



**musawah**

For Equality in the Muslim Family



**Equality Now**

A just world for women and girls.

President Ashraf Ghani, Afghanistan  
President Ilir Meta, Albania  
Prime Minister Edi Rama, Albania  
President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, Algeria  
President Ilham Aliyev, Azerbaijan  
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President Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa, Bahrain  
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President Šefik Džaferović, Bosnia and Herzegovina  
President Željko Komšić, Bosnia and Herzegovina  
President Milorad Dodik, Bosnia and Herzegovina  
Prime Minister Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah  
Mu'izzaddin Waddaullah, Brunei  
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Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad, Malaysia

President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih, Maldives  
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President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, Mauritania  
King Mohammed VI, Morocco  
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President Muhammadu Buhari, Nigeria  
Sultan Qaboos Bin Said Al Said, Oman  
Prime Minister Imran Khan, Pakistan  
President Dr. Arif Alvi, Pakistan  
Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Qatar  
King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Saudi Arabia  
President Macky Sall, Senegal  
President Julius Maada Bio, Sierra Leone  
President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed, Somalia  
President Mahmoud Abbas, State of Palestine  
President Omar al-Bashir, Sudan  
President Emomali Rahmon, Tajikistan  
President Adama Barrow, The Gambia  
President Mohamed Beji Caid Essebsi, Tunisia  
President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Turkey  
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President H. H. Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, United Arab Emirates  
Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, United Arab Emirates  
President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, Uzbekistan  
Secretary General of Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, H.E. Dr. Yousef bin Ahmad Al-Othaimeen  
Secretary General of the League of Arab States, H.E. Ahmed Aboul Gheit

27 March 2019

Your Excellencies,

On behalf of the undersigned, women's rights and human rights organizations and activists from the Muslim world, we have the honor to transmit to you this letter.

All of the organizations endorsing this letter are committed to the protection and promotion of women's rights in the Muslim world and are very concerned over the crackdown on women's rights activists in some countries. We request that you, as leaders of Muslim-majority countries, raise your voice to support equality for women, recognize the critical

role that women's rights defenders play in this regard, and condemn the imprisonment and torture of women human rights defenders.

The repression and persecution of civil society organizations and activists, including a crackdown on their funding, is a worrying trend in many countries. In particular, we are concerned about the treatment of Iranian women's rights activists, including Nasrin Sotoudeh, an internationally renowned lawyer and activist, who has been reportedly recently sentenced to 38 years in prison and 148 lashes, and Narges Mohammadi, sentenced in 2016 to 16 years in prison. Similarly, we are alarmed by the arrests and arbitrary detentions for over 300 days of Saudi women's rights activists, including Loujain Al-Hathloul, Hatoon Al-Fassi, Aziza Al-Yousef, Eman Al-Nafjan, Nouf Abdelaziz, Samar Badawi, Nassima Al-Sadah, Amal Al-Harbi, and Shadan Al-Anezi, who stood up for the rights of Saudi women. These activists in Iran and Saudi Arabia have been accused of being a threat to national security. In fact, the opposite is true as it is well documented that the level of gender equality in a country correlates with the level of security – the more gender equal a society, the less conflict it breeds!

We are disheartened that almost all Muslim majority countries have scored very high on the Gender Inequality Index in the UNDP Human Development Reports and, indeed, several are the lowest ranked countries in the world. We are also concerned that, according to the World Bank's Women, Business and the Law report, countries of the MENA region, primarily Muslim countries, have the lowest global average scores for gender equality. In fact, Saudi Arabia has the lowest score in the world and Iran has the fourth lowest score.

We urge you, as leaders of Muslim countries, to recognize the message of equality that is inherent in Islam and that is guaranteed in many of our constitutions, and acknowledge the role of gender equality in bringing about peace and security. We need your political will and leadership to make equality a reality for Muslim women and all women who live in Muslim contexts so that they can contribute fully and freely to the development of their societies. A first step in this direction is support for women's rights activists and organizations, so that they are free to organize, start important conversations, and work for justice and equality for women. We urge you to stand in unity against the persecution of women who raise their voices for equality and join us in calling for the immediate and unconditional release of the women's rights activists named above by Iran and Saudi Arabia.

Please contact us via Zainah Anwar ([zainah@musawah.org](mailto:zainah@musawah.org)) and Yasmeen Hassan ([yhassan@equalitynow.org](mailto:yhassan@equalitynow.org)). We would welcome a dialogue with you.

#### Signatories:

1. Hangama Anwari, Afghanistan
2. Yamina Houho, Algeria
3. Farida Ghulam, Bahrain
4. Bangladesh Nari Progati Sangha, Bangladesh
5. Alia Hogben, Canada
6. Canadian Council of Muslim Women, Canada
7. Ossob Abdillahi, Djibouti/Canada
8. Act, Egypt
9. Azza Soliman, Egypt
10. Center for Egyptian Women's Legal Assistance (CEWLA), Egypt
11. Magda Adly, Egypt
12. Karama, Egypt
13. New Women Foundation, Egypt
14. Women's Center for Guidance and Legal Awareness, Egypt
15. Alliance of Inclusive Muslims, Global
16. Coalition for Sexual and Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies (CSBR), Global
17. Equality Now, Global
18. Musawah, Global
19. Muslims for Progressive Values, Global
20. Women's March Global, Global
21. Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa, Horn of Africa
22. Bharatiya Muslim Mahila Andolan (BMMA), India
23. Muslim Women's Forum, India
24. Cecep Jaya Karama, Indonesia
25. Fahmina, Indonesia
26. Imam Nahe'i, Indonesia
27. Indonesian Legal Aid Association for Women (LBH APIK), Indonesia
28. Institute for Women's Empowerment, Indonesia
29. Kalyanamitra, Indonesia
30. Kamala Chandrakirana, Indonesia

31. KH Husein Muhammad, Indonesia
32. Koalisi Perempuan Indonesia, Indonesia
33. LBH APIK Jakarta, Indonesia
34. Lies Marcoes, Indonesia
35. Rumah Kita Bersama Foundation, Indonesia
36. National Commission on Violence against Women, Indonesia
37. Pergerakan Sarinah, Indonesia
38. Perhimpunan Rahima, Indonesia
39. Professor Azyumardi Azra, CBE, Indonesia
40. Prof. Dr. KH. Nasaruddin Umar, MA, Grand Imam, Istiqlal National Mosque, Indonesia
41. Pusat Fisi IPMAFA, Indonesia
42. PW Fatayat NU DIY, Indonesia
43. Solidaritas Perempuan, Indonesia
44. Asian Muslim Action Network (AMAN), Indonesia
45. Ulama Perempuan Rahima, Indonesia
46. Iraqi Al-Amal Association, Iraq
47. Women Empowerment Organization, Iraq
48. شبكة المستقبل الديمقراطية العراقية, Iraq
49. Iraqi Women League, Iraq
50. Altufula Center-Nazareth, Israel
51. Arab Women Organisation, Jordan
52. Jordanian National Commission for Women (JNCW), Jordan
53. Sisterhood is Global Institute, Jordan
54. Tadamon Network to Defend Women's Rights, Jordan
55. Bishkek Feminist Initiatives, Kyrgyzstan
56. Myriam Sfeir, Lebanon
57. The Lebanese Council to Resist Violence Against Woman (LECORVAW), Lebanon
58. All Women's Action Society, Malaysia
59. Dato' Noor Farida binti Mohd Ariffin, Malaysia
60. G25, Malaysia
61. Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM), Malaysia
62. International Renaissance Front, Malaysia
63. Ivy Josiah, Malaysia
64. Loh Cheng Kooi, Malaysia
65. Marina Mahathir, Malaysia
66. Noor Azimah Abdul Rahim, Malaysia
67. Persatuan Sahabat Wanita Selangor, Malaysia
68. Sabah Women's Action Resource Group (SAWO), Malaysia
69. Sheena Baharudin, Malaysia
70. Sisters in Islam, Malaysia
71. Suguna Papachan, Malaysia
72. Zainah Anwar, Malaysia
73. Uthema, Maldives
74. Association des Juristes Maliennes (AJM), Mali
75. Femmes et Droits Humains, Mali
76. Promotion des Femmes de Sabalibougou (PROFESAB), Mali
77. Professeure Aïcha El Hajjami, Morocco
78. Jossourffm / KARAMA, Morocco
79. AGHS Legal Aid Cell, Pakistan
80. Alyas Rahmat, Pakistan
81. Awami Workers Party, Lahore, Pakistan
82. Aware Girls, Pakistan
83. Blue Veins, Pakistan
84. Faiz Younas, Pakistan
85. Forum for Dignity Initiatives (FDI), Pakistan
86. Institute For Peace and Secular Studies, Pakistan
87. Justice Muhammad Khalid Masud, Shariat Appellate Bench Supreme Court, Pakistan
88. Manizeh Bano, Pakistan
89. Naumana Suleman, Pakistan
90. Sahil, Pakistan
91. Shirkat Gah, Pakistan
92. Yasmeen Hassan, Pakistan
93. Aswat- Palestinian Feminist Center for Freedoms, Palestine
94. Tamara Tawfiq Tamimi, Palestine
95. The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy- MIFTAH, Palestine
96. Women's Study Center, Palestine
97. Altufula Center, Palestine
98. Filastiniyat, Palestine
99. QADER for Community Development, Palestine
100. Women Against Violence, Palestine
101. Women Centre for Legal Aid and Counseling, Palestine
102. Arab Human Rights Foundation, Regional
103. Hala Aldosari, Saudi Arabia
104. Ayan Mohamoud Hersi, Somalia
105. Faiza Jama Mohamed, Somalia
106. Siciido Hassan, Somalia
107. Suad Ibrahim Abdi, Somalia
108. Muslim Personal Law Reform Action Group (MPLRAG), Sri Lanka
109. Muslim Women's Research and Action Forum, Sri Lanka
110. Asha Khalil Abdalla, Sudan
111. Mutawinat Organization, Sudan
112. Rabab Baldo, Sudan
113. Samia Hashmi, Sudan
114. Association Tunisienne des Femmes Démocrates (ATFD), Tunisia
115. Professor Zahia Jouirou, Tunisia
116. Mussurut Zia, United Kingdom
117. Dr. Ziba Mir-Hosseini, United Kingdom/Iran
118. Dr. amina wadud, Prof. of Islam and Qur'an, US