# Chapter 11

# Why Muslim Women are Re-interpreting the Qur`an and Hadith: A Transformative Scholarship-Activism

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## Introduction

Because the true message of Islam concerning women was rarely practiced throughout the past 14 centuries of Muslim history, women scholar-activists[1] who self-identify with Islam have been taking it upon themselves to reinterpret the Qur`an to change attitudes about gender (Barazangi 2009). They have been trying to go beyond revolution to a wake-up call about gender practices in Islam. By "revolution", I mean not only the revolutionary unrest that has been sweeping some Arab societies since December 2010, but also the silent revolution that I discussed few years back—the systematic critical analysis of one's Muslim identity and how others contribute to shaping it (Barazangi 2005). Although Muslims are a majority in these societies, few in-depth discussions of history and religious foundations for reform, particularly in gender practices, took place prior to the recent revolutionary unrest, like the writings of Jamal al Banna (2005a) and the recent article by Rabab El Mahdi (2010). But this literature does not seem to reach those politicized Muslims who are running the post-revolution affairs in these societies. To the contrary, they are leading a counter-revolution against gender justice (al Jazeera 2011).

There is a crisis in the general interpretation and representation of Islam leading Muslim women, like the majority of Muslims, to fail to embrace the Islamic concept of *Tawhid*. The concept of *Tawhid* reminds Muslims of their humanness, that is, their ability to reason; the Qur`an provides the ethical guidance for the exercise of this ability. To alleviate this general problem of interpretation and representation, each woman needs to self-identity with Islam (Barazangi 2000). The Muslim woman must realize that, as an individual Muslim, she becomes legally bound by

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1 The term scholar-activists and/or scholarship-activism were adopted by some American Muslim women scholars in the edited volume *Windows of Faith* by Gisela Web to indicate a specific approach "because it originates in the conviction that to look at women's issues *from within* the Islamic perspective must include, and indeed unite, issues of theory and practice" (2000: xi).

the guidance of Islam only after she ethically and consciously chooses its message as her worldview in its totality. Moreover, the individual Muslim woman is not necessarily bound by most of the secondary sources beyond the Qur`an nor by the rules derived by jurists and interpreters throughout the centuries. *This is an urgent issue because I see Muslim women's reinterpretation of the Qur`an as a response to the crisis in understanding Islam, beginning on the university campuses in the American and other Western countries and reaching as far as the caves of the Taliban.*

The common English translation of "Islam" as "surrender" or "submission" is not accurate. The word "Islam" (*Deen*) as emphasized in the Qur`an {The religion before Allah is Islam [to be at peace with Allah's guidance] ('Al 'Imran 3: 18)}, is more accurately understood as a worldview of being at peace with oneself, with society, and with God.[2] Islam is a religio-moral rational worldview that is neither a law nor a dogma of submission, because submission means a rejection of the responsibility for the awareness and understanding the deep meanings of the Qur`an required by verses 14–19 of Chapter (al 'Alaq 96) to fully practice Islam. The implications of the lack of such awareness and the absence of Muslim women in developing and shaping Islamic thought are numerous (Barazangi 2009, 2008). For purposes of this chapter, though, women's lack of awareness that, "the Qur`an does not prescribe one timeless and unchanged social structure for men and women" is particularly problematic (Wadud 1999).

In this chapter, I investigate gender dissent within the basic order of Islam as a worldview of *Tawhid*. I propose that a return to the concept of *Tawhid* could alleviate the current crisis in understanding Islam, making way for an egalitarian approach wherein the Muslim woman herself may retrieve her place in history-making, instead of being merely the object of study. Two basic concepts are important to my argument. First, when referring to a woman's self-identity with Islam, I do not mean that woman's cultural or political identity, but rather that her identification with Islam as a worldview is her primary identity. Second, my focus is the crisis in understanding Islam, not an "identity crisis" that Olivier Roy (2007) characterizes as a response to "the post cultural society," and as the foundation of contemporary religious revivalism, not only among Muslims, but also among other religious groups. My research findings (Barazangi 2008, 2004) suggest that the "religious revivalism" among fundamental Christians, Jews, and others in the West, is one of the factors that incited some Western Muslims to adopt extremist views which traveled east (Christian Science Monitor 2012). Thus, the rush of the

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2    The brackets {.} refer to the English rendition of the verse(s) of the Qur`an used here to emphasize or clarify a point. The parentheses ( ) refer to the title of the Qur`anic *Surah* (Chapter), its numerical order and the specific verse number. I often rely on Muhammad Asad's (2003) rendering in English, and the site: Mawqi' al Islam: Qur`an, 1, with some modification. Note that Arabic linguistic use of the masculine does not mean that Qur`an guidance is exclusive to males. Finally, the accent (`) in the Arabic transliteration indicates a (long 'a') vowel, and the accent (') indicates a special letter that does not exist in English.

neo-scholars of Islam to attribute fundamentalist extremist views to some Muslim writers or to sharia must be put to rest by contextualizing "revivalism" within the problem of interpretation.

When attempting to address social issues pertinent to Muslim women, the majority of contemporary Muslim and non-Muslim scholars have followed either the traditional Muslim interpretations, the social theorists (from Bourdieu 1977 to Foucault 1990), or the orientalist approaches, which are problematic. Traditional interpretations are bound by time and place, while social theorists have focused their analyses on everyday practice as productive of or resistant to dominant orders (Scott 1990). Meanwhile, many orientalists, such as Schacht (1964), have separated Islamic rituals (*ibadat*) from legal rules (Jurisprudence) and in the process separated the ethical from the legal. These approaches often resulted in dichotomous conclusions while marginalizing the women themselves. Such marginalization is more harmful than the male's claim of superiority and abuse, because it reinforces the female's perception of herself as secondary or inferior in the social structure.

In contrast to the above approaches, Marie Failinger (2011–12: xv) reminds us that "the protest, the dissent, the lone figure standing up to legal and political power has been a feature of religious narratives and theological controversy since the first recordings of sacred texts." Maysam al Faruqi suggests that, in addition to being controversial, the conclusions of such narratives and theologies concerning gender by Muslims or non-Muslims have not been sustainable because they have defined the problem from the authors' own perspectives. She states:

> [F]or Muslim women, the relativity of these perspectives is itself the problem, for by necessity, the adopted lens will provide a particular reading of the problems at hand. More importantly, the proposed solutions themselves are going to be determined by the way the problem is identified and defined (al Faruqi 2000: 72).

When I stated in my lecture at the Commonwealth Club of California, San Francisco on July 19, 2010 that it is time for these women scholar-activists to openly and peacefully struggle against injustice, I did not dream that this challenge would be accepted in less than a year (Barazangi 2010a). Though I have no claim to the realities on the ground, I am pleased to report that my idea of a peaceful open struggle for justice seems to have resonated. In an e-mail communication, a young scholar-activist wrote, "Your 'open struggle' is taking place," in reference to the first YouTube™ posted on the Internet by the Egyptian female revolutionary, Asma Mahfouz (personal e-mail, 6 February 2011).

My hope in making the self-identity paradigm central in this chapter, and in presenting the Arab revolutionary unrest as a contemporary context for the crisis in interpretation of Islam, is to encourage the younger generation of Muslim women scholar-activists who self-identify with Islam to maintain their leadership positions in the on-going revolutionary movements in some of these Muslim-majority

Arab societies. To maintain a leadership position beyond the initial protest stage, Muslim and Arab women must change negative attitudes and realities concerning gender, and reaffirm the necessity for their participation in developing Islamic thought (Barazangi 2010a).

This chapter explores the following questions. Is it enough for Muslim women to reinterpret the Qur`an? Have their interpretations helped and how? What mechanism can guarantee a peaceful, just interpretation that will result in a transformative scholarship-activism and change the realities of the approximately 800 million Muslim women on the ground? How can scholars and activists facilitate a change in perceptions and attitudes about the Islamic belief system from the confusing representations of "sharia law," or "Islamic law," and "Islamic feminism"? I will rely in my investigation mainly on the primary and only divine source of the Islamic message—the Qur`an—within its own ethical and pedagogical framework. By synthesizing the way this message has been projected through reports attributed to its messenger, Prophet Muhammad, as his tradition (known also as Hadith and/or sunnah), I expose the core problem of the Muslim personal status codes in Muslim-majority societies that are being also reflected in the behavior of some Muslim communities elsewhere. Unlike other political and economics laws in Muslim societies, Muslim personal status codes have not changed for centuries, and their practices have been most unjust to women.

I begin by restating the problem, the context in which I am investigating it, and possible solutions. The main problems of interpretation lie in two common confusions: confusing Qur`anic Shari'ah (with a capital 'S') with "Islamic law" or "Islamic sharia," and confusing Muslim woman's self-identity with "Islamic feminism." I will place this problem in context by analyzing a centuries-old sociological, legal, and cultural phenomena—the issue of witnessing (s*hahadah*)— from within the ethical framework of the Qur`an, to explain where the problem of interpretation lies and why investigating the issue of "witness" is essential for woman's self-identification. By synthesizing the different meanings of "shaahed (a witness)" in the Qur`an, in the reported prophetic traditions, and in some Muslim male exegesis (*tafaaseer*) and jurisprudence (*fiqh*) as applied mostly in Muslim Personal Statues Codes, I offer a solution to this problem of interpretation, presenting a pedagogical model for reinterpreting the Qur`an and rethinking the Hadith for a transformative scholarship-activism. The goal is to expose the suffocating attitudes and practices of interpretation and representation—in the study of Muslim women and Islam. I conclude by assessing whether Muslim women's reinterpretations of the Qur`an to date have helped or hindered the urgently-needed rethinking of Hadith.

## The Problem, the Context, and Possible Solutions

Within the ethical and pedagogical framework of the Qur`an, Chapter 50 and particularly verse 21, {[A]nd there will come forth every soul: with each will have a drive and a witness bearer (Qaaf 50: 21)}, suggest that the "drive" is the intention

of each individual as the trustee (*Khalifah*) of God (Allah). As the "witness," the individual's own action will lead toward fulfilling the trust (*Amanah*) through understanding and working with the natural order (*sunan alkhalq*) as set by the divine. Each individual's active understanding and working with the natural order are essential to the Qur`anic concept of "trust"—the responsibility that only humans chose to undertake: {We did indeed offer the trust to the Heavens and the Earth and the mountains; but they refused to undertake it, being afraid thereof: but human undertook it; human was indeed unjust and foolish (al Ahzab 33: 72)}.

The phrase "human was indeed unjust and foolish" represents the state of today's Muslim male elites and leaders, when they claim authority on the message of Islam, preventing the majority of individuals, particularly women, from personally reading the Qur`an. These elites also elevate interpretations to the level of the Qur`an by insisting on following past interpretations, despite Qur`anic emphasis on each individual's responsibility to read and reflect in time and place (al Baqara 2: 78–9). The first set of verses revealed to Muhammad states: {Read! In the name of your Guardian and Cherisher, Who Created, … Taught humans that which they knew not (al 'Alaq 96: 1–5)}, indicating that each individual is given the means to read (use his or her own reason) in order to understand the message of the Qur`an intuitively and intimately. However, the majority of Muslims instead set the Qur`an on a pedestal (al Furqan 25: 30) as an iconic symbol .

The Qur`an gives each individual the choice (al 'Alaq 96: 14–19), and confirms that each individual is endowed with spiritual, intellectual, social, political, and religious rights and responsibilities to refuse or to carry on its message: {*For men and women, for believing men and women, for devout men and women* … (al Ahzab 33: 35)}. Realizing the other side of human nature—namely the ability to transgress even in religiosity—verse 6 in Chapter 96 warns: {Nay, but human does transgress all bounds (al 'Alaq 96: 6)}. Yet, we still see this transgression in interpretation by some Muslim scholars when they emphasize the agency of the angels over human reasoning despite Qur`an's affirmation that only humans were given the power to know and to reason.

For example, the four most referenced exegeses of the Qur`an (Ibn Katheer [1301–73], al Tabari [838–923], al Qurtubi [d. 1273], and al Jalaleen [no date]) agree that "every soul" in verse 21 of Chapter 50 indicates all humans, with no particularity among them. But, these same scholars vary as to who the witnessing agent might be—the self or the guardian angel. By relying on contradictory narratives attributed to some companions of the Prophet, Ibn Katheer, for instance, perhaps unknowingly contradicted the Qur`an when he deduced that the "driving agents" are the angels. "It was [n]arrated by Abi Hurayra that the drive is the angel, and the witness is the individual's action" (Mawqi' al Islam: Qur`an, 1 (Website of al Islam)). He seems to have neglected that the Qur`an reminds each individual that he or she will be accountable for the responsibilities that the individual was entrusted as a witness (96: 6), as well as for the rights to leadership in justice (50: 21).

*The Problem*

It can be argued that the general problem is not with Islam, nor limited to dictators and extremist groups, but with the representation of Islam in general. Therefore, I question the views that confuse ideals of Islam with its interpretations and practices as well as the premises that drive them. Jawdat Sa'id (2012) recently stated that our leaders and scholars have written most of their jurisprudence and interpretations of Islamic beliefs under the "shadow of the sword." This means that those scholars were not necessarily writing their interpretations free from the desire to appease the rulers of the time. It is true that the majority of Muslim societies have not awakened to the reality that human development is a process that is based on balancing a belief system with its interpretation. But non-Muslims who think they are helping do not realize that they can exacerbate the problem by separating knowledge from a value system. This separation is evident, for example, in the argument that Muslim women may assert their rights by changing current laws through legislation without analyzing the values and attitudes on which these laws were based, or the "religious" and non-religious sources that were used to generate such laws. Eleanor Kilroy presents a fair analysis of the impact of the 1997 statement, "Plan of Action", and of the *Network of Women under Muslim Law* (2010: 540–43). Such a strategy results in more misrepresentations of Islam, confusing Qur`anic Shari'ah with what is known as "Islamic sharia" or "Islamic law," and often more conflicts, such as those taking place in Afghanistan.

When I was asked to review a legal memorandum on divorce in Islam written by a graduate student at Cornell Law School for the benefit of judges in developing countries on gender issues, I was pleased that academic institutions are working with the realities on the ground. I was perplexed, however, when I read the memorandum because it began with a definition of "Islamic law" as synonymous with "Islamic sharia," without defining the latter.[3] Could justice for women be achieved with respect to one of the most fundamental aspects of a Muslim woman's life, if it is based on a lack of understanding of the difference between Qur`anic "Shari'ah" (with a capital "S"), i.e., God's Shari'ah (*Shari'atu Allah*) and what is known in the West as "Islamic law"? Obviously, this student was merely relying on what had probably been taught at the university for decades without being questioned. The magnitude of the problem here demands more than just explaining the difference to the student or to the person who asked me to review the document. The problem is embedded in the premises on which the disciplines of "Islamic studies," "Islamic law," "Islamic feminism," and international women's rights advocacy are based.

Shari'ah (with a capital "S") is the path or the guidance of the Qur`an in its totality: {Then, We put you on the (right) way of Religion: so follow that (path), and follow not the desires of those who know not (al Jathyah 45:18)}, and not the collection of rules derived by jurists or interpreters that were solidified by Western

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3   Avon Global Center for Women and Justice, Cornell Law School (personal e-mail 21 April 2010).

colonials under the term "Islamic law" (Barazangi 2008). As I stated above, we need to critically examine the commonly used meanings of Islam, as well as of these terms. Asifa Quraishi (2011) also suggests that in order to defend Muslim women's rights we should distinguish God's Shari'ah from fiqh—the man-made sharia (with a small "s"). Although she calls Shari'atu Allah "God's Law," we may benefit from her further explanation. She states:

> In contemporary discourses, especially in a legal advocacy setting, it is very important to keep the two terms *fiqh* and *sharia* distinct. Sloppy use of the term "*sharia*" can (and does) generate unnecessary resistance to what otherwise would be legitimate and uncontroversial statements. Remember that *fiqh*—the product of human legal interpretation—is inherently fallible and thus open to question, whereas *sharia*—God's Law—is not. Thus, simple attention to language could play a significant role in alleviating some of the perceived deadlocks in global debates over what is and is not legally negotiable for Muslims (2011: 26–7).

Given the ongoing messy historical and political dynamics in Muslim societies, Abu-Lughod's (2002) question, "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?" should be extended to the question, "[h]ave the Afghan war or the multitudes of NGOs saved the Afghan women from the Taliban's and other extremists' interpretations?" The answer is: "No." This is evident in the Revolutionary Afghanistan Women Association (2010) statement that Afghan women are mourning for the gang-rape of many women, for being flogged, for being auctioned in open market, and for their young daughters who put an end to their miserable lives by their own hands.

## The Context

It is fair to state that as long as Islam is studied with the tools of Orientalism, that is, treating Islam as an object of study, stamped with an otherness (Said 1979), the West will never be able to understand Islam, nor help Muslim women. The West does not see these women as citizens in their own right, or realize that such women, and Muslims in general, are also an integral element in the New West (incorporating the non-Anglo-Saxon population). The assumption that Islam is a foreign religion that needs to be interpreted by others telling Muslims how to understand their own belief system (such as the Jewish professor of Islamic studies at Cornell University who conducts a Qur`an study circle with Muslim students) further marginalizes Muslim women and gives rise to misunderstandings about their concerns. These assumptions, though propagated by Orientalists and supported by the colonials, are influenced by the Jewish view of the Talmud as a law (Barazangi 2004), and may have contributed to the confusion between Qur`anic Shariah and what is wrongly called "Islamic law" or "Islamic sharia" (with a small "s"). These assumptions are also influenced by the Christian missionary emphasis on elite male leadership (Barazangi 2008). The present Muslim legal systems that apply Muslim personal status codes consist predominantly of centuries-old

interpretations and customary practices by Muslim males that were made into law with the support of the colonials to subdue the conservative Muslim male leaders (Chitnis and Wright 2007).

We saw more harmful contemporary results of such confusion and influence when the United States government interfered in drafting the Iraqi constitution in 2005, allowing extremist Muslim clerics to slip in specific "Muslim rulings (*Marji'ia Islamiya*)" as one of the bases for developing any law in Iraq. Similarly, when the Archbishop of Canterbury suggested in 2008 that British lawmakers should come to some "accommodation with some aspects of Muslim law, as we already do with aspects of other kinds of religious law," he exposed his misunderstanding of the difference between Islamic guiding principles of the Qur`an and what is known as "Islamic law." Now, sadly, some Canadian and Australian Muslims, including some women's groups, want to implement "sharia'" and "marji'iyah" in Canadian and Australian courts (Doherty and Sharpe 2010).

*Possible Solutions*

Europe's reformation (Lindberg 2010) will never be replicated in Muslim societies because of fundamental differences in the structure and aspirations of Muslim societies. The social structure in Islam is built on the extended family social collaboration model rather than Europe's nuclear, economic-based model ('Abd al 'Ati 1977). Muslim aspirations are mostly related to past history and traditional authority morality, rather than nationalistic or ethnic morality (Hallaq 2005). Hallaq (2004) also suggests that the idea that Islamic law is a viable legal system is questionable in light of the changes in the conception of legal authority brought on by the advent of the nation state.

Therefore, the time has come for a transformative move to build a new structure for Muslim societies through an egalitarian interpretation of the Qur`an that restores the religio-moral rational authority of interpretation to each individual Muslim. Two basic Qur`anic principles could ensure a peaceful and just Muslim society: observing the natural order of the world and developing action plans by means of educated reason and mutual consultation. I will elaborate on these principles in my conclusion, but an illustration of the troubling ramifications of what is often claimed to be the liberation of Muslim women or the reformation of contemporary Muslim societies is in order here.

The reports on Afghan and Iraqi women cited in the previous sections concern me because of their overall negative ramifications, as well as two aspects of their underlying perceptual and attitudinal stance. The first troubling attitude is the stigmatization of Muslim women as a helpless group that needs outside help, ignoring the fact that their misery is also related to militarized politics grounded with the support of Western governments' think tanks, such as Daniel Pipe's Middle East Forum and Campus Watch Dog. The second troubling aspect about these reports is that Muslim women who experience these situations often are told that they are being liberated by removing the veil, by going to beauty parlors to do their

hair and paint their fingernails, or by driving cars (Forbes Magazine 2011). These women are not offered real solutions to their pathetic conditions or the capacity to change their lots, mainly because they are oppressed by their lack of skills and by the distorted knowledge of those who claim to protect their culture, or to liberate them from the same culture. Their pathetic conditions are further complicated by the fact that they do not realize that their knowledge of Islam primarily relies on secondary conflicting sources instead of on the Qur`an. They may recite the Qur`an many times daily asking for God's help, but they have been mostly absent from extracting meanings directly from the Qur`an by themselves and for themselves in order to challenge false hopes and false representations of Islam. Such false representations are those that resulted in segregating men and women, secluding women in the name of modesty, preventing them from accessing educational institutions, discouraging or preventing them from congregational prayer and communal decision-making, but above all denying women direct identification with the Qur`an as autonomous persons (Barazangi 2004). In other words, women have been absent from the process through which representations of Islam and of Muslim women have been developed, largely by Muslim males and patriarchy in general, and partially by non-Muslims who reinforce such representations by accepting them as if they were the "authentic" Islam.

## Reinterpreting Qur`an, and Rethinking Hadith: The Issue of Witnessing

I present some Qur`anic terms, as well as some narratives from Hadith collections that relate to "*shahaadah* (witnessing)" and are often used in most Muslim countries' personal status codes, as summarized in Gharawi (2008). My synthesis of these sources is intended to illustrate three mandates of the Qur`an. First, each sane adult is responsible for the trust. Second, in order to fulfill the trust, each individual needs to have full authority to bear witness to the trust in every aspect of life. Thus, to assume any particularity in the validity and value of witnessing both contradicts the Qur`an and causes injustice to the particular witness. One cannot emphasize enough the importance of woman's witnessing—beginning with witnessing in her own behalf against accusations of adultery, and ending with her full authority to interpret the text. Third, Muslims should be reiterating the problem of past and present interpretations, to illustrate the misuse of Hadith in general, and to explain the necessity for each individual's participation in the process.

### *The Qur`an*

As I stated in the introduction and according to the Qur`an, each individual acts as a witness to her own action {Qaaf 50: 21}, and is accountable for actualizing her right and responsibility as the trustee, endowed in all humans: {Behold, your Guardian God said to the angels: "I will create a khalifah 'vicegerent' on earth …" (al Baqara 2: 30)}.

*Feminism, Law, and Religion*

Several passages in the Qur`an refer to human witnessing, seeing, and testifying. By analyzing some contexts of these passages, I am also laying the groundwork for identifying the source of the confusion in interpreting the validity and value of woman's witnessing. A good example is when Muslims (and non-Muslims) only quote one verse (2: 282) to argue that Islam gives women's testimony the value of one-half of the male's testimony, even though this verse was intended for a special circumstance of a particular time. This verse is particular to witnessing a loan for a specified time; the requirement of having another woman with the female witness was to secure extra documentation to protect the lender's rights, since women generally were not in the market place (Jamal al Banna 2007: 151). Understanding the problem in misinterpreting this "witness" requirement may also help us understand the difference between Qur`anic Sharia'h and sharia in general, and where the confusion lies in understanding Islam's moral norms compared to its legal norms, as explained by al Faruqi (2000) through the following five examples.

First, several contexts speak of God's knowing what may come in the "Hereafter," the unknown (*al ghayb*), encompassing the totality of the natural order as ordained by the Guardian God, and the witnessed, or the seen (al shahaadah), including human action.[4] Yet few interpreters pay attention to the concept of "God the Knower" and its relation to human knowledge and action. For example, the four most popular exegeses (*Tafaseer* of Ibn Katheer, al Jalaleen, al Tabari, and al Qurtubi) agree on the basic meaning of God's knowing the seen and unseen, of this world and the Hereafter when interpreting: {Allah is He, … , Who knows both unknown (*al ghayb*) and known (al shahaadah)…(al Hashr 59: 22)}. Only al Qurtubi states that "al ghayb" is that what humans do not know, and "al shahaadah" is that what they see and know. Since we are concerned with human right and responsibility to know (testify or witness) in the broadest sense, reassessing the interpretation that is based only on one verse (2: 282) is appropriate in order to change attitudes about the validity and value of female witnessing.

Second, the Qur`an presents guidance in Chapters 2, 4, 5, and 65 concerning human testimony in several circumstances. Chapter 2 addresses witnessing economic contracts in general, without specifying the gender.[5] Chapter 4 addresses witnessing justice (*'Adl*).[6] Chapter 5 addresses the witnessing of bequests (that is, instituting another trust in addition to one's will and testament).[7] Chapter 65

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4   Qur`an 6: 73; 9: 94, 105; 13: 9; 23:92; 32: 6; 39: 46; 59: 22; 62: 8; and 64: 18.

5   {If you are on a journey, … And if one of you deposits a thing on trust with another let the trustee [faithfully] discharge the trust, and let him fear his Guardian God, conceal no evidence (al Baqara 2: 283)}. It is worth noting that Ibn Katheer emphasizes the importance of such witnessing and its accuracy (Mawqi' al Islam: quran. 49).

6   {O you who believe! stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses (shuhada) to Allah, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it is [against] rich or poor … (al Nisa` 4: 135)}.

7   {O you who believe! When death approaches any of you, [take] witness (shahaadah) among yourselves when making bequests, *two just persons* of your own [relatives] or others

addresses witnessing social contracts—namely matters of marriage and dissolution of marriage (divorce).[8] Remarkably, only in some English renditions of the Qur`an do we find the "two persons" being specified as two males, even when no exegetist added such particularity.[9] Even the most commonly-referenced collection of reported Hadith, *Sahih Bukhari* [810–70] (1991), emphasizes that there should be two witnesses when a separation and rejoining of the couple takes place, without specifying the gender of witnesses (Mawqi' al Islam: Hadith 2932).

Third, "a witness (shaahed)" appears in three places. Most relevant is in Chapter 11 in the context of God's signs that can be used to witness the truth of revelation.[10] It applies to all those who accept the message of the Qur'an, regardless of gender, race, or ethnicity.

Fourth**,** the term "is witnessing (shahiid)" appears in several contexts.[11] All but 2:282 are in reference to God's knowledge of both the unknown and the known or seen. Relevant to our purpose is Chapter 2, verse 282, as cited above: {O ye who believe! When you deal with each other, in transactions …, reduce them to writing … *And get two witnesses, out of your own men, and if there are not two men, then a man and two women, such as you choose [for witnesses], so that if one of them errs, the other can remind her*…(al Baqara 2: 282)}.

Ibn Katheer, unfortunately, interprets this verse suggesting that the two women witnesses are a sign of the woman's feeble mind. He caused further injustice by using weak traditions attributed to the Prophet, in addition to the narrative of Abu Hurayra cited above, all of which are in *Sahih Bukhari*.[12] Furthermore, the jurist al Shafi'i [767–820] (1961) uses a similar tradition to deduce that "woman" by

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from outside if you are journeying through the earth and the chance of death befalls you … (al Ma`ida 5: 106)}.

8    {O Prophet! When you do dissolve your marriage divorce women at their prescribed periods, and count their prescribed periods, and fear Allah your Guardian God, and turn them not out of their houses, nor shall they [themselves] leave, except in case they are guilty of some open lewdness … Thus, when they fulfill their term appointed, either take them back on equitable terms or part with them on equitable terms; and take for witness persons from among you, endowed with justice, and establish the evidence before Allah … (al Talaq 65: 1–2)}.

9    Note that Muhammad Asad (2003) does not specify the gender of the two persons in his rendition of the Qur`an, but it is specified in the online site: Mawqi' al Islam: Quran, 125.

10    {Can you be [like] those who accept a clear [sign] from their Guardian God and whom a witness (shaheed) from Allah [Prophet Muhammad] does teach, as did the Book of Musa before it, a guide and a mercy? ... Yet many among people do not believe! (Hood 11: 17)}.

11    Qur`an 2: 282; 3: 98; 5: 117; 6: 19; 10: 46; 22: 17; 34: 47; 41: 47; 41: 53; 50: 37; 58: 6; and 85: 9.

12    "2515—On the authority of Abi Sa'd al Khudari that the Prophet referred to woman's witnessing being equal to one-half of a man was because of her feeble mind." The numbers before each Prophetic narrative refers to the order listed in *Sahih al Bukhari*.

default cannot be a trusted witness on her own in many other contexts or for any other purpose.[13]

Fifth, the term "witnesses (shuhada)" in plural is also used in different contexts. The most significant is in Chapter 24, wherein Ibn Katheer overlooked the fact that woman's witnessing on her own behalf before God is accepted.[14]

## *The Hadith*

I will only use Bukhari since his *Sahih* is the most quoted and supposedly the most accurate source of Hadith. I should note here that some of the weak traditions cited above are included in Bukhari. Six cases in the Book of Shahadat in *Sahih Bukhari* are relevant to our analysis here. The same problem of selective quoting of the Qur`an discussed above is repeated here. Interpreters often use only one Hadith[15] in preference to others that often favor women. How is it possible that the Prophet accepts the testimony of a female slave[16] and a free female in other women's affairs,[17] in two very important affairs, marriage and infidelity, respectively, and of a blind man who could not have seen what happened[18] and a young boy who may not be mature enough to present a reasonable testimony,[19] while equating the value of woman's witnessing in general as one-half of a man's witnessing? The requirement that witnesses must be of just character[20] is the norm in the Qur`an,

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13   "Abu Hurayra narrated that the Prophet ordered women to give more charity and to ask forgiveness because, among other things, they are of feeble mind" (Mawqi' al Islam: quran, 48).

14   {And those who launch a charge against chaste women, and produce not four witnesses, flog them with eighty stripes; and reject their evidence ever after: for such men are wicked transgressors ... But it would avert the punishment from the wife, if she bears witness four times [with an oath] by Allah, that [her husband] is telling a lie (al Noor 24: 4, 6–8)}.

15   "2515—On the authority of Abi Sa'd al Khudari, the Prophet referred to woman's witnessing being equal to one-half of a man was because of her feeble mind."

16   "2516—On the authority of 'Uqba Ibn al Harith that when he married `Um Yahay bint Abi Ihab, a black amah came and said that I have nursed both of you. Thus, 'Uqba mentioned that to the Prophet who then asked him to leave `Um Yahya."

17   "946—On the authority of 'A`ishah, and al Qasim bin Muhammad bin Abi Bakr that the Prophet asked Zaynab, his other wife to testify, with reference to the accusation of 'A`ishah's infidelity, if she saw any wrong doing. Zaynab responded that she only saw goodness."

18   "940—On the authority of Qasem, al hasan, Ibn Sereen, al Zahri, and 'Ata`, that testimony of a blind person is accepted, but al Shu'bi added that shahadah is accepted on the condition that the blind man is sane."

19   "2521—On the authority of Ibn 'Amr that the Prophet allowed him to participate in the battle of al Khandq when he became 15, but refused his participation in the battle of `Uhud when he was still 14."

20   "2498—'Abd Allah bin 'Utabah stated that he heard Caliph 'Umar bin al Khattab saying: 'We accept people's testimony by their action, if they were good, we consider them of just character.'"

but we also see a discrepancy in accepting a female testimony even if she was known as having a just character! (Mawqi' al Islam: fiqh, 173).

If we assume that all the above types of witnessing documented in *Sahih Bukhari* do corroborate the Qur`an, whether or not they are considered valid by the majority of interpreters and jurist, why did al Shafi'i in his jurisprudence only accept the weak Hadith that discusses the particular situation of a monetary loan (Qur`an 2: 282), to suggest that a woman's testimony equals one-half of a man's? Also, how could al Shafi'i justify his generalization of this particular context in 2: 282 across the board, stating that a woman's testimony is not accepted in adultery (*zena*) cases, contradicting the Qur`an (al Noor 24: 4, 6–8), and adding his own words, "the just witnesses can only be men," something that is not in the Qur`an (Mawqi' al Islam: fiqh, 173)? The wider problem is that al Shafi'i's jurisprudence is used by the majority of Muslims, and although it is the most restrictive among the classical schools of fiqh (the Hanafi, after Abu Hanifa (d. 768); the Hanbali, after Ibn Hanbal (780–855); the Maliki, after Malik Ibn Anas (d. 795); and the Ja'afari, after Ja'afar al Sadiq (702–66)); his views are revered, perhaps because he also wrote the principles of developing fiqh in his al *Risalah*.[21]

The Prophet Muhammad would be amazed at such perspectives of Islam and at the Muslims' practice of them, especially when they attribute to him some narratives or behavior that contradict the Qur`an. The sad reality is that most Muslims, regardless of their levels of university education, foil Islam in the image of their own beliefs. They seem to have bought in to the idea that Islam is a private religion that is a routine practice of rituals and of particular interpretations that demand no reasoning. The majority assume that by merely imitating the reported images and actions of the Prophet of Islam, whether or not these reports are corroborated by the Qur`an, they have mastered their religious duties and fulfilled their Islamicity.

True, Chapter 59 in the Qur`an instructs: {Take what the messenger has brought to you, and leave what he prevented you from doing" (al Hashr 59: 7)}, but the problem is that Muslims came to codify all reported sayings and actions attributed to the Prophet, whether authentic or not, and even when they contradicted the Qur`an. Al Ghazali (1988: 45) states that Muslims were affected worse by the misunderstood traditions than by the unauthentic ones. Compounded with viewing these reports as sacred as the Qur`an and citing these reports before the Qur`an, the majority of Muslims are missing the basic message that the Prophet carried for 22 years, between 610 and 632 AD. By elevating these reported traditions from their place as a secondary source of Islam to the same level of the primary source, the Qur`an, they have violated the message of the Qur`an of recognizing no deity but God, as well as the intent of the Prophet. According to al Banna (2004), the Prophet used to chastise his companions when they start referring to his saying or actions, stating that they should only refer to the Qur`an. al Faruqi (2000: 76) states: "The Qur`an reminds us that it *is not because of the Prophet* Muhammad

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21   See http://www.islamhouse.com/p/344944 [accessed: 18 June 2012].

that Muslims accept the Qur`an, *but because of the Qur`an that they have accepted the authority of the Prophet*" (emphasis is mine).

While the Prophet, as an agent of change, was willing to take a risk by challenging the common sense knowledge of the time, the majority of today's Muslims are not willing to abandon the centuries-old interpretations of Islam that are often dated and unjust, and sometimes misleading, in order to replace them with the egalitarian intention of Islam as outlined in the Qur`an. Hence, it is fair to reiterate that the true message of Islam concerning women has rarely been practiced for the past 14 centuries, because most representations of Islam are based on the reported traditions, without being corroborated by the Qur`an.

The Qur`an was the only written source of Islam while being revealed to Prophet Muhammad and for more than one hundred years after his death. His biographies and reported traditions, essential as they may be as the second source of Islam, were not fully documented until about three hundred years after the Prophet's death. Furthermore, the majority of these sources were abused by male interpreters, such as those regarding attire and seclusion, as well as those interpreting the "witness" requirements discussed above. Like the issue of hijab (Barazangi 2004), the issue of seclusion has no basis in the Qur`an, because jurists' rulings often brought unjust edicts that also contradict the Qur`an. For example, many Muslim/Arab male elites deny women participation on an equal footing by misinterpreting the rationale behind the Prophet's giving a special day for the women to vote. Instead of recognizing the Prophet's emphasis on woman's autonomous political rights and responsibilities, male elites claim that the special day was a model for segregating men and women. Thus, al Banna (2007) states something to the effect that it is simple to ignore their [the elites] narratives, even when quoted in the Sahihain (Bukhari's and Muslim's, 1962), without having moral quorum.

## Have Muslim Women Scholar-Activists' Interpretations of the Qur`an Helped, and How?

The search for understanding Muslim women cannot be separated from understanding historical events that surround them. Nor can the "Muslim woman" question be secularized or viewed separately from the belief system it represents. It is next to impossible for a non-Muslim mind to comprehend any Muslim phenomenon without trying to find a representation in his or her own belief system, even when she uses a non-religious model. Likewise, it will be next to impossible for a Muslim male to explain issues related to Muslim women without retrieving past interpretations developed by male jurists who rely mainly on the reported prophetic traditions, whether in corroboration with the Qur`an or not. Hence, we Muslim women scholar-activists have been re-interpreting the Qur`an with a frame of reference that does not necessarily propagate old interpretations. By leading this process of self-identifying with the message of the Qur`an (Barazangi 2000,

2004), we are realizing Islam as our primary source of identity, not an "additional" ideological superstructure (al Faruqi 2000). We reread the Qur`an on our own in order to understand Islam beyond rituals, to rethink its message of *Tawhid*, and to implement it fully in place and time.

The conditions during the last decade of the twentieth century were favorable and helped us, the majority of Muslim women scholar-activists who self-identify with Islam, especially in North America, to challenge the Islamic authority hijacked by Muslim males. Thus, we have declared ourselves an independent authority in Qur`anic exegesis, hoping that our transformative solutions will bring a meaningful reform for Muslim societies—a reform that entails building a new structure based on Islam as a worldview and that seeks egalitarian justice through mutual consultation of the entire community. This is the first essential step to address the crisis of understanding Islam and Muslim women and to find solutions for transformation in Muslim-majority societies.

The next step in finding solutions for this crisis is to address the following three main obstacles to Muslim women's scholar-activist reinterpretation of the Qur`an: failure to keep Qur`anic interpretations open among Muslims in general; lack of organizations and solidarity among women scholar-activists; and cooptation by Western feminists supported, though indirectly, by Western governments' imperialist and unjust policies (Sa'id 1994).

## Keeping Qur`anic Interpretations Open Among Muslims

Muslims have lost the ability to directly relate the message of the Qur`an to its principle of keeping Qur`anic interpretation open in time and place, wherein each individual bears a responsibility and a right as stated in the first order of things: {Read in the name of God … (96: 1–5)}. The majority of Muslims are not considering or practicing the values of self-identity and self-governance as part of the Islamic ethos. For example, Muslims, particularly women, are ignoring the basic teaching of the Qur`an concerning modesty that neither necessarily requires the covering of the hair, nor separating men and women (al Banna 2002, Barazangi 2004, Lazraq 2009). By using a weak tradition that is attributed to the Prophet concerning his instruction to Asma, his wife's sister, to emphasize the extreme seclusion of women behind the head cover which is mistakenly called "*Hijab*" (Barazangi 2009) or behind a curtain in a mosque, Muslims are actually contradicting the Qur`an.

## Lack of Organizations and Solidarity Among Women Scholar-Activists

Although Muslim women constitute about 1 percent of the American population,[22] in a recent informal survey, I estimated them to represent about 10 percent of

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22   Muslims in the U.S. are estimated at 7–8 million. Martin Marty (2000) comments on the discrepancy in the estimated number of Muslims in NA: "There is no official census and no number that is commonly accepted."

academics in fields related to the Middle East, South and Southeast Asia, and Arabic studies that inevitably discuss Islam. (See, for instance, the Journal of Middle East Women's Studies). More significant is that a good number of the female scholar-activist academics who self-identify with Islam (for example: Hassan 1995, Kahf 1999, Wadud 1999, al Faruqi 2000, al Hibri 2000, Barlas 2002, Quraishi 2006, and others) also became outspoken despite the constraints on academic freedom of expression during the past decade. Worthy of special mention in this regard is the focused assault on Middle East scholars of Islamic background (O'Neil 2006). Yet, these scholar-activists are still confounded by the attitudes of their male cohorts and by the way Islam is taught on the American and other campuses. For example, the presence of Muslims is still accounted for by the number of mosques, even though this number in the US has doubled during the past three decades;[23] these numbers often reflect only male attendees. Also, even when 70 percent of those attending the mosques feel that the Qur`an should be interpreted with consideration of its purposes and modern circumstances, only men are considered to have the authority to do so.[24] Meanwhile, the majority of those who teach Islam or Islamic history on American campuses are still those non-Muslims who view Islam as a static law.[25] Even with the recent addition of token Muslim men and some women, sources that emphasize Islam as a law or as a dogma are still being used in these fields.

The few female scholar-activists who self-identify with Islam, like myself, are scattered geographically and linguistically or disjoined by nationalistic, sectarian, ethnic, or intellectual affiliations. Even when one recognizes that disagreement in interpretation is one of Islam's core principles that helped develop a vast civilization for about 1000 years (Hodgson 1974), it is not reassuring to view the same traditional material on web sites of nearly 50 different organizations speaking in the name of Muslim women. This helps explain why none of these organizations were strong enough to be able to stand up and state, for example, that the action of the scholar-activist Amina Wadud—conducting the co-ed prayer in 2005—was justified by the Qur`an.[26] Although many scholars and lay people argued against the validity of a woman leading such prayers, over 100 male and female Muslims attended the controversial event on March 18, 2005 in New York City, and some, such as Jamal al Banna (2005a), assert counter-arguments in support of this action.[27] The reality is that the woman who has lost

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23    A 2011 survey suggests there are 2,106 mosques, and in another survey in 2007, it was reported that, on average, 1,625 Muslims associated with each mosque (Bagby 2012).

24    The information drawn from a survey released April 2001 by the Hartford Seminary "Faith Communities Today," posted on the US info site on October 2002 (USINFO 2012).

25    See, for example, the recent report by Institute for Social Policy and Understanding (ISPU) (Macfarlane 2012).

26    It is sad that Muslim women asked some male scholars to justify the action of the well-known female scholar of Islam, Amina Wadud (Progressive Muslims 2012).

27    All citations from Jamal al Banna are my translation from Arabic.

her moral autonomy or self-identity with Islam for centuries will not emerge as an emancipated woman unless she admits that she was not actually practicing Islam, but rather an interpretation of Islam made by others, which may not be valid for this time or place.

Therefore, intimate reading of the message of the Qur`an that the Prophet carried for twenty-two years continues to elude even some Muslim female exegetes and leaders, such as Ingrid Mattson, the first Muslim female president of the largest Muslim organization in North America, the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA). When she became president in 2006, she did not lead the co-ed congregational prayer with the excuse that there was no precedent in the Prophetic tradition for such a practice. This is a perplexing act, for two reasons. First, there was a narrative that suggests women's leading a co-ed congregational prayer.[28] Second, even if there were no such tradition, Mattson seems to have forgotten that the Qur`anic meaning of "Khilafah" (leadership or trusteeship) is not limited to ritualistic, political or social leadership, but starts with congregational leadership— the most important process of educating for change in premises and perceptions.

## Cooptation by Western Feminists

Some Western feminists have co-opted our work, insisting on categorizing it under the rubric "Islamic feminism" (Islamic Feminism 2012). I reject this term as philosophically and factually contradictory. 'Feminism' is a creative theory intended to regain women's rights and place in society by analyzing mainly from a secular perspective (Val Moghadam 2008) the social construct of gender as the unit of analysis.[29] Islam, on the other hand, is a worldview that posits a single pair, the human pair: {It is God who created you from a single soul, and made her mate of like nature, in order that he might dwell with her [in love] (al 'Araf 7: 189)}, with equal rights and responsibilities—spiritually, intellectually, and socially {96: 15–19}, in trusteeship and leadership {50: 21}. The unit of analysis for Qur`anic interpretation is what the Qur`an means by *Taqwa* (equilibrium), that is, each individual is responsible for building her own capacity to balance all these roles in a specific time and at a specific place within the guidelines and the spirit of *Tawhid*.

In addition, our authority to interpret the Qur`an was distracted by some Western groups when they pre-empted our attempts to implement the new meanings into actual change on the ground.[30] These Western groups, intentionally

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28    The narrative *in Sahih al Bukhari* suggests that women were allowed to lead a co-educational prayer gathering (Mawqi' al Islam: Hadith 200).

29    Middle East Studies may have added more awareness of the issues of Muslim women but have not affected changes in fundamental perceptions and attitudes.

30    We see examples ranging from the action by NOW claiming to help Afghan women (Barazangi 2004: 138), to the neo-conservative think-tanks, such as the Freedom House, The Rand Foundation, and so on, that are producing reports about such claims of development.

or not, instigated their governments to pre-empt the work of female-led local NGOs in Muslim societies, claiming to liberate Muslim women through wars.[31] For example, there are now hundreds of so-called civil society organizations with 550 political parties and 126 foreign security companies in Iraq, but the conditions are worsening, especially for women, as demonstrated by different reports.[32] Also, since 1995, numerous national and international conferences concerning Muslim women's rights have been held, but I do not see a Muslim women's movement emerging.[33]

## Conclusions: Is it Enough for Muslim Women to Reinterpret the Qur`an?

The crisis in understanding Islam among Muslims grew worse as Muslims began using the reported prophetic tradition before the Qur`an and as they conflate Qur`an with its interpretations, particularly concerning women's role in the community, as illustrated by the claim that the validity of a female witnessing is one-half that of a male's witnessing. This misinterpretation of the Qur`an and misuse of the prophetic tradition makes it mandatory for Muslim women scholar-activists to rethink Hadith within the spirit and the guidance of the Qur`an. For instance, as discussed above, few Muslims pay attention to Qur`anic intention of "witnessing" in all the related passages, instead citing only verse 282 in Chapter 2. Al Banna (2007: 151) reiterates the overall equitable stance of the Qur`an, explaining the fallacy of the claim assigning a lesser value for female witnessing, but some consider him an apostate.

Qur`an teaches that all, including the prophets, have to guard against unjust interpretations (al Shura 42:13). When the community conflates an interpretation with the Qur`an, each individual has to stand up to upholding Qur`anic rules of interpretation (al Zummar 39: 23). These two verses support my argument that there is a crisis in understanding Islam among Muslims, and that the crisis is mainly the result of Muslims' obscuring the basic principle of Islam—*Tawhid*—and misusing the meaning of apostasy. A good example is the general rhetoric against Amina Wadud's leading a congregational co-ed prayer in 2005 as "unIslamic." Wadud herself commented in the context of this event as follows:

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31   See, for example, the claim by Laura Bush that the war on Afghanistan was to liberate Afghani women from the Burqa, reported in Barazangi (2008).

32   In a PBS report (1 September 2011), Hanan Edwar, the head of the Iraq al Amal Association, stated that Iraq has one million widows who have no economic support for them and for their estimated 4 million orphans beyond the social welfare payment of less than $50 a month. Also, in 2008 the Iraqi Women Ministry reported that since 2003, out of each four marriage cases, three ended with divorce.

33   The discussions in some academic quarters of what they wrongly called "Islamic feminism" is a good example (Barazangi 2010b, and as discussed above).

> The question is—and I certainly think that the most important work that is before us in terms of progressive Islamic thought—is to wrestle the eternal system away from its contextual foundation. And that foundation is a time-space reality, that is, Islam had to come into being into the mundane world, but it is not the universal. In order to be able to cast the universal into its many, or say, its pluralistic guises, we have to be able to determine that patriarchy is in fact a limitation, it's not a liberation (PBS Frontline 2005).

This crisis of understanding Islam has multiplied as the majority of Muslim women have lost their identity and identification with the Qur`an, to the point of losing the moral courage to stand up for their rights as autonomous entities. Even after they have reinterpreted the Qur`an, and despite the fact that some of them have participated in the recent protest movements, some of these women seem to be abdicating their responsibility of leadership following the protests for fear of controversy or of being stamped with apostasy. An example of this is the young female Muslim scholar in the United States who, after writing an entire dissertation deconstructing the concept of hijab, as understood now, in which she argued that the head cover was not required in the Qur`an, decided not to publish her thesis for fear of being stamped as an apostate (personal communication).

We would be able to have a peaceful and just Muslim society by using two basic Qur`anic principles: observing the natural order of the world and developing action plans by means of educated reason and mutual consultation. I am convinced that reinterpreting the Qur`an by us, Muslim women who self-identify with the Qur`an, has helped to raise the consciousness of some. Yet we still have a long way to go despite, or because of, the certain path that we chose to take—the path of Qur`anic Shari'ah. Reinterpreting the Qur`an is a time-consuming, difficult process that requires full awareness of its ramifications—from backlash by the conservatives to pitfalls in personal opinions—and special skills both in Arabic linguistics as well as in the history of the Qur`an. In addition, as I outlined in the previous section, there are also other obstacles in our way.

Furthermore, unfortunately, Muslims and non-Muslims have become more conservative in response to the challenges from within or from without. From within, the current religious-right advocates and governing authorities in Muslim and non-Muslim countries are collaborating because they feel threatened by the new interpretations, despite the fact that the so-called moderate or progressive groups are still weak in vision, organization, and strategies. Some Muslim scholars are also hampered by the conviction that it is enough to solve social issues that are not necessarily specific to Muslim women, such as literacy, education, and domestic violence. These scholars do not see that the situation requires a change in perception and attitude concerning the meanings of Islam in order to combat the ignorance among the public which fosters political corruption or brain-washing. From without, ideas of reforming Muslim societies modeled after the European enlightenment or the American/Western concept of democracy are creating further dichotomy between religious and civil affairs, causing popular unrest directed

towards those who are different, rather than honest self-reflection or a focus on changing corrupt systems, dogmatism, and ignorance.[34] Western governments and private corporations complicate matters by supporting dictatorships in most Muslim countries and male leadership in order to protect their own interests, producing further reactionary response by religious extremists on both sides who misuse weak traditions to propagate their own ends.[35]

Hence, the struggle will be difficult, long, and uncertain, but we, Muslim women scholar-activists, few as we may be, continue to lead the path by rethinking the Qur`anic message in the same prophetic spirit of tolerating peoples' needs in time and place. I, therefore, am taking further steps to address the crisis in understanding Islam and to complement Qur`an reinterpretation with my new project—namely rereading the Hadith and rethinking the sunnah. The theoretical and practical model of this project is exemplified in my analysis and synthesis of the issue of "witnessing."[36]

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34  The Western governments' reaction to the "Arab Spring" mainly with providing force is a good example (Cornwell 2012).

35  The nature of the newly elected members of parliaments in Tunisia and Egypt are a good proof (NPR 2012).

36  Further details of this model can be found in my forthcoming monograph on Woman's Identity and the Hadith.

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