

Musawah Planning Committee

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Global Meeting Coordinator: Maria Chin Abdullah

SIS Board of Directors

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A Feast of Equals Opening Dinner

Creative Director: Ann Lee

Stage Manager: Ivy Josiah

Lighting and Shadow Play: Carolyn Lau

Performers: Isatou Touray, Asma'u Joda, Hadil El-Khouly, Fatimah Abu Bakar, Ida Nerina, Christina Orow, Hari Azizan, Faridah Hameed, Charbat Youssef, Iedil Putra; also Vernon Emuang, Farah Azizan, Ineza Mahathir Roussille, Faiqsyazwan Kuhiri, Razlinawati Ramli, Bryan Chang, Andrei Xydas, and Kerina Marize

Music: Rhythm in Bronze

Musawah Video: Red Communications – Lina Tan, Rafidah Abdullah, Angie Choo; with footage and images from Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Canada, Egypt, Gambia, India, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Morocco, Nigeria, Pakistan, Turkey, United Kingdom, Yemen and Women Living Under Muslim Laws

Graphic Design: Gan4Hire

Rehearsal Space: Five Arts Centre/Dramalab

MC: Yasmin Yusuff

The Musawah Planning Committee and Sisters in Islam would like express our deepest appreciation to all SIS members, staff, volunteers, rapporteurs, interpreters, translators and donors who have made this Global Meeting possible.

Global Meeting Teams

Coordinator: Maria Chin Abdullah

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Secretariat: Nazreen Nizam, Syarifatul Adibah Joda, Sharifah Zuriyah al-Jefri, Hadil El-Khouly, Norfadilah Mat Ripin, Nurul Hidayah Zainun Abiden, Nurul Afida Ahmad, Norhidayah Ismail, Noraina Haji Mustapha, Noorizwa Jurish

Marketplace: Azareena Aziz, Nur Azrine Abdul Razak, Rosniza Hart, Siti Suliana Sanusi, Mariam Ramli, Kawti Nizan, Tahana, Intan

Rapporteurs: tan beng hui, Chin Oy Sim, Lisa Pusey, Lee Wei San, Yasmin Masidi, Audrey Lee, Maisarah Muhd Najib, Maimuna Merican, Shazana Syed Salim Agha, Vizla Kumaresan, Abigail de Vries, Hadil El-Khouly, Brooks Hickman

Programme Design and Layout: Mosaic Street, cover by Gan4Hire

Musawah Funders

Oxfam Novib
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 Hivos
 British High Commission, Kuala Lumpur
 SENADA (Malaysian Secretariat for the Empowerment of Muslim Women)
 Friends of Sisters in Islam

Welcome to this ground-breaking Global Meeting to launch Musawah, a Global Movement for Equality and Justice in the Muslim Family. The fact that some 250 participants from 49 Muslim countries and minority communities are here in Kuala Lumpur to be a part of Musawah is a cause for celebration. As they say, nothing is more powerful than an idea whose time has come.

Musawah is designed to bring together scholars and activists who wish to work within a holistic framework to ensure that Muslim women are treated as human beings of equal worth and dignity in the law, in the family and the community. Since so much of the injustice against Muslim women and the resistance to law reform are justified in the name of Islam, we feel that it is important that Musawah's key focus as a knowledge-building movement be on acquiring knowledge and understanding why equality and change are possible and necessary within Islam.

It is for this reason that the international planning committee of Musawah spent almost two years building a foundation for the initiative by commissioning theoretical papers to provide the basic grounding to understand why change is possible; developing a Framework for Action and principles to guide Musawah's work; consulting scholars, activists and practitioners from over thirty Muslim countries in this process; building a website to promote the principles of Musawah and substantive arguments for family law reform; and organising this Global Meeting to bring activists, scholars and decision-makers together in a common demand for equality and justice.

The objectives of the five-day Global Meeting are:

- To introduce the movement, its principles, process, objectives, resources, tools and conceptual framework;
- To empower women's groups, activists and practitioners through the sharing of knowledge and experiences;
- To build support and alliances;
- To agree on the way forward for Musawah.

It is our hope that Musawah as a global movement will lead to that day when those in the Muslim world will realise that women's demands for equality and justice are neither alien nor a threat to Islam, but are rooted in the Islamic tradition. Equality and justice are non-negotiable—and these values must be at the core of what it means to be Muslim today.

Zainah Anwar
 On behalf of the Musawah Planning Committee and
 Sisters in Islam

DAY ONE

10.00 – 17.00	REGISTRATION		
20.00	OPENING EVENT A Feast of Equals <i>(Open to the media)</i>	A celebration of women's activism in the Muslim world.	Musical performance: Rhythm in Bronze Welcome speeches <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zainah Anwar, Musawah Project Director • Dato' Sri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil, Adviser to the Malaysian Prime Minister on Women and Social Development Dinner Multi-media and live performance: From Darkness to Light

Saturday, 14 February 2009

DAY TWO

09.00 – 11.00	PLENARY SESSION 1 Launch of Musawah Equality in the Family is Necessary <i>(Open to the media)</i>	An introduction to Musawah and its Framework for Action, situating the movement within the lived realities of Muslim women and men.	Du'a: Hadil El-Khouly (Egypt) Opening Speech: Zainah Anwar (Malaysia) Keynote Speech: Yakin Ertürk, United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women Context Setting: Kamala Chandrakirana (Indonesia) Panel: Amal Abdel Hadi (Egypt), Isatou Touray (Gambia), Nani Zulminarni (Indonesia), Rangina Hamidi (Afghanistan), Maha Yamani (Saudi Arabia), Shaista Gohir (United Kingdom)
11.00 – 11.20	TEA BREAK		
11.20 – 13.00	BREAK-OUT 1	A space for participants to discuss the movement and what it means for them.	Participants will meet in small groups to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce themselves to each other; and • Discuss the relevance of Musawah to their work and lives.
13.00 – 14.15	LUNCH • YOUNG WOMEN'S CAUCUS		
14.15 – 15.40	PLENARY SESSION 2 Equality in the Family is Possible	A historical and contextual overview of how Muslim family laws are diverse, constantly changing, and moving towards equality.	Chair: Rabéa Naciri (Morocco) Family Law in Contemporary Muslim Contexts • Cassandra Balchin (United Kingdom) The Genesis of Muslim Family Laws • Amira El-Azhary Sonbol (Egypt)
15.40 – 16.00	TEA BREAK		
16.00 – 18.00	PLENARY SESSION 3 Equality in the Family is Possible: Text and Context	An explanation of why equality and justice are possible from an Islamic perspective, and an understanding of how social, cultural and political conditions have shaped the interpretation of texts and the construction of laws.	Chair: Norani Othman (Malaysia) Islam Beyond Patriarchy Through Gender Inclusive Qur'anic Analysis • Amina Wadud (United States) Fiqh as a Social Construction • Muhammad Khalid Masud (Pakistan) Towards Gender Equality: Muslim family laws and the Shari'ah • Ziba Mir-Hosseini (Iran)
EVENING	DINNER ON OWN • CAUCUSES • FILMS		

09.00 – 11.00	BREAK-OUT 2 Parallel Workshops on Knowledge Sharing towards Equality and Justice	In-depth discussions on specific issues related to Qur'an, <i>tafsir</i> , <i>fiqh</i> and women's rights.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Beyond Text: From misogyny to equality • Amina Wadud (United States) English/French 2. The Legal and the Social in <i>Shari'ah</i> • Muhammad Khalid Masud (Pakistan) English/Arabic 3. Construction of Gender in Islamic Legal Thought • Ziba Mir-Hosseini (Iran) English 4. Women's Rights: A balancing act between Islamic norms and state secularism • Sana Benachour (Tunisia) English/French 5. The Qur'an and Ideology of Revelation • Kyai Husein Muhammad (Indonesia) English/Bahasa Indonesia 6. Interpreting the Qur'an: Towards a contemporary approach • Abdullah Saeed (Australia) English 7. Between the Divine and the Human: <i>Shari'ah</i>, <i>fiqh</i> and positive law • Farida Bennani (Morocco) English/Arabic 8. Text and Context: Possibilities for reading equality • Nur Rofiah (Indonesia) English 9. Deriving Law from Texts • Siti Musdah Mulia (Indonesia) English <p>(NOTE: please see workshop descriptions on pages 10 and 11)</p>
11.00 – 11.30 TEA BREAK			
11.30 – 13.00	PLENARY SESSION 4 Religion and Feminism	Women of other religions sharing similar experiences of how to address gender discrimination from within a religious tradition.	<p>Chair: Rashidah Abdullah (Malaysia)</p> <p>Revisiting the Intersections of Women's Equality and Cultural Rights • Madhu Mehra (India)</p> <p>Jewish Identity, Gender and Human Rights • Deena Hurwitz (United States)</p> <p>Enlightenment and Equality: Women taking charge • Bhikkhuni Dhammananda (Thailand)</p> <p>A Catholic in Resistance: Claiming legitimacy as a woman • Frances Kissling (United States)</p>
13.00 – 14.15 LUNCH • YOUNG WOMEN'S CAUCUS			
14.15 – 16.15	PLENARY SESSION 5 Successful Campaigns and Strategies for Reform	A sharing of strategies used by groups that have successfully campaigned for law reform within a framework of equality and justice.	<p>Chair: Homa Hoodfar (Iran / Canada)</p> <p>Moroccan <i>Moudawana</i>: Marriage as a partnership of equals • Amina Lemrini (Morocco)</p> <p>Reform of the Turkish Civil and Penal Codes: Realising full gender equality in the family • Pinar Ilkcaracan (Turkey)</p> <p>Afghanistan Marriage Contract: A concrete foundation in an unstable environment • Roya Rahmani (Afghanistan)</p> <p>Promoting Gender Equality in Family Law Reform in Fiji • Imrana Jalal (Fiji)</p>
16.15 – 16.30 TEA BREAK			
16.30 – 18.00	PLENARY SESSION 6 International Networks and Organisations	An overview of the work of international networks to promote women's right to equality and justice in Muslim contexts.	<p>Chair: Dato' Sri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil (Malaysia)</p> <p>Women Living Under Muslim Laws • Zarizana Abdul Aziz</p> <p>Women's Islamic Initiative in Spirituality and Equality • Daisy Khan</p> <p>Women's Learning Partnership • Rakhee Goyal</p> <p>Coalition for Sexual and Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies • Pinar Ilkcaracan</p> <p>United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) • Azza Karam</p>
EVENING DINNER HOSTED BY Y.B. DATO' SERI DR. AHMAD ZAHID HAMIDI, MINISTER IN THE MALAYSIAN PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT			

09.00 – 11.00	BREAK-OUT 3 Parallel Roundtable Discussions towards Equality and Justice	Roundtables offering a space to share experiences and challenges in advocacy for equality and justice in the family.	1a. A Holistic Approach: Justifying equality and justice in Muslim family law advocacy English/French 1b. A Holistic Approach: Justifying equality and justice in Muslim family law advocacy English/Arabic 2. Negotiating Bliss: Using model marriage contracts towards equality in the family English/Arabic 3. Best Friends and Strange Bedfellows: Alliance building and networking for successful campaigns English 4. Getting Ourselves Heard: How to open up public debate on Islam as a source of law and public policy English 5. Law Reform is Easy—The Hard Part is the Implementation English/Arabic 6. Getting the Powerful to Listen: Working with decision-makers English 7. Using Information Technology as a Tool for Social Change English 8. Transforming Research Findings into Advocacy Materials English 9. Opening the Doors of <i>Ijtihad</i> on <i>Faraid</i> Rules? English/French 10. Sisters Doing it for Ourselves: Approaching the holy texts as non-experts English (NOTE: please see workshop descriptions on pages 12 and 13)
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11.00 – 11.30 TEA BREAK

11.30 – 13.15	PLENARY SESSION 7 Using Research to Support Proposals for Equality and Non-discrimination	A sharing of new research projects to support proposals for equality in the family and demands for change.	Chair: Azza Soliman (Egypt) Impact of Polygamy on the Family • Masjaliza Hamzah, Sisters in Islam (Malaysia) Inheritance Rules and Circumventing Practices • Mohammed El Ayadi, Association Démocratique des Femmes du Maroc (Morocco) Women’s Empowerment in Muslim Contexts • Vivienne Wee, WEMC Research Programme Consortium Resisting and Challenging Religious Fundamentalisms • Shareen Gokal, Association for Women’s Rights in Development
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13.15 – 14.30 LUNCH • YOUNG WOMEN’S CAUCUS

14.30 – 16.30	PLENARY SESSION 8 Equality without Exception	A discussion of the interaction between religious and customary laws and guarantees of equality and non-discrimination in constitutions and international human rights law.	Chair: Marina Mahathir (Malaysia) Faith and Freedom • Mahnaz Afkhami (Iran) Tensions between Constitutional Guarantees of Equality and Family Laws • Rashida Manjoo (South Africa) Ensuring Equality without Exception: A case study from Canada • Alia Hogben (Canada) Culture and Inequalities: International human rights instruments as a tool for change • Shanthi Dairiam (Malaysia)
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EVENING DINNER ON OWN • CAUCUSES • FILMS

***Shari’ah* embraces justice, kindness, the common good and wisdom. Any rule that departs from justice to injustice, from kindness to harshness, from the common good to harm, or from rationality to absurdity cannot be part of *Shari’ah*, even if it is arrived at through individual interpretation.**

– Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah,
7th (AH) / 14th (CE) jurist

09.00 – 11.00	BREAK-OUT 4 Developing the Way Forward	Small group discussions on how Musawah can be developed and sustained as a movement to meet needs at the ground level and to have an impact at the international level.	Participants break into small groups to discuss proposals for future work: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what ways can we provide strategic support for each other? • What next steps, within our capacities, do we need to move Musawah forward? • How to ensure the sustainability of the initiative at the global level? • What can you and your organisation contribute to the movement (e.g. training, resources, knowledge, etc.)?
11.00 – 11.30	TEA BREAK		
11.30 – 13.00	REPORT BACK IN PLENARY	A facilitated discussion to gather feedback from the small groups and agree on proposals for moving forward.	Facilitators: Lies Marcoes, Cassandra Balchin and Rashidah Shuib
13.00 – 14.15	LUNCH • YOUNG WOMEN'S CAUCUS		
14.15 – 16.00	CLOSING Necessary and Possible <i>(Open to the media)</i>		Introduce agreed proposals for moving forward Closing speeches and video



**We, as Muslims and as citizens,
declare that equality and justice in the family
are both necessary and possible.**

**We hold the principles of Islam
to be a source of justice and equality,
fairness and dignity for all human beings.**

**The time for realising these values
in our laws and practices is now.**

1. **Beyond Text: From misogyny to equality** • Amina Wadud (United States) English/French
This session will examine the interaction between lived realities and textual implication and applications. Using *An-Nisa* 4:34 as a reference, Amina Wadud will deal with key issues of language and cultural context in which the text is read, as well as the Qur'anic view of women and male authority. The session will also look at how the voices and realities of women can be better represented and reflected through a more gender inclusive reading and how this understanding can be used in the context of rising demand, for a 'return to *Shari'ah*'.
2. **The Legal and the Social in *Shari'ah*** • Muhammad Khalid Masud (Pakistan) English/Arabic
This session will look at how Muslim jurists deal with conflict between *Shari'ah* ideals and social norms, the concept of law, concept of justice, the place of reason, and the tension between the sacred and the mundane in law. Khalid Masud will also take participants through an introduction to juristic principles of *maqasid al-Shari'ah*, *maslahah* and *istihsan* as tools that can be used for law reform based on equality and justice.
3. **Construction of Gender in Islamic Legal Thought** • Ziba Mir-Hosseini (Iran) English
This workshop will help identify the legal theories and philosophical and cultural assumptions that inform competing and at times conflicting conceptions of gender rights in Islamic jurisprudence. Ziba Mir-Hosseini will cover the conception of gender and rights in traditional *fiqh* and deal with competing discourses and ideologies on various discriminatory issues within Muslim family law. The emerging feminist scholarship in Islam and its contribution to construction of an egalitarian family law within an Islamic framework will also be explored.
4. **Women's Rights: A balancing act between Islamic norms and state secularism** • Sana Benachour (Tunisia) English/French
In the area of women's rights and family laws, modern Muslim states find themselves caught in a delicate balancing act between norms based on rights and on religion, tradition and modernity, universal rights and cultural specificity. Paradoxically, in many contexts family laws are *both* the means of preserving the existing model of the Muslim family *and* a means of political, social and cultural change. Instead of focusing on abstract texts, Sana Benachour will ask in this session: What is the interplay of religious and mundane influences behind family laws? Through what practical and symbolic processes are competing norms regarding women developed and then reflected in legislation? What is the role of the various actors involved (including judges and magistrates who are taking increasingly feminist positions, especially regarding marriages between Muslims and non-Muslims), and how is *ijtihad* being accessed? How is civil society reshaping the terms of this debate, especially by referring to Islamic laws in ways that are producing new directions?
5. **The Qur'an and Ideology of Revelation** • Kyai Husein Muhammad (Indonesia) English/Bahasa Indonesia
This session will be an introduction to the science of the Qur'an, with special attention to revelation, transmission, interpretation, form, language and style, abrogation, and the creation of a male-normative paradigm. Kyai Husein will also introduce the less-understood concept of *ta'wil*, a method of reading the Qur'an which provides due appreciation to the importance of reality and reason, in contrast to *tafsir* which emphasises intertextual reading and often cannot resolve inconsistencies between text and social reality.

6. **Interpreting the Qur'an: Towards a contemporary approach** • Abdullah Saeed (Australia) English
Abdullah Saeed will provide a four-stage model for reinterpretation to deal with contemporary problems. Using specific violations of rights as models, participants will (1) determine current concerns, problems and needs; (2) explore the social, political, economic and cultural context relevant to the text in question; (3) compare the present context with the socio-historical context of the text; and (4) derive meaning of the text to deal with the violations of the Present.
7. **Between the Divine and the Human: *Shari'ah*, *fiqh* and positive law** • Farida Bennani (Morocco) English/Arabic
What is *Shari'ah*? What is *fiqh*? What is positive law? How are Muslim family laws formulated? What are the sources for them? Are they divine or human? Can they be reformed to respond to changing social realities just like other laws? If they are divine, why aren't they the same in all Muslim societies? Farida Bennani will emphasise the differentiation between what constitutes the divine *Shari'ah* as revelation from God, and what is *fiqh* and positive law as constructed by humans. It is the confusion between revelation and human understanding that is causing resistance to reform and violations of women's right to equality and non-discrimination.
8. **Text and Context: Possibilities for reading equality** • Nur Rofiah (Indonesia) English
Nur Rofiah will provide a *tafsir* methodology that looks at the context in which the text was revealed; how it says what it says; and the whole text and its *weltanschauung*/worldview with regard to gender relationships. She will take participants through all of the 'problematic' verses in the Qur'an which are used to discriminate against women, reading the text in the context of history and language, and highlight the positive verses that can become the basis for more equitable gender relationships.
9. **Deriving Law from Texts** • Siti Musdah Mulia (Indonesia) English
This session promotes a reading of the texts—Qur'an and *Hadith*—using a historical and sociological perspective, guided by the core universal values of Islam, which strive for justice and equality for all humankind. While many Muslim scholars have promoted this approach in the past, their views have not been popular in the Muslim world. Siti Musdah Mulia will provide guidance to participants in reading the Qur'an and *Hadith* based on the principles of humanism, pluralism and gender equality, and in line with Islam's emancipatory spirit, establishing this as the foundation to derive just laws on marriage and the family.

1. **A Holistic Approach: Justifying equality and justice in Muslim family law advocacy** (two sessions)
 This session discusses a comprehensive framework for supporting the demand for equality and justice in Muslim family laws—either for positive reform of existing laws or to prevent regressive changes. The Musawah framework uses a combination of Islamic sources, international and national laws, and the socio-economic reality regarding marriage, divorce, maintenance, financial rights and children. What has been the experience of campaigners using such a framework and how could it work in your context?
1a. Interveners: Morocco, Iran, Mali, Indonesia English/French
1b. Interveners: Tunisia, Egypt, South Africa, Malaysia English/Arabic

2. **Negotiating Bliss: Using model marriage contracts towards equality in the family**
 This session discusses marriage contracts as a strategy towards equality in the family. It will examine what can and cannot be included and negotiated in a marriage contract, as well as sharing experiences from Muslim majority and minority contexts, from countries where marriage contracts are widely practiced and where they are rare. Is this a suitable alternative to the law reform route, and what are the advantages and challenges of using this strategy? How can trends in marriage contracts in one country help work towards equality in the family in other contexts?
Interveners: United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Canada English/Arabic

3. **Best Friends and Strange Bedfellows: Alliance building and networking for successful campaigns**
 Achieving equality and justice in the Muslim family requires mobilisation and the sharing of information across community, national and international levels. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the various possible structures for working together—networks, platforms, coalitions, alliances? How can we work across traditional boundaries to strengthen our work? This session shares positive and negative experiences of working collectively on protecting and promoting rights, and discusses how to stay friends with your long-time allies as well as what to do when there is an opportunity for unexpected collaboration.
Interveners: Women Living Under Muslim Laws, Turkey, Niger, Indonesia English

4. **Getting Ourselves Heard: How to open up public debate on Islam as a source of law and public policy**
 Historically, there has been little public space for those who seek to promote equality and justice in the Muslim family. But without this voice and space, campaigns will go nowhere. At the same time, within all societies whether the state is secular or not, debating Islam as a source of law and public policy is hugely controversial today. How have women successfully built a public voice and demanded the opening up of this debate and what are the remaining challenges?
Interveners: Iran, India, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia English

5. **Law Reform is Easy—The Hard Part is the Implementation**
 Securing a positive change in the law requires a huge investment in time and energy, but in many ways it is just the beginning of the long process of change. For the reform to actually work in practice, implementation has to be effective. Do reformers pay enough attention to implementation, what are the necessary ingredients in your context for successful implementation, who are the main actors in implementation, and how is procedural reform different to the reform of family law texts?
Interveners: Pakistan, Egypt, Iran, Nigeria English/Arabic

6. **Getting the Powerful to Listen: Working with decision-makers**
 Even with mass mobilisation, at the end of the day a successful campaign for equality and justice has to work with community, national and international policy makers and

- decision-takers—religious leaders, parliamentarians, bureaucrats, even donors who support national Justice Ministries, etc. This session discusses ways to ensure the powerful are on our side, what to do if they fail to support equality and justice in the family, how to get effective messages across, and some tricks of the lobbying trade.
Interveners: Fiji, Mali, Pakistan, Turkey English
7. **Using Information Technology as a Tool for Social Change**
 How can we use information technology, the mass media and popular culture to reach out to a mass audience to encourage social change? Technology, especially communications technology, has already changed the nature of civic activism and promises to be the most potent force in transforming the way people learn, work, and relate to one another across communities and around the world. WLP will showcase practical examples and uses by women activists of new technology tools to create awareness, build networks and movements, raise funds, and run advocacy campaigns. Breakthrough will share how it has successfully used the mass media and pop culture to reach an audience of about 100 million around the world in campaigns on gender-based violence, HIV/AIDs, and religion and peace.
Interveners: Breakthrough Communications (India), Women’s Learning Partnership English

 8. **Transforming Research Findings into Advocacy Materials**
 Knowledge and experience about the suffering caused by inequality and injustice in the family can only lead to positive change if there are shared effectively. Yet discussing family laws can be very legalistic and technical, and research about their impact can be complex and nuanced or entirely anecdotal. This session will discuss the importance of research, documentation and advocacy materials for successful campaigns, the alliances needed between academics and activists, and how to use detailed information in ways that can change attitudes, practices and laws towards greater equality in the family.
Interveners: Pakistan, Canada, Malaysia, Women’s Empowerment in Muslim Contexts English

 9. **Opening the Doors of *Ijtihad* on *Faraid* Rules?**
 Increasingly Muslim scholars and intellectuals are calling for a historical approach as a means of challenging dominant ideological constructions of Islam while remaining faithful to the Qur’anic spirit and message. Thinkers from the Maghreb region figure prominently in this trend, and have enabled a re-examination of the issue of succession and inheritance. Classical jurisprudence has tended to essentialise the principles of *Shari’ah*, and abstract them from our constantly changing social circumstances. This session will not offer a definitive reinterpretation but will reveal the potential for a re-opening of the Gates of *Ijtihad*, which will allow the values of equality to enter our lives.
Interveners: Tunisia, Morocco English/French

 10. **Sisters Doing it for Ourselves: Approaching the holy texts as non-experts**
 We are often told we need degrees in Arabic and certificates from Al-Azhar or Qom before we are knowledgeable enough to ‘really’ understand and engage with the Qur’an and *Hadith*. But where does this leave ordinary Muslim activists who believe in the message of Islam but feel the texts are being misused to oppress women and the marginalised? This session will share the experiences of those who have embarked on the challenging journey of re-discovering the holy texts for themselves, individually and collectively. In a field dominated by experts, how do supposed non-experts make space for themselves, what is the power of collective thinking and enquiry, and how do we respond to those who claim authority in Islam?
Interveners: United Kingdom, Malaysia, Nigeria, South Africa English