:
Executive Director: Fouzieh Khaleliyan
Mehrnoush Mousavi fouzieh@yahoo.com
Tel: (416) 754- 2427
Emancipationofwomen@yahoo.com

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Islamic Terrorism is Women's Rights enemy!