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## **Women rights and Islam**

A study of women rights and effects of Islamic fundamentalism and Muslim feminism in  
the Kurdish area of Iraq

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## **ABSTRACT**

Lack of women rights in the international society is something that UN and other international human organizations are striving against. Women oppression is common in many countries, but is often connected with the Muslim countries. Women oppression is something that is against UN: s definition of human rights. The international society has therefore tried to protect the women, and has formed resolutions, conventions and so on, for their security.

According to the Iraqi regime, human rights are an important question. The country has therefore signed the UN: s convention about women rights. Since the year of 1992, when the Kurdish area of Iraq became self- governed, Kurdistan has started programs that favour women rights. Organizations and institutions have for example been established, that are struggling for the women in the society. The ruling government has also instituted some laws that favour women rights.

Islamic fundamentalism and Muslim feminism are two theories that today have supporters in the international society. Both of those theories and their supporters believes in the Quran and use it to justify their own actions, but in different ways. The fundamentalists emphasize the differences that, by the nature, exist between the sexes. According to the fundamentalists, women and men have different responsibilities in the society. The feminists on the other hand believe in equality between the sexes and mean that women oppression has its origin in an erroneous interpretation of the Quran.

Different kinds of crimes against women rights issues are today common in Kurdistan. Many of those crimes don't have any support in neither UN, nor the Quran. Muslim feminists, the department for human rights and the women organizations all has agreed about the meaning of women rights. They believe in UN: s definition of women rights and they all use the Quran to justify women right issues. Islamic fundamentalists on the other hand also use the Quran for justifying their actions, but they don't believe in UN: s definition of women rights.

So both Muslim feminists and Islamic fundamentalists exist today in Kurdistan, and their engagement in women issues is therefore affecting the work of the organizations and the department.

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## **EXPLANATIONS**

Anfal campaign- occurred in the Kurdish are of Iraq. During the Anfal Saddam Hussein and his Baath regime slaughtered thousands of Kurds, because of the Kurdish struggle against the regime. The campaign took place between the 23 of February and the 6 of September, the year of 1988.

Baath party- the aim of the party is to create a pan Arabic society.

Hadith- is guidance about the Prophet Muhammed's traditions and statements in different situations. The Hadith treat questions that the Quran doesn't treat.

KDP- Kurdistan Democratic Party. A Kurdish party.

KRG- Kurdistan Regional Government.

PUK- Patriotic Union of Kurdistan. A Kurdish party.

Sharia- the Islamic law that is based on the Quran and Muhammed's Sunna.

Sunna- the life and reasoning of the Muslim prophet Muhammed.

Zin be zin- exchange of women in marriage arrangement. For example if a man want to get married, the woman's family will also ask for a bride in return from his family, for their own son.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Lack of human rights and women oppression is something that many women around the world endure every day, despite United Nations daily struggle to decrease the oppression. Oppression of women is something that sometimes is connected with the Muslim countries. Many people think that Islam is a women oppressive religion and that fundamentalism has a significant role in the region, but within the Muslim countries today there also exist different feminist groups, which struggle for women rights. One of these groups is Muslim feminism.

I have chosen to look at women rights in the Kurdish area of Iraq for analysing if fundamentalism is something that has a significant role in the area. It should be noted that the Kurdish area of Iraq is self-governed since 1992, but is not independent from the ruling government in Iraq. It should also be emphasized that the Kurdish government doesn't have the same laws as the Iraqi government.

Kurdistan is a male dominated society where women are victims of oppression every day. Women and girls get married against their will, women get maltreated etcetera. Every year a lot of women get killed. Honour related murder is common in Kurdistan. Some women commit suicide, while others just disappear without any track. Some of the methods being used by these women that commit suicide or their relatives are burning, shooting or pushing/jumping down from mountains. Women rights in Kurdistan are something that has improved for every year since the area became independent. The ruling government has for example added some laws that favour women. But there is still much to do for the women and their rights in the area of Kurdistan.

I will use the theory of Muslim feminism for attaining my aim of this study. Islamic fundamentalism is an another theory that I will also use. In order to understand the situation in the Kurdish area of Iraq I have visited the country and met some people who are working with and struggling for the rights of the Kurdish women. I have for example visited some women organizations and the two existing departments for human rights in the cities of Suleymaniya and Erbil. Although there is just one Kurdish government, the two cities, Suleymaniya and Erbil, are ruled by two different Kurdish parties, the Patriotic Union of

Kurdistan (PUK) and the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), and each of them has a human rights department.

## **1.1 PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY**

The aim of this essay is to assess if and how Muslim feminism affects the struggle for women rights and if and how Islamic fundamentalism affects women rights, with Kurdistan as an example.

- What is the Muslim Feminism view on women and women rights?
- What is the Islamic fundamentalism view on women, in comparison with United Nations and the Quran?
- Can the struggle for women rights affect the Islamic fundamentalists view on women?

## **1.2 METHOD AND MATERIAL**

To attain the purpose of this essay I have used information I have found in books, on the internet, periodical journals and other publications like articles etcetera. Regarding the material, it should be noted that I was careful when I was searching for information about women rights. I have for example carefully examined who the authors are and where the books were published. About the internet sources I have only used Western material that I found reliable. For example I examined where the information originates from and who is responsible for it.

Many of the periodical journals and the publications I have used in my study are from the women organizations in Iraq and Kurdistan Regional Governments Nordic representation (KRG) in Stockholm. All the literature I used for my essay was from the Western countries. The material that I have used is in English, Arabic and Swedish.

I have also visited the Kurdish area of Iraq, a very grateful experience. One of the reasons why I wanted to visit the country was that it was hard to find any information about the women's situation in Kurdistan. In Kurdistan I visited some women organizations and the two existing departments for human rights in Suleymaniya and Erbil. My aim with the visit was to interview some people who are working with women rights. I chose the cities



Suleymaniya and Erbil for my interviews because of the two existing departments, which are situated in these two cities.

Qualitative text-study is the method I used during my essay. Qualitative text-study is about finding relevant information in the text. Qualitative study is also the method I used when I did my interviews. The questions during the interviews were open questions so that the persons I interviewed could tell more openly about her/his thoughts and experiences.

The interviews were mainly performed in English and Arabic, but I also had to use Kurdish sometimes. I tried not to use Kurdish because of my insufficient knowledge in that language. It should be noted that I always had my father with me when I performed my interviews. One of the reasons for bringing my father was my insufficiency in the Kurdish language. Another reason was for my own security, because women rights are a sensitive question in the area.

The language barrier was one of the many difficulties during my interviews, because some of the people didn't speak Arabic nor English, just Kurdish. Therefore I sometimes had a hard time understanding them, and because they had another Kurdish dialect than I was not familiar with. Another problem was the Kurdish culture and traditions, which were very different from the culture and traditions I'm used to.

I chose the largest and most successful women organizations. It was hard to find some of the organizations because many of them are trying to keep low profile, because women rights is a sensitive question. I contacted some of the organizations in Kurdistan before I travelled to the country and informed them about my visit. But some organizations I found, with help from the women organizations I already knew about, when I was in Kurdistan.

I couldn't interview some women outside the organizations because of the large risk for my own security. It would increase the risk for kidnapping among other things.

Since I am a Muslim and Kurd from Iraq I'm aware that my own values, experiences and knowledge can affect my interpretations.

### 1.3 PREVIOUS RESEARCH

It has been very hard to find any information about women rights in the Kurdish area of Iraq. One of the reasons is that Iraq have been ruled by the dictator Saddam Hussein and his government for many years, so there hasn't exist any human rights in the country. Another reason is that the Iraqi government has for many years denied the Kurdish peoples existence in the area, so finding any information about the Kurdish people is hard. If any information can be found, it should be questioned. Because the Kurdish people might have exaggerated the information in the books and in the statistics, just to receive more attention from other countries. On the other hand, the Iraqi government might have decreased the statistical information about the Kurds or denied them, just to show the international society that there doesn't exist so many Kurds in the area, or for denying them as Kurds and instead arabising them. In a country like Iraq where democracy and human rights have never existed, it's hard to find any information about women rights.

Muslim feminism is one theory I use to attain my purpose of the study. The reason to why I used this theory is because Muslim feminism is a theory that has supporters in the Muslim countries. The supporters have started a movement that is based on Muslim feminism thoughts. The movement's members discuss questions that affect the women and their rights. When Muslim feminists argue about such questions, they often use the Quran for their own support. Islamic fundamentalism is another theory that also has support in the Muslim countries. These movements' members also use the Quran to justify their own actions. Something to notice is that it is not hard to find any information about these two movements and their aim. Some of the main authors in the Western countries that have discussed Muslim feminism and Islamic fundamentalism are Nira Yuval- Davis, Mai Yamani, Minoo Moallem, Norma Alarcón and Caren Kaplan. Nira Yuval- Davis has discussed both feminism and fundamentalism in her book *Gender & Nation*. Mai Yamani has on the other hand, in the book *Feminism and Islam, Legal and literary perspectives*, argued about Muslim feminism. Caren Kaplan, Norma Alarcón and Minoo Moallem have also discussed feminism and fundamentalism in the book *Between woman and nation. Nationalisms, transnational feminisms, and the state*.

## **1.4 LIMITATIONS**

The empirical work is limited to the study of women rights in the Kurdish area of Iraq. The lack of time in Kurdistan forced me to choose just the largest women organizations in the two biggest cities, Erbil and Suleymaniya.

I'll also limit my study to the theories of Muslim feminism and Islamic fundamentalism and their supporters. Muslim feminism and Islamic fundamentalism are two of the main movements regarding women's role in the Kurdish society. I'll not take into account any other movements.

## **1.5 DISPOSITION**

After the first chapter, there I among other things have discussed the purpose with this essay, I have in the second chapter treated the theory of Muslim feminism and its meaning. I have also discussed other different feminist theories, fundamentalism and the Muslims holy book, the Quran. The third chapter, which also is the background chapter of this essay, treats women rights in Iraq. In this chapter, one can for example read about committing suicide and honour related murder. Chapter four is about the women organizations and the department I visited in Kurdistan. The conclusions I have made during my work with the essay are something that I have discussed in chapter five. Appendix is something that can be found at the end of the essay.

## 2. THEORY

Muslim feminism is the theory I will use to assess the aim of this study. The reason to why I chose Muslim feminism is because of their struggle for women rights in the Muslim countries. Another theory that I discuss is Islamic fundamentalism. It is a theory that also have supporters in the Muslim societies. Something to notice is that both Muslim feminism and Islamic fundamentalism have supporters that follows and believes in the theories contents. I will therefore during the essay mention the theories, but also the supporters who have created movements who are based on the Muslim feminist and the Islamic fundamentalist thoughts. Both of those movements use the Quran to justify their own actions about the women and their rights. Muslim feminism and Islamic fundamentalism are movements that affect the women organizations struggle for the women rights in the Kurdish area of Iraq. The women organizations are trying to use Muslim feminist thoughts about women rights and are trying to use the Quran to justify their struggle for the women in the society. Islamic fundamentalism on the other hand is against the organizations work for the Kurdish women and means that the struggle for equality between men and women are against the Quran. Both Muslim feminism and Islamic fundamentalism focus in other words on women issues, but in different ways.

Women are the ones in the world who are often connected with different cultures. They are therefore the ones who have an important responsibility in the society as tradition bearers. Even if they have such a significant role in the world, they are still excluded from important decision- makings and to become leaders of societies.<sup>1</sup> According to the women organizations, womens responsibility as tradition bearers is one of the reasons to why the women have to take care of their honour. Womens connection to the honour of the family is one reason to why it today exist honour related crimes against women.

Feminism is a theory that has supporters that struggle for equality between men and women. The concept of feminism implies among other things women rights. But it is also about the different kinds of oppression against women in their daily life. Feminists discuss that the differences between men and women, and the relations between the sexes, are socially constructed by the society. Many of those differences are not lying in our human

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<sup>1</sup> Kramarae, Cheris. & Spender, Dale. (2000), *Routledge. International Encyclopedia of Women. Global Women's Issues and Knowledge.* (Volume 3). New York, London: Routledge. Sid. 1389.

nature, and we can therefore change them.<sup>2</sup> That is something that the department for human rights and the women organizations agree with.

Feminism is something that in many times is connected with the Western world, even if there are many feminists in other parts of the world, like in the Muslim countries.<sup>3</sup> There exist many different directions of feminism, but two of the main types are: Difference feminism and Equality feminism.

Difference feminism believes that men and women are not equal, that is something that the nature has decided. Many difference feminists believe that it is impossible for women and men to be equal in the society, one example is because of women's childbirth. Women are born to be women, and men are born to be men. Women should therefore be allowed to be women and be proud of it.<sup>4</sup> Difference feminists "...do not aspire to equality in the sense of sameness but in the sense of equal value, equal respect or equity."<sup>5</sup> Something to notice is that women have some values that are superior, which is something that the society should take advantage of.<sup>6</sup>

Equality feminism, on the other hand, is the name on different kinds of feminist theories that believe that there doesn't exist any differences between men and women. Example in one such feminist theory is Liberal feminism. According to Equality feminism, men and women are equal. The differences that today exists in the society is, for the most times, something that we people have created, they are not biological. There also exist biological differences between men and women, but it is important to emphasize that men and women are equal as human beings. It is the different environments, cultures, traditions and religions in the international society that have created those differences.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Andermahr, Sonya. Lovell, Terry. & Wolkowitz, Carol. (1997), *A glossary of feminist Theory*. Great Britain: Arnold. Sid. 93.

<sup>3</sup> Pettman, Jan Jindy. (1999), "Gender Issues" i Baylis, John & Smith, Steve (red.), *The Globalization of World Politics. An introduction to International Relations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Sid. 487.

<sup>4</sup> Boles, Janet K. & Long Hoeveler, Diane. (1996), *Historical dictionary of feminism*. USA: Scarecrow. Sid. 105.

<sup>5</sup> Voet, Rian. (1998), *Feminism and citizenship*. London: Sage. Sid. 26.

<sup>6</sup> Boles, Janet K. & Long Hoeveler, Diane. (1996), *Historical dictionary of feminism*. USA: Scarecrow. Sid. 105.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. Sid. 118.

There exist today three main categories from the two feminism theories, Equality feminism and Difference feminism. The three categories are: Deconstructionist feminism, Humanist feminism and Woman- centred feminism. Deconstructionist feminism believes that the society should go beyond the discussion about difference and equality and should therefore focus on the importance of gender pluralism. They therefore mean that the international society should have more plurality in the for example political sphere. About Humanist feminism, they believe that men and women should be equal, not just in the public sphere, but also in the private sphere. They mean that it even shouldn't matter to which society class the men and the women belong, if they are middle- class citizens or upper- class citizens, all of them should be equal in front of the law. The Humanist feminists emphasize the importance of taking care of the women as citizens, and not as women.<sup>8</sup>

Equal rights for women, who make up over half the population, are a prerequisite for achieving justice. But protecting women's rights is organically linked to promoting the rights of the poor and disadvantaged and to ending discrimination based on the arbitrary grounds of race. This is not only because the poor are most often women, and black women suffer from a dual discrimination, but primarily because women's rights will only be secured in a context of respect for the rights of all and of policies designed to ensure a just society.<sup>9</sup>

Woman- centred feminists believe on the other hand in women's thinking and behaviour, and support it. "Equity for them is something like equality of 'voice and access' and this implies equal rights, political and social rights for all adults."<sup>10</sup>

Other feminist theories that also are interesting to notice are: Marxist feminism and Liberal feminism. They are interesting because of the Marxists discussion about the capitalist system and its effect on the women in the society and the Liberal feminists who oppose the states intervention on the private sphere.

Feminists who follow the Marxist theory discuss the internationalized capitalist system and the material's effect on women oppression. They mean that women oppression is something that exists because of the system. The Marxist feminist theory focus on the

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<sup>8</sup> Voet, Rian. (1998), *Feminism and citizenship*. London: Sage. Sid. 28, 29, 30.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. Sid. 29.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. Sid. 29, 30.

materialism in this society and its meaning for the people.<sup>11</sup> The supporters of the theory discuss women's housework and mean that women can therefore not escape from the materialist society, even if they want to. Another thing that should be noted is that Marxist feminism support women's housework and thinks that the women should receive salary. According to Marxist feminists women oppression will decrease if the society became more socialist, so the government will handle the production and so on. Marxist feminism therefore doesn't believe in the different feminist movements that struggle for equality between men and women.<sup>12</sup>

But Marxist theory brings women into the frame principally in the discussion of the FAMILY. And because Marx uses an abstract concept of labour, his labourers and the labours that they perform are not distinguished by sex. Marxism has no adequate conceptual tools for the understanding of specifically sexual OPPRESSION, of gender differentiation, or SEXUALITY. Marxist feminism therefore has necessarily been revisionist, attempting to achieve some kind of synthesis between Marxist theory and feminist accounts of sex/gender systems and sexuality.<sup>13</sup>

Liberal feminism believes in individualism. They believe not just in human rights, but also in justice and liberty. Liberal feminists emphasize democracy and equality between the people, men as women.<sup>14</sup> Liberal feminism, focus on men and women's opportunities in the society and consider that women don't have the same possibilities as men, in for example the political system.<sup>15</sup> The most important for the Liberal feminists is women's freedom. They mean that the reason why women oppression exists today is because of the lack in women rights issues that the society has created. According to Liberal feminism, the oppression of women will decrease if the women have good opportunities to get educated.

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<sup>11</sup> Smith, Steve. (1999), "New Approaches to International Theory" i Baylis, John & Smith, Steve (red.), *The Globalization of World Politics. An introduction to International Relations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Sid. 174, 175.

<sup>12</sup> Boles, Janet K. & Long Hoeveler, Diane. (1996), *Historical dictionary of feminism*. USA: Scarecrow. Sid. 190.

<sup>13</sup> Andermahr, Sonya. Lovell, Terry. & Wolkowitz, Carol. (1997), *A glossary of feminist Theory*. Great Britain: Arnold. Sid. 151.

<sup>14</sup> Boles, Janet K. & Long Hoeveler, Diane. (1996), *Historical dictionary of feminism*. USA: Scarecrow. Sid. Sid. 181.

<sup>15</sup> Smith, Steve. (1999), "New Approaches to International Theory" i Baylis, John & Smith, Steve (red.), *The Globalization of World Politics. An introduction to International Relations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Sid. 174.

The supporters of the theory think that it is important to distinguish the private from the public sphere and oppose the states intervention on the private sphere.<sup>16</sup>

Liberal feminism argues for individual fulfilment free from the strictures of highly defined sex roles. It limits itself to reformism, seeking to improve the status of women within the system but not fundamentally contesting either the system's operation or its legitimacy. Contemporary liberal feminists espouse women's rights in terms of welfare needs, universal education, and health services.<sup>17</sup>

Another feminist theory, that is usual in the Muslim countries, is Muslim feminism. That is the theory I will discuss hereinafter.

## **2.1 MUSLIM FEMINISM**

It was in the late nineteenth century when the Muslim feminist movement that was based on the the theory of Muslim feminism thoughts was created in the Middle East, to struggle for women rights in the society. The creation of the movement started after that the middle- and upper class women had got aware about the oppression the women in the society were getting through. Muslim feminists aim is to create a society where there is equality between the sexes, not just in the families, but also in the whole society. The aim of the middle- and upper class women has therefore been to make changes in the patriarchal state system, where the women now are under oppression. Women rights and democracy are therefore the important things that the Muslim feminists are striving for. According to the members of the movement, it is important for every woman to struggle for a society system where inequality between the sexes doesn't exist and where women don't get oppressed. To achieve this aim it is important to make women aware of their oppression in society.<sup>18</sup> Muslim feminists, Liberal feminists, Equality feminists and Difference feminists, all discuss the equality between men and women, but emphasize different things in their discussions. Liberal feminists for example, as Muslim feminists, emphasize the importance of equality between men and women. Equality feminists also mean that men and women should be equal as human beings, but that is something that Difference feminists don't agree with and say that there exist biological differences between the genders. Liberal

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<sup>16</sup> Humm, Maggie. (1995), *The dictionary of feminist theory*. Columbus: Ohio University Press. Sid. 150, 151.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. Sid. 151.

<sup>18</sup> Esposito, John L. (1995), *The Oxford encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*. (Volume 2). Oxford: Oxford University Press. Sid. 19.



feminists and Muslim feminists mean that women oppression will decrease if women get informed about their rights. Equality feminists think that the environment we people live in affect peoples thoughts about the differences between men and women. According to Difference feminists, equality is impossible because of our human nature. But they say that men and women should have the same value.

Muslim feminists have in different ways tried to express their opinion about women rights. They have for example written novels, poems and essays about different women issues. The members of the movement have also been active in different ways. They have tried to make changes in people's daily life, in for example the educational state system.<sup>19</sup> The education of women is something that the women organizations and the department for human rights also support. The employees at the organizations have also tried to write essays and novels about women issues.

Many women in the Muslim societies have to live their daily life with the laws that the men in the area have created. With that reason many women don't have the same opportunities as the men. The sharia is the Islamic law, which has inspired many of the foundations of the laws in the Muslim countries. Many of those laws are therefore based on statements that got founded for many centuries ago. To take one example we can look at the polygamy for the male inhabitants, which in many societies are accepted. The Muslim women, in the Muslim countries, have struggled for many years for abolishing the polygamy, but without any progress.<sup>20</sup> But the women in the Muslim societies have succeeded in other questions, like changing in some family laws. It should be noted that the family sphere and its private concerns is the area where the Muslim feminists have met most set-backs.<sup>21</sup> That it has been hard to change some laws that favour the women is something that the organizations and the department also believe in.

Muslim feminists believe in Islam and the Quran. They use its contents when they are trying to change some laws that affect the women.<sup>22</sup> They argue that the Quran looks at

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<sup>19</sup> Esposito, John L. (1995), *The Oxford encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*. (Volume 2). Oxford: Oxford University Press. Sid. 19.

<sup>20</sup> Kramarae, Cheris. & Spender, Dale. (2000), *Routledge. International Encyclopedia of Women. Global Women's Issues and Knowledge*. (Volume 2). New York, London: Routledge. Sid. 794, 795.

<sup>21</sup> Esposito, John L. (1995), *The Oxford encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*. (Volume 2). Oxford: Oxford University Press. Sid. 21.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* Sid. 22.

men and women as equal in front of God. They don't just have the same punishment, they also have the same duties in their daily life.<sup>23</sup>

Muslim men and Muslim women, believing men and believing women, obedient men and obedient women, truthful men and truthful women, steadfast men and steadfast women, humble men and humble women, men and women who give alms, men who fast and women who fast, men and women who remember God much, for them God has prepared forgiveness and a mighty reward. (Qur'an XXIII, 35)<sup>24</sup>

One of the representatives of this school of thoughts Riffat Hassan argues that women oppression can be reduced by interpreting the Quran in the right way, so there will not be any misunderstandings.<sup>25</sup> The organizations mean that the wrong interpretation of the Quran depends for the most time on the men, but in many times also on the women. Because many of the leaders in the society are men.

In the Muslim countries today, there exist some feminism women organizations that are striving for women rights. The aim for those organizations is to create a society where women can be respected. The organizations also wish to make some changes in the family laws.<sup>26</sup> The Kurdish area of Iraq is one area in the Muslim world that today has many women organizations. Those organizations' aim is to create a society where people respect women rights.

## **2.2 VIEWS OF FUNDAMENTALIST WOMEN REGARDING FEMINISM**

Fundamentalism and feminism are two growing movements among women in Muslim countries. Those movements have much in common; both discuss for example femininity, masculinity and their connection to cultures. They discuss in other words not only the

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<sup>23</sup> Yamani, Mai. (1996), *Feminism and Islam. Legal and literary perspectives*. USA: New York University Press. Sid. 22.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. Sid. 73.

<sup>25</sup> Yuval- Davis, Nira. (1997), *Gender & Nation*. London: Sage. Sid. 123.

<sup>26</sup> Esposito, John L. (1995), *The Oxford encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*. (Volume 2). Oxford: Oxford University Press. Sid. 20.

individual's connection to the private sphere like the family, but also to the public sphere like the state.<sup>27</sup>

Fundamentalism among women is a movement that tries to counter the modernity in the society through referring to the Islamic religion and the Quran. Fundamentalist women have now days started to use feminist concepts when they argue about women's position in society. About feminism, they discuss not only the femininity and the masculinity in the society but even the equality between these two sexes. They also discuss different cultures and women's connection with the nature. So both feminism and fundamentalism have some asserts in common. Both of them discuss women's situation in the patriarchal state system, the public and private sphere in the community, women's bodies and the sexual objectification of women in the world, and women as the main bearer of a country's values and culture.<sup>28</sup>

Both feminism and fundamentalism exist in not only one part of the world, but in the whole world. It is therefore not correct to associate feminism to the Western world and fundamentalism to the Muslim countries.<sup>29</sup>

Feminists are against the labour division that is based on a person's sex, and question women's domestic work. Fundamentalists discuss women and their connection to the nature and see women as main providers for some social positions, in not only the private sphere but also in the public sphere. Fundamentalists argue for example that women's roles as mothers and wives are something that God have decided. That explains women's domestic role and why the family should be women's first priority. Feminists on the other hand insist and assert that society has decided these roles.<sup>30</sup> The women organizations agree with the feminists about the roles that the societies have decided. But say that some roles are decided by the nature, like womens childbirth.

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<sup>27</sup> Kaplan, Caren. Alarcón, Norma. & Moallem, Mino. (1999), *Between woman and nation. Nationalisms, transnational feminisms, and the state*. Durham: Duke University Press. Sid. 321.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. Sid. 323, 324, 325, 326- 327.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. Sid. 324.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. Sid. 326, 329.

Fundamentalists believe in the society's control of the women.<sup>31</sup> The citizen's role in society is important for both the fundamentalists and feminists who mean that apart from the citizen's relationship to law, there even exist other important things like tradition, ethic and moral.<sup>32</sup> According to the women organizations, the reason to why so many women commit suicide in Kurdistan depends on the traditions and the laws that today exist in the area. So changing the law will decrease the numbers of suicide and honour related murders.

## 2.3 WOMEN AND THE QURAN

The reason to why I discuss what the Quran says about women is because Muslim feminism, Islamic fundamentalism and the women organizations in Kurdistan use the Quran to justify their struggle for different women issues.

Islam means submission, submission to God. It is the reason to why the Islamic law, the sharia, influence the political system in the Muslim countries. The law is among other things based on the Quran and the Sunna. The sharia is guidance for the citizen's daily life, for how the people should act in different social situations.<sup>33</sup> Something to notice is that the Quran in most cases doesn't forbid, just guide, for various actions.<sup>34</sup>

Western thoughts about human rights and freedom are something that has influenced the Muslim countries. These thoughts have in different ways challenged the Islamic society norms.<sup>35</sup> One example is polygamy, which although connected in the West to Islam, even exists in several non- Muslim cultures around the world. The Quranic verse about polygamy was written in a time where polygamy was spread all over the world. The Quran didn't recommend polygamy, instead it tried to limit the numbers of wives. In Islam a man can have several wives if he can treat them equally, but according to a later verse in the Quran, verse 4:129, that is impossible.<sup>36</sup> That is the reason to why the women organizations are trying to forbid polygamy. The argument they use is that many women get depressed

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<sup>31</sup> Yuval- Davis, Nira. (1997), *Gender & Nation*. London: Sage. Sid. 62.

<sup>32</sup> Kaplan, Caren. Alarcón, Norma. & Moallem, Minoo. (1999), *Between woman and nation. Nationalisms, transnational feminisms, and the state*. Durham: Duke University Press. Sid. 328- 329.

<sup>33</sup> Sargent, Lyman Tower. (1999), *Contemporary political ideologies. A comparative analysis*. Harcourt Brace & Company. Sid. 222, 224.

<sup>34</sup> Esposito, John L. (2001), *Islam. Den raka vägen*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Sid. 116.

<sup>35</sup> Sargent, Lyman Tower. (1999), *Contemporary political ideologies. A comparative analysis*. Harcourt Brace & Company. Sid. 225, 226.

<sup>36</sup> Esposito, John L. (2001), *Islam. Den raka vägen*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Sid. 134.

when their husband marry another women. That is something that affect the whole family, not just the women, but also the children.

Several interpretations of Islam and the Quran are against polygamy. According to those interpretations, it is not possible for any man in the world to treat all his wives in exactly the same way. Polygamy is something that today is decreasing in the Muslim societies,<sup>37</sup> possibly due to the human rights movement in the region.

#### IV: 3 Women

And if ye fear that ye will not deal fairly by the orphans, marry of the women, who seem good to you, two or three or four; and if ye fear that ye cannot do justice (to so many) then one (only) or (the captives) that your right hands possess. Thus it is more likely that ye will not do injustice.<sup>38</sup>

#### IV: 129 Women

Ye will not be able to deal equally between (your) wives, however much ye wish (to do so). But turn not altogether away (from one), leaving her as in suspense. If ye do good and keep from evil, lo! Allah is ever Forgiving, Merciful.<sup>39</sup>

According to the Quran there are no differences between men and women, although they have different responsibilities in society.<sup>40</sup> Examples are those two verses:

#### XXIV: 30 Light

Tell the believing men to lower their gaze and be modest. That is purer for them. Lo! Allah is Aware of what they do.<sup>41</sup>

#### XXIV: 31 Light

And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and be modest, and to display of their adornment only that which is apparent, and to draw their veils over their bosoms, and not to reveal their adornment save to their own husbands, or fathers, or husbands' fathers, or their sons or their husbands' sons, or their brothers or their

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<sup>37</sup> Khader, Naser. (1998), *Familjeliv och levnadsmönster. Bland Mellanösterns muslimer*. Göteborg: Wahlström & Widstrand. Sid. 55- 56.

<sup>38</sup> Pickthall, Marmaduke. (2000), *The Meaning of The Glorious Koran*. New York: Dorset Press. Sid. 79.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. Sid. 91.

<sup>40</sup> Kramarae, Cheris. & Spender, Dale. (2000), *Routledge. International Encyclopedia of Women. Global Women's Issues and Knowledge*. (Volume 3). New York, London: Routledge. Sid. 1159.

<sup>41</sup> Pickthall, Marmaduke. (2000), *The Meaning of The Glorious Koran*. New York: Dorset Press. Sid. 255.

brothers' sons or sisters' sons, or their women, or their slaves, or male attendants who lack vigour, or children who know naught of women's nakedness. And let them not stamp their feet so as to reveal what they hide of their adornment. And turn unto Allah together, O believers, in order that ye may succeed.<sup>42</sup>

The Quran also discusses how men and women should be dressed. The use of the veil is therefore something that many Muslims discuss today.<sup>43</sup> The veil is something that existed in the Muslim countries before Islam. Women before the Islamic religions origin therefore used the hijab, veil, like an Assyrian and a Mesopotamian tradition. The veil had different meanings, but one of them was to keep the men away from the women. Another meaning was women's virginity.<sup>44</sup> Women's virginity and reputation is still important for the families honour in Iraq. That is the reason to why today many women get killed in the name of honour.

The veil and its use for Muhammed's wives in Medina is on the other hand something that the Quran argues about. At that time Medina was a place for trade. Many people therefore visited the city. The meaning with the hijab, according to Islam, was therefore to protect the prophet's wives from the public. In the Quran, sura 33:59, one can read about the jilbad that should be used for protecting the women.<sup>45</sup> A jilbad is "a long outer garment, like a cloak" that all women that are Muslims should use, but only when they are in public.<sup>46</sup> According to the Quran Muslim women and men don't have to cover their whole body, just to bear respectable clothes. Around the world today many people wear the hijab for different meanings, not only for religious reasons, but also political.<sup>47</sup> Islamic fundamentalists think that every woman should use the veil. That is something that Muslim feminists, the women organizations and the department don't agree with. According to them, a woman should have the opportunity to choose if she wants to use the veil or not.

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<sup>42</sup> Pickthall, Marmaduke. (2000), *The Meaning of The Glorious Koran*. New York: Dorset Press. Sid. 255.

<sup>43</sup> Hjärpe, Jan. (1992), *Islam. Lära och livsmönster*. Stockholm: Norstedts Förlag AB. Sid. 126.

<sup>44</sup> Khader, Naser. (1998), *Familjeliv och levnadsmönster. Bland Mellanösterns muslimer*. Göteborg: Wahlström & Widstrand. Sid. 35- 36.

<sup>45</sup> Kramarae, Cheris. & Spender, Dale. (2000), *Routledge. International Encyclopedia of Women. Global Women's Issues and Knowledge*. (Volume 3). New York, London: Routledge. Sid. 1160.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Khader, Naser. (1998), *Familjeliv och levnadsmönster. Bland Mellanösterns muslimer*. Göteborg: Wahlström & Widstrand. Sid. 35, 37.

The Quran emphasize the importance of knowledge and allows both sexes to be educated.<sup>48</sup> According to Muhammed ‘Seeking knowledge is mandatory for every Muslim, man or woman’.<sup>49</sup> Education is something that also is important according to UN, who mean that equality between men and women will increase if people get educated.

Another interesting question to discuss is circumcision. Male circumcision is something that is supported in Islam but female circumcision is not, although many people still practice it today.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, the Quran is against female circumcision because it may affect womens sexuality. Sexual intercourse is something that is recommended in Islam. The holy book doesn’t recommend celibacy. Female circumcision, as practised today among some Muslims, is in reality a pre- Islamic tradition that the Quran doesn’t support.<sup>51</sup> The women organizations in Kurdistan and the department for human rights are today trying to do their best to stop female circumcision. They are for example trying to inform people that female circumcision doesn’t have anything to do with Islam.

In the Muslim world the traditions are many times more important and more used than the religion. Many Muslim people talk about equality between the two sexes, although they mean that there exist natural differences. The Muslim world is a patriarchal society where men are the protectors and head of the families.<sup>52</sup> Women on the other way should get married and have children.<sup>53</sup> They should always give priority to the family.<sup>54</sup>

## **2.4 THE UNITED NATIONS AND WOMEN RIGHTS**

International norms are also affecting the interpretation of women rights in Kurdistan. For example, Muslim feminists and the women organizations believe in UN: s definition of women rights and are therefore trying to implement those rights in Kurdistan. Islamic fundamentalists on the other hand don’t believe in those rights.

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<sup>48</sup> Kramarae, Cheris. & Spender, Dale. (2000), *Routledge. International Encyclopedia of Women. Global Women’s Issues and Knowledge*. (Volume 2). New York, London: Routledge. Sid. 503.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Hjärpe, Jan. (1992), *Islam. Lära coh livsmönster*. Stockholm: Norstedts Förlag AB. Sid. 109.

<sup>51</sup> Khader, Naser. (1998), *Familjeliv och levnadsmönster. Bland Mellanösterns muslimer*. Göteborg: Wahlström & Widstrand. Sid. 30- 31, 77.

<sup>52</sup> Kramarae, Cheris. & Spender, Dale. (2000), *Routledge. International Encyclopedia of Women. Global Women’s Issues and Knowledge*. (Volume 2). New York, London: Routledge. Sid. 682, 683.

<sup>53</sup> Kramarae, Cheris. & Spender, Dale. (2000), *Routledge. International Encyclopedia of Women. Global Women’s Issues and Knowledge*. (Volume 1). New York, London: Routledge. Sid. 348.

<sup>54</sup> Kramarae, Cheris. & Spender, Dale. (2000), *Routledge. International Encyclopedia of Women. Global Women’s Issues and Knowledge*. (Volume 2). New York, London: Routledge. Sid. 1042.

There exist today different organizations in the international society that are trying to protect the different principles that UN has decided, like for example human rights. Women organizations in Kurdistan are some of the organizations in the international society that refer in their demands to the UN: s definition of women rights.

UN: s definition of human rights, equality between sexes, came with UN: s foundation in the 10 of December, 1948. In 1979 the UN passed a new convention on the discrimination against the women in the world.<sup>55</sup> Many countries in the world have reservations against some parts of the convention. Others like Iraq have signed the convention but don't follow it arguing its incompatibility with Islamic law.<sup>56</sup>

Within the UN in 1946 a woman commission was founded to struggle for the women's political, social and economical rights. 1975- 1985 was UN: s women decade and since then the UN has arranged different conferences for women rights, in for example Mexico City, Rio de Janeiro and Nairobi.<sup>57</sup>

In 1993 the UN passed a declaration called *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women*. The aim of the declaration was to abolish all kinds of women violence in the world. Many of UN: s articles today discuss the equality between all the people in the world. According to article 2 for example, all human beings have the same rights. Article 3 discusses every person's right for protection and freedom.<sup>58</sup> According to the women organizations, the women in Kurdistan should therefore have the same rights as the men. Today many women don't have the protection and the freedom they have right for.

## 2.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Muslim feminism and Islamic fundamentalism are the two theories I discuss in this essay. I use those two theories because they have an important role in the Kurdish society. The supporters of those theories are struggling for women issues and they both have support

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<sup>55</sup> Eriksson, Lars. m.fl. (1995), *FN globalt uppdrag. Fakta Historia Framtid*. Svenska FN- förbundet & SNS förlag. Sid. 54, 55.

<sup>56</sup> Eriksson, Lars. & Granath, Berith. (2001), *Läget i världen. FN rapporterar om mänskliga rättigheter 2001*. Stockholm: Svenska FN- förbundet. Sid. 6- 7, 111.

<sup>57</sup> Eriksson, Lars. & Halldén, Birger. (2000), *FN globalt uppdrag. 1995- 2000*. Stockholm: Svenska FN- förbundet. Sid. 34.

<sup>58</sup> Amnesty Sweden: <http://www2.amnesty.se/krg.nsf>, 26/6- 2004.



among the Kurdish people. Muslim feminism and Islamic fundamentalism affect the struggle for women rights in Kurdistan. To look at those two theories and their view on UN and the international norms, and the Quran, it will be easier to understand their affect of the struggle for women rights in the Kurdish area of Iraq. It will also be easier to understand if the struggle for the women in the society can affect the Islamic fundamentalists view on women and why honour related crimes are still common in Kurdistan.

Muslim feminism believes not just in UN: s definition of women rights, but also in the Quran. To justify their struggle for women rights, Muslim feminists therefore refer to the Quran. I have in this essay used John L. Espositos definition of Muslim feminism, which he mentions in his book *The Oxford encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*.

Islamic fundamentalism on the other hand, doesn't believe in UN: s definition of women rights and means that it is against the Quran. Islamic fundamentalists, as Muslim feminists, also refer to the Quran for supporting their own actions. The definition of Islamic fundamentalism that I use is the one that is discussed in the book *Between woman and nation. Nationalisms, transnational feminisms, and the state*.

The Quran, which both Muslim feminism and Islamic fundamentalism believe in, is the holy book of the Muslim people. Different movements in the international society, like Muslim feminism and Islamic fundamentalism, are today trying to interpret the Quran in the way that favour them and their work. Their interpretation and their work is something that affect the struggle for women rights in Iraq and therefore even the crimes in the name of honour. The Muslim feminists and Islamic fundamentalists view on women rights and how the two theories affect the women organizations work for the women in Kurdistan is also something that I will discuss in the essay.

There exist today different international organizations that are struggling for the norms and values that the international society has decided. Some of those principles are peace, security and women rights. One of those international organizations that are struggling for women rights is UN. According to UN, men and women are equal. But the implementation of women rights is not easy, because of the different countries that today are members in UN. Many of those countries, like for example the Muslim countries, think that some of UN: s definition of women rights is against the Quran.

I will in this essay discuss Muslim feminism and Islamic fundamentalism and their view on the Quran and UN. I will also look at the theories view on women issues, like female circumcision and honour related murder, in comparison with the women organizations and the department for human rights.

I have in this chapter discussed the theory of Muslim feminism and its view on women rights. I have also argued about Islamic fundamentalism that today exists in the international society and UN: s definition of women rights. I will now continue my discussion about the women and their rights in Kurdistan, in order to see how they are affected by the international norms institutionalised by UN, by Islamic fundamentalism and how Muslim feminism is trying to improve them. On the other hand, Islamic fundamentalism is against the fighting for women rights.

### 3. KURDISTAN

Kurdistan is a territory that lies between the countries Iraq, Iran, Turkey and Syria.<sup>59</sup> The name of the capital city in Kurdistan is Erbil.<sup>60</sup> The Kurds are the fourth biggest ethnic group in the Muslim countries.<sup>61</sup> The Kurdish people have during the history witnessed many hard times with battles and genocides.<sup>62</sup> They are an Indo-European group who have an Indo-European language. With the exception of the language that separates the Kurdish people from their neighbours, there even exist other differences, like the Kurdish clothes, music and traditions. Most Kurds are Sunni Muslims, but there also exist Shia Muslims, Christians and other religions like Jezidism etcetera.<sup>63</sup> Another difference between the Kurds and their neighbours is that Kurds give more rights to women.<sup>64</sup> The reason is that the Kurdish people have during the history endured battles and oppression from their neighbours, the Kurdish women and men had therefore to cooperate to survive.

In the year of 1992 the Kurdish area of Iraq became self- governed. Since then, Kurdistan has tried to democratize the area. The democratization process has been problematic for different reasons. One reason is the economic sanctions that Iraq had, another example is the existence of the Islamic fundamentalism.<sup>65</sup> The area of northern Iraq has, since the independence, become better in implementing human rights, and especially women rights. There are for example several women organizations in the area that help women in hard social situations. In both the PUK and the KDP areas, human right departments have been established.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Eskandari, Ahmad. (vinter 2002- vår 2003), "Kurdistan och kurder", *Kvinnor mot fundamentalism*. Nr 24. Stockholm: Stödskommittén för kvinnor i Iran. Sid. 5.

<sup>60</sup> The organisation Equal Rights in Kurdistan. (2004), *Project proposal*. Hawler: Equal Rights in Kurdistan. Sid. 2.

<sup>61</sup> Ahmadzadeh, Hashem. (1998), *Kurdistans delning och den kurdiska nationalismen*. Jönköping: Kitab- i Arzan. Sid. 15.

<sup>62</sup> Eskandari, Ahmad. (vinter 2002- vår 2003), "Kurdistan och kurder", *Kvinnor mot fundamentalism*. Nr 24. Stockholm: Stödskommittén för kvinnor i Iran. Sid. 5.

<sup>63</sup> Ahmadzadeh, Hashem. (1998), *Kurdistans delning och den kurdiska nationalismen*. Jönköping: Kitab- i Arzan. Sid. 22, 24.

<sup>64</sup> Ciment, James. (1996), *The Kurds. State and Minority in Turkey, Iraq and Iran*. New York. Sid. 78.

<sup>65</sup> The organisation Equal Rights in Kurdistan. (2004), *Project proposal*. Hawler: Equal Rights in Kurdistan. Sid. 1.

<sup>66</sup> Regeringskansliet: <http://www.manskligarattigheter.gov.se/extra/page/>, 6/1- 2004. Sid. 1, 3, 10.

The Kurdish area of Iraq is today divided in two governments that are ruled by the Kurdish parties KDP and PUK. PUK govern the area of Suleymaniya and KDP has control over the Erbil area. The two parties had for years been in conflict with each other but in the year of 1998 they decided to cooperate. They have now therefore created an agreement for their future cooperation in Kurdistan.<sup>67</sup>

One thing that should be mentioned is that the Kurds, in order to receive more political support from the international society, have been exaggerating the numbers of the Kurds. The Muslim countries on the other hand, are trying to minimize the number of Kurds, to show the world that there aren't so many in the area. Because of this, today it is hard to find any reliable information about the Kurdish inhabitants in the Muslim countries.<sup>68</sup>

Now we shall see how the situation for women in Iraq and particular in Kurdistan been affected by Islamic fundamentalism, Muslim feminism, the Quran and UN: s principles.

### **3.1 WOMEN RIGHTS IN IRAQ**

According to the old Iraqi laws, all the people in the country are equal. That is something that for example the article 19 stands for. People's equality is even something that the Iraqi government have mentioned in 1970s laws. For example, the 11<sup>th</sup> article from 1970 mention the mothers and say that every mother should receive all the support she need. But the Iraqi people's daily lives are far away from living in equality. Many of the laws discriminate the women and their human rights. An example is the law from 1951, article 102, that doesn't care about women rights. According to the law, every child belongs to the father and his family. The mother of the child can therefore not be the guardian. The Iraqi civil codes are far away from supporting the women and their rights. According to the article no. 3, a married woman can't travel without her husband, if she does that, she need his permission. A man has the right, if he wants to have several wives. Those Iraqi laws are just some of the laws that under several years have oppressed the women.<sup>69</sup> Islamic fundamentalists defend the law about having several wives and mean that there exist more women than men in the society, and the women need someone who can support them.

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<sup>67</sup> Regeringskansliet: <http://www.manskligarattigheter.gov.se/extra/page/>, 26/6- 2004. Sid. 7.

<sup>68</sup> Ahmadzadeh, Hashem. (1998), *Kurdistan delning och den kurdiska nationalismen*. Jönköping: Kitab- i Arzan. Sid. 23.

<sup>69</sup> Organization: Khatuzeen. (Feb. 2004), "To thoroughly clarify the women rights, it's necessary to review the Iraqi law completely", *Dangih Nevie*. No 3. Erbil: Khatuzeen. Sid. 53.

Iraq has signed the UN's convention on women rights. Equal rights between men and women are according to the Iraqi laws guaranteed in health, education and work. But even with those kinds of guarantees one can for example see that women make only 20 percent of the paid labour nowadays. Womens rights in Iraq have declined in the last century.<sup>70</sup> Since Saddam Hussein and his Baath regime started to govern, the violence against the Iraqi women started to increase. Many women got raped and murdered and that affected their attendance to school or participation in formal labour.<sup>71</sup> The lack of women rights depends on many factors, among other things unemployment and the economic problems the country has had for the last 20 years.<sup>72</sup> The Iraqi culture is based on thoughts that a man is the one who should take care of and support the family. Many men couldn't do that during the Baath regime and felt that they had failed in their daily responsibilities. Some of those men had, with different reasons, psychical problems. Many of them had endured different kind of oppression, many had get tortured without any reason.

In Iraq today, it doesn't exist any reliable statistics about women's situation. For example it is hard to find any information about female circumcision. But one thing we know for sure is that violence against women exists. According to UN, from the year of 1991 to 2002, more than 4000 women got killed in Iraq for different reasons. The perpetrators of these murders were for the most part their own families; they were honour related murders. In the year of 2000, the Kurdish area of Iraq created a law that forbids honour killings. However in places like Baghdad, it has been hard to control crimes against women, because of insufficient police resources.<sup>73</sup> Islamic fundamentalists mean that honour killing is important in a society so women don't commit any dishonest actions.

### **3.1.1 WOMEN RIGHTS IN KURDISTAN**

I will in this part of the essay focus on honour related crimes and emphasize my discussion on honour killing and female circumcision. I have focused on those two crimes because they are usual in the Kurdish area of Iraq. The women organizations in Kurdistan and Muslim feminists are today trying to prevent such crimes.

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<sup>70</sup> Regeringskansliet: <http://www.manskligarattigheter.gov.se/extra/page/>, 26/6- 2004. Sid. 11.

<sup>71</sup> Amnesty International: <http://www.web.amnesty.org/report2004/irq-summary-eng>, 26/6- 2004.

<sup>72</sup> Regeringskansliet: <http://www.manskligarattigheter.gov.se/extra/page/>, 26/6- 2004. Sid. 11.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. Sid. 12.

The Kurdish society and its struggle for women rights is something that has been affected by both internal and external factors. The internal factors are about the culture, traditions and the religion of Islam that exist in Kurdistan. The external factors on the other hand are UN and different international NGO: s.

During the history, when the people in Kurdistan have met hard times like wars and so on, the women have been the ones who always have paid the hardest price, with their health and lives.<sup>74</sup> Many women in Kurdistan have during the history been victims for different kinds of cruelties. Many of those women have lost their lives striving for their rights. But it is with those womens engagement in women right questions that the Kurdish law today, among other things, regards honour killing like murder.<sup>75</sup> According to the Kurdish regime, killings in the name of honour don't have any support in the Quran.<sup>76</sup> Muslim feminists agree with the Kurdish regime and say that according to the Quran both men and women should be punished, not killed, if they have sexual relations before marriage.

Something to remember is that killing in the name of honour happens as well in other countries like Egypt, Iran and Jordan. The Kurdish culture and traditions are affected by other cultures like the Turkish, Arabic and Persian.<sup>77</sup> Islamic fundamentalists mean that it is important to protect the culture and the traditions and claim that killings in the name of honour wouldn't exist if the women could take care of themselves.

Faraj who is a researcher, chief editor and working for women rights in Kurdistan mean that there exist Islamic fundamentalist groups in Kurdistan. Those groups are struggling against women rights in the area. They can for example attack women who don't use the hijab. Islamic fundamentalism has different support and power in different cities. In the city of Halabja for example, there is a strong fundamentalist movement. Those fundamentalist groups receive support from Saudi Arabia and Iran, in terms of financial aid for example.<sup>78</sup> Islamic fundamentalists mean that it is important for a Muslim society to follow the Quran.

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<sup>74</sup> Faraj Rahim, Runak. & Shwan, Hana. (2003), *Statistics on Violence Used against Women with an Article*. Suleimaniyah: Women Information and Culture Center. Sid. 3.

<sup>75</sup> Eskandari, Ahmad. (vinter 2002- vår 2003), "Kurdistan och kurder", *Kvinnor mot fundamentalism*. Nr 24. Stockholm: Stödskommittén för kvinnor i Iran. Sid. 7.

<sup>76</sup> Amnesty Sweden: <http://www2.amnesty.se/kg.nsf>, 26/6- 2004.

<sup>77</sup> Faraj Rahim, Runak. & Shwan, Hana. (2003), *Statistics on Violence Used against Women with an Article*. Suleimaniyah: Women Information and Culture Center. Sid. 3.

<sup>78</sup> Irani, Sholeh. (vinter 2002- vår 2003), "Kurdiska kvinnor organiserar sig mot förtrycket", *Kvinnor mot fundamentalism*. Nr 24. Stockholm: Stödskommittén för kvinnor i Iran. Sid. 11.

It is therefore important to stop the Western influence in the society. That is something that Muslim feminists don't agree with and refer to the Quranic sura, *The Cow* (II: 256): "There is no compulsion in religion."<sup>79</sup>

Islamic fundamentalists, men and women, oppress the Kurdish women in different ways. For example, they don't let the women work outside the house. That is a big problem in some parts of Kurdistan, because many of the women don't have anyone who can support them.<sup>80</sup> Many women are not only responsible for their own livings, but even their children's. Many of the women have had problems with finding a job for supporting themselves and their family, because of not only the fundamentalist thoughts, but also because of their illiterateness. The bad economy in some families has lead to problems within the family.<sup>81</sup> Some of the women in those families therefore have to work as prostitutes. It is a problem, because they risk to get killed by their families.<sup>82</sup> With those kinds of problems many women prefer to commit suicide.<sup>83</sup>

Muslim feminists are trying to use the Quran for protecting the women and say that according to the holy book it is forbidden to kill someone. That is something that the women organizations in Kurdistan also support.

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No soul can ever die except by Allah's leave and at a term appointed.<sup>84</sup>

Muslim feminists also discuss womens labour outside the house and say that the Quran don't mention that it is forbidden for a woman to work. Muslim feminists mention Muhammeds wife Khadija and say that she was a businesswoman.

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<sup>79</sup> Pickthall, Marmaduke. (2000), *The Meaning of The Glorious Koran*. New York: Dorset Press. Sid. 57.

<sup>80</sup> Garemani, Bahman. (vinter 2002- vår 2003), "Kurdistan. Det dubbla förtrycket mot kvinnor", *Kvinnor mot fundamentalism*. Nr 24. Stockholm: Stödkommittén för kvinnor i Iran. Sid. 17.

<sup>81</sup> Faraj Rahim, Runak. & Shwan, Hana. (2003), *Statistics on Violence Used against Women with an Article*. Suleimaniyah: Women Information and Culture Center. Sid. 3.

<sup>82</sup> Garemani, Bahman. (vinter 2002- vår 2003), "Kurdistan. Det dubbla förtrycket mot kvinnor", *Kvinnor mot fundamentalism*. Nr 24. Stockholm: Stödkommittén för kvinnor i Iran. Sid. 17.

<sup>83</sup> Faraj Rahim, Runak. & Shwan, Hana. (2003), *Statistics on Violence Used against Women with an Article*. Suleimaniyah: Women Information and Culture Center. Sid. 3.

<sup>84</sup> Pickthall, Marmaduke. (2000), *The Meaning of The Glorious Koran*. New York: Dorset Press. Sid. 73.

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And their Lord hath heard them (and He saith): Lo! I suffer not the work of any worker, male or female, to be lost. Ye proceed one from another.<sup>85</sup>

When a woman dies in Kurdistan, it is in many times hard to know if she was murdered or not, because many women commit suicide for different reasons. One reason can be marriage, that a woman gets forced to marry a man she doesn't want. Many families give away their daughters like wives to other families just to receive wives in exchange from those families.<sup>86</sup> The families' marriage of their own daughters is something that Islamic fundamentalists support. They mean that the parents often know which man is good enough for their daughter. The parents just want to protect the daughter, because a girl can't control her own feelings. That is something that Muslim feminists and the women organizations don't agree with and say that according to the Quran it is forbidden to force someone to get married.

According to Faraj, the oppression against women in the society depends on many things; one thing is men's loss of power over their own lives. When men feel powerless they try to decide over the women and their lives.<sup>87</sup>

### **The Kurdish womens situation since 1992**

There are no differences between the sexes in front of the Kurdish law today. The government's aim is to achieve equality in the whole society. One example is the law no. 1 from 1992. According to the law, every Kurdish woman in the Kurdish area of Iraq has the right to participate in the public sphere and be elected. Every Kurdish woman has also the right to vote. For example, in the National Assembly today, 8 of 105 members are women. The Kurdish National Assembly has a committee called The Defence Committee for Women's rights. It is a committee with an assignment to control the Kurdish areas implementation of the laws about women and their rights. For example, according to the Iraqi penal code of the year of 1969, law no 111, a husband is allowed to use violence

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<sup>85</sup> Pickthall, Marmaduke. (2000), *The Meaning of The Glorious Koran*. New York: Dorset Press. Sid 78.

<sup>86</sup> Irani, Sholeh. (vinter 2002- vår 2003), "Kurdiska kvinnor organiserar sig mot förtrycket", *Kvinnor mot fundamentalism*. Nr 24. Stockholm: Stödskommittén för kvinnor i Iran. Sid. 11.

<sup>87</sup> Garemani, Bahman. (vinter 2002- vår 2003), "Kurdistan. Det dubbla förtrycket mot kvinnor", *Kvinnor mot fundamentalism*. Nr 24. Stockholm: Stödskommittén för kvinnor i Iran. Sid. 17- 18.



against his wife for punishment. In 2001 the Kurdish area of Iraq abandoned that law and founded a new law, no 7 that forbid that kind of violence.<sup>88</sup>

All the laws that the Kurdish parliament had to reconstitute, after the Kurdish areas self- government, had to be UN adapted. At the year of 2001 a new ministry for human rights was established in Kurdistan. It has many tasks. One example is that the ministry should cooperate with Kurdistan Regional Government and several human rights organizations, not just national organizations but also internationals.<sup>89</sup>

The new law, no. 14, which was voted by the National Assembly in the Kurdish area of Iraq, forbids the old Iraqi articles 128, 130, 131, about honour killing.<sup>90</sup> Those law changes exist in appendix 1. Those Kurdish law changes are something that Muslim feminists and the women organizations support, but not Islamic fundamentalists that think that the new laws are against Islam.

If we look at the last years we can see that honour related murder have decreased in Kurdistan. Before the year of 1992 Kurdistan had the same laws as the rest of Iraq. After 1992, when the Kurdish area of Iraq became self- governed, the Kurdish government began to institute its own laws, which favoured women rights. Several laws were changing, like for example:<sup>91</sup>

- The abolishment of mitigating circumstances for honour related killings
- The prohibition to marry outside public courts (Muslim marriages)
- The obligation for fathers to pay child support in divorce settlements
- The right for women to receive fully paid maternity leave<sup>92</sup>

Since 1992 Kurdistan has started programs that favour women rights, for example several different women organizations and institutions that are struggling for democracy has been started. The women organizations are helping women in different ways like education,

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<sup>88</sup> Kurdistan Regional Government. (2004), *Kurdistan Regional Government*. Kurdistan Regional Governments representation in Sweden.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Kurdistan Regional Government. (14/8- 2002), *New law voted by the National Assembly of Iraqi Kurdistan*. No. 14. Kurdistan Regional Governments representation in Sweden.

<sup>91</sup> Kurdistan Regional Government. (19/2- 2004), *The situation of women in Iraqi Kurdistan*. Kurdistan Regional Governments representation in Sweden.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

struggling against honour killing etcetera.<sup>93</sup> According to Ronak Faraj, most women who visit the women organizations are not from the big cities of Iraq, they are from the villages. But one can see that more women contact the organizations today than before the independence. Many women are today less afraid of seeking help, because they trust the organizations.<sup>94</sup> Since the independence of 1992, Kurdistan has tried to rebuild the area and has therefore received help from different countries in the international society, like for example USA and Germany. The help Kurdistan receive is information, economical help and so on. For helping the Kurdish people, the countries in the international society want the Kurds to follow the claims they have decided, in for example women issues. The Kurdish cooperation with other international NGO: s has therefore affected the Kurdish people's thoughts. The Western thoughts and UN: s aim of women rights is therefore something that has affected the Kurdish societies struggle for women issues. To cooperate with other countries is something that Muslim feminists support, but Islamic fundamentalists say that it is wrong to cooperate with people who are not religious.

Since Kurdistan became self- governed, Muslim feminists have made some progress in changing peoples thoughts about women rights, and has also affect some law changes. Muslim feminists on the other hand has met resistance from the Islamic fundamentalists that doesn't like the Muslim feminists idea about abolishing the patriarchal state system. Islamic fundamentalism in Kurdistan doesn't have as much support in the country today as it had during the Baath regime, because of the modernization in the area. Today many people have internet and satellite, they see how other people in other parts of the world live. That has therefore changed the Kurdish people's thoughts. Satellite and internet are things that Islamic fundamentalists are against, because they can affect people's thoughts. Like for example the Western movies that are not censored.

The Kurdish parliament and the women organizations are trying to do their best to abolish those kinds of patriarchal thoughts, in for example informing people about their rights. It is important to notice that the Iraqi Baath regime was not based on religious thoughts and was striving against religious groups. But many of the people in the society were influenced by different religious fundamentalist groups.

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<sup>93</sup> Kurdistan Regional Government. (19/2- 2004), *The situation of women in Iraqi Kurdistan*. Kurdistan Regional Governments representation in Sweden.

<sup>94</sup> Irani, Sholeh. (vinter 2002- vår 2003), "Kurdiska kvinnor organiserar sig mot förtrycket", *Kvinnor mot fundamentalism*. Nr 24. Stockholm: Stödskommittén för kvinnor i Iran. Sid. 10.

### 3.2 THE CONCEPT OF HONOUR

One of the crimes that are against women rights is according to UN, murder in the name of honour. It is almost always about that the women have had sexual relations. Such crimes exist in many different countries and cultures. Even if it is forbidden, many women get killed every year. 50 00 is the number of honour killing that UN: s statistic shows. The murderer is often a male relative. It can be a father, brother, husband or some other man in the family.<sup>95</sup> Islamic fundamentalists support that kind of actions and mean that it is important for the society's honour that the men take their responsibility.

According to UN, every state is today responsible for its member's security. It is the states responsibility to stop the violence against women. But many of the states in the international society haven't done much to prevent such crimes.<sup>96</sup> If we look at Kurdistan, many women get killed in the name of honour during the Baath regime. For example a policeman in the city of Duhok tells that every night people who worked for the Iraqi Baath regime visited Duhok and killed a lot of women in different ways. Many of the women get pushed down from a mountain named Barda Qaraman. During Saddam Hussein's regime, it was not forbidden to kill a woman in the name of honour.<sup>97</sup> The Baath regime thought that it is important to protect the Iraqi honour. Their thoughts were not based on religious thoughts, but on the culture and traditions that exist in the country.

The meaning of the concept of honour is different in different societies, cultures and society classes. But it is important to notice that honour killing exist in all society classes. If we take an example about a woman from a village in Iraq who has had sexual relations with a man, this woman may get killed. But a woman who has done the same thing in a big city in Iraq would be punished, not killed. Honour related killings are not usual in the big cities,<sup>98</sup> because Islamic fundamentalist thoughts are not common as in the villages. The thoughts about women rights are more common in the big cities. It has been easier for Muslim feminists and the women organizations to contact the people there, because people are more educated.

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<sup>95</sup> Amnesty Sweden: <http://www2.amnesty.se/krg.nsf>, 26/6- 2004.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Faraj Rahim, Runak. & Shwan, Hana. (2003), *Statistics on Violence Used against Women with an Article*. Suleimaniyah: Women Information and Culture Center. Sid. 7, 10.

<sup>98</sup> Amnesty Sweden: <http://www2.amnesty.se/krg.nsf>, 26/6- 2004.

A Kurdish network that is struggling for the Kurdish women rights in Kurdistan and in other countries is the Kurdish womens action against honour killing, KWAHK. The aim of the organization is to awake, not just a national, but also an international discussion against Kurdish women oppression. The organization is therefore trying to cooperate with the United Nations, other NGO: s etcetera. KWAHK as an organization was founded in London at the year of 2000.<sup>99</sup> For more information about honour killing, appendix 2 show statistic about the number of women who got killed in Kurdistan from 2001- 2002 to 2003.

A woman in Kurdistan can get killed in the name of honour for different reasons, not only because of sexual relations, but also if she for example gets divorced, raped, or if she marries a man her family doesn't accept. Interesting to notice is that many of the girls that get killed are virgins. Their families often notice that after their death.<sup>100</sup> Muslim feminist and the women organizations are trying to protect those women by refering to the Quran that nobody have the right to kill someone.

In some patriarchal Muslim societies, if a raped woman marries the man who has raped her, the family's honour will be saved. The man can choose between to marry the woman he has raped or to be in prison. The families honour is so important that the womans family let her live in a horrible marriage for the rest of her live.<sup>101</sup> Muslim feminists don't believe in that kind of marriage and mean that every man who rapes a woman should be punished, according to the Quran. That kind of view is not accepted by Islamic fundamentalists, they mean that sexual relations before marriage is against the Quran. That is the reason why a man who has raped a woman should marry her.

In some families where a male member has raped a woman in his own family, and she get pregnant, the woman has to be killed, just to protect the family's honour.<sup>102</sup> In many times, fundamentalists think that it is the womans fault that she has been raped, she should learn to take care of her self and don't behave in a provocative way.

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<sup>99</sup> Beigikhani, Nazhand. (vinter 2002- vår 2003), "Kurdiska kvinnor mot hedersmord", *Kvinnor mot fundamentalism*. Nr 24. Stockholm: Stödskommittén för kvinnor i Iran. Sid. 21.

<sup>100</sup> Amnesty Sweden: <http://www2.amnesty.se/krq.nsf>, 26/6- 2004.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

Today, in the Muslim countries, there exist different kind of honour related crimes, except honour killings, like for example acid attacks, force to marriage, maltreatment and torture. One kind of torture can be female circumcision. That is something that mainly exists in African countries. It even exists in Muslim countries, but not in the same extent. Two million women around the world get circumcised every year. Women who get circumcised often suffer a lot of pain. Some of them die, and many of them suffer from mental scars for the rest of their lives.<sup>103</sup>

Circumcision among Kurdish women is something that exists in the Kurdish area of Iraq. In some parts more common than in others. Even if female circumcision doesn't have any support in the Islamic religion and the Quran, many Muslims practice it. But it is interesting to notice that most of the Muslims in the world don't circumcise their females. Female circumcision has its origin in different cultures and traditions.<sup>104</sup> Female circumcision is something that Muslim feminists, the women organizations and the department for human rights are striving against. They mean that the Quran doesn't support female circumcision and emphasize the importance of sexual relations. Muslim feminists are therefore trying to make people aware that the Quran just support male circumcision.

Many not educated people in the Kurdish villages don't know that female circumcision is forbidden according to the Kurdish law, and think that circumcision is important in Islam. In the areas where people are educated, circumcision is less common.<sup>105</sup> Many fundamentalists don't understand the feminists struggle against female circumcision and as they don't share the argument that circumcision can affect womens sexuality. They mean that women are subordinated men, also in sexual relations.

Today, a person can find data about female circumcision that have commits in the cities of Erbil and Suleymaniya, between the years 1985 to 2001. Circumcision is something that still exists in these two cities, but not in the same magnitude as for a couple of years ago. In cities there Islamist fundamentalist groups have existed and ruled, circumcision has always

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<sup>103</sup> Amnesty Sweden: [http://www2.amnesty.se/krig\\_nsf](http://www2.amnesty.se/krig_nsf), 26/6- 2004.

<sup>104</sup> Faraj, Ronak. (vinter 2002- vår 2003), "Omskärelse av kurdiska flickor", *Kvinnor mot fundamentalism*. Nr 24. Stockholm: Stödkommittén för kvinnor i Iran. Sid. 19. and Amnesty Sweden: [http://www2.amnesty.se/krig\\_nsf](http://www2.amnesty.se/krig_nsf), 26/6- 2004.

<sup>105</sup> Faraj, Ronak. (vinter 2002- vår 2003), "Omskärelse av kurdiska flickor", *Kvinnor mot fundamentalism*. Nr 24. Stockholm: Stödkommittén för kvinnor i Iran. Sid. 19.

been usual. One example of those cities is Halabja.<sup>106</sup> Statistics about female circumcision in Erbil and Suleymaniya is something that shows in appendix 3.

### 3.2.1 COMMITTING SUICIDE

Many Kurdish women can't today handle the oppression from the society and decide to commit suicide. Muslim feminists and the women organizations in Kurdistan are aware about that kind of problems and are therefore trying to help the Kurdish women. They are for example trying to inform the people about the womens hard situation in the society and are also trying to help the women with finding jobs. Even if the women organizations and Muslim feminists are working hard to prevent the women from committing suicide, there is still much to do. There exist today many different types for committing suicide among the women in Kurdistan. Those types are:

1. Self burning
2. Taking pills
3. Using gun for suicide
4. Jumping from mountains
5. Drowning in lakes<sup>107</sup>

Taking pills, jumping from mountains and drowning are the types for committing suicide that are most common in the countrysides and not in the cities.<sup>108</sup> According to Muslim feminists the society should do something to decrease the number of suicide among women. Committing suicide is something that affects the whole society, because women are half of the population. Muslim feminists also mean that committing suicide is forbidden according to the Quran.

Different studies have been made to see why most women burn themselves while they commit suicide. The studies show that it is hard to know the reasons but it can be a symbol for those women to show the world how they feel inside. But it can also be about that

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<sup>106</sup> Faraj, Ronak. (vinter 2002- vår 2003), "Omskärrelse av kurdiska flickor", *Kvinnor mot fundamentalism*. Nr 24. Stockholm: Stödkommittén för kvinnor i Iran. Sid. 19.

<sup>107</sup> Faraj Rahim, Runak. & Shwan, Hana. (2003), *Statistics on Violence Used against Women with an Article*. Suleimaniyah: Women Information and Culture Center. Sid. 28.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

women are the ones who work in the kitchen and are therefore the ones who have access to the fire.<sup>109</sup>

Statistics shows that in 2001 there were about 245 women in Kurdistan who burned themselves to death. 109 of those women were from Suleymaniya. In the year of 2002, 119 women in Suleymaniya committed suicide by burning themselves. For suicide, the women in Duhok for the most times use guns to shot themselves or jumping from mountains.<sup>110</sup> Appendix 4 shows statistics about the women in Suleymaniya who committed suicide in the years of 2001 and 2002. Muslim feminists and the women organizations believe that many Kurdish women today don't have anything to do, except taking care of the family. That is one reason to why they get depressed and commit suicide. So helping the women to go out in the society and meet other women will help them from being depressed.

There are today many explanations to why women in Kurdistan commit suicide by self- burning. Some of the main reasons are:

- Bad economy. Many of the women who decide to commit suicide are poor and can't afford their own livings.
- Many of those women don't have a job.
- Most women who commit suicide are not from the cities they are from villages.
- Most of those women are illiterate.
- Those women have in many times bad relations to their family. And many of them are married against their will, zin ba zin.<sup>111</sup>

One another problem that also exists in the Kurdish area, except suicide, is disappearance. Many women run away when they are threatened badly by their families. One example can be that the family want to kill the woman because they suspect she had a love affair. Another problem that exists in the area is the social problems. One example is a family that cut the nose off their daughter for having a love affair with a man. His parents on the other

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<sup>109</sup> Faraj Rahim, Runak. & Shwan, Hana. (2003), *Statistics on Violence Used against Women with an Article*. Suleimaniyah: Women Information and Culture Center. Sid. 31.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid. Sid. 31, 33.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid. Sid. 33- 34.

hand cut his ears. Their parents also excluded them from their respective family.<sup>112</sup> Muslim feminism believes that the number of women committing suicide or running away from their families will decrease if the women get educated. When the Kurdish women get educated they will find other ways to resolve their own problems, instead of committing suicide or disappear. The fundamentalists don't believe in the Muslim feminist thoughts and mean that the problems that exist in the society today are that women and men don't know their own responsibilities that God has decided.

The patriarchal state system is something that Muslim feminists are today striving against and they have therefore tried to make some changes in the law to favour the womens situation in the family sphere.<sup>113</sup>

I have now among other things discussed the womens situation in Iraq and Kurdistan. I have also discussed the concept of honour and different kinds of crimes that today commits in the name of honour. I will therefore in the next chapter write about the women organizations and the department for human rights that I visited in Kurdistan. I will also mention the German project, named WADI.

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<sup>112</sup> Faraj Rahim, Runak. & Shwan, Hana. (2003), *Statistics on Violence Used against Women with an Article*. Suleimaniyah: Women Information and Culture Center. Sid. 35, 38.

<sup>113</sup> Esposito, John L. (1995), *The Oxford encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*. (Volume 2). Oxford: Oxford University Press. Sid. 19, 21.



#### **4. THE KURDS' STRUGGLE FOR WOMEN RIGHTS**

During my time in Kurdistan, when I visited several women organizations and the departments for women rights, while I was searching for information to attain my purpose, I ran into some problems. An example was the department for human rights in Suleymaniya who didn't let me interview anyone there. They gave me a lot of excuses to why I couldn't do my interview, for example they said that they didn't have time for me. Another problem was that it was very difficult to find information about rights of the Kurdish women. It was also difficult to find literature in Iraq, especially because of the post-war situation. The lack of information depends also on many other things, for example the fact that Iraq for many years has denied the existence of the Kurds. Another reason is that a lot of people in the region don't want to talk about the problem with women oppression.

Kurdistan is one area that has founded some women organizations. In comparison with the rest of Iraq, Kurdistan has become aware about women rights and has therefore started with the implementation of it, like abolishing laws that discriminate women and founding women rights organizations. The organizations are, in different ways, trying to increase the awareness among people about women rights, honour killings and so on.<sup>114</sup> Women in the society can visit the women organizations for most of their problems. But the most visiting women have family problems, like marriage and divorce. At the organizations, the women can receive the most kind of help. It is today hard for many women in the society to become independent, because many of them are illiterate. So the organizations are trying to give them some courses and teach them to read and write. The women organizations also have courses in for example handling a computer, cooking, sewing and haircut. Muslim feminists support those courses and say that they are important for the Kurdish women so they can become more independent.

The work of the department and the women organizations are something that is affected of both internal and external factors. The internal factors, as I earlier mentioned, are cultures, traditions and religion, and the external factors are International NGO: s and UN. How some of those factors affect the work of the organizations and department is something that I write about in part 4.1.

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<sup>114</sup> The organisation Equal Rights in Kurdistan. (2004), *Project proposal*. Hawler: Equal Rights in Kurdistan. Sid. 2.

## **4.1 THE WOMEN ORGANIZATIONS AND THE DEPARTMENT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN KURDISTAN**

I will now discuss the information I received from the women organizations and the department for human rights during my time in the Kurdish area of Iraq.

About the women organizations in Erbil and Suleymaniya and the department for human rights in Erbil, they all believe in UN: s definition of women rights. They are therefore trying to implement women rights in Kurdistan, but they don't always follow UN: s definition about women rights in all points. Such things take time for the people to understand and accept. They mean that it is hard in a society like Kurdistan, because some of the UN: s definition about women rights is against peoples believes. For example, a lot of people believe in the Islamic law, the sharia. One must therefore suit the laws after the society and the people in it. That is something that Muslim feminists agree with and say that UN, like an extern factor, has a good influence on the work of the organizations. Muslim feminists also mention the internal factors and their affect on the work of women rights. Those internal factors, like the traditions, have made the work of women rights harder to develop.

The aim for the organizations is to create a better standard of living for both the women and the children. The organizations and the department are trying to do their best to support the women in the society. The women in Kurdistan can visit the organizations for most of their problems. Many of the women have family problems, like marriage, divorce and so on. The women can also receive juridical help, psychological- and medical treatment. Some women have economic problems. Many of the women who need help are survivors from the Anfal campaign. In a situation like that, when the women need help with their economy, the organization do not just give them the money, but also tries to teach them something like for example sewing. The organization often helps them to start a project so they, in the future, can support themselves.

The organizations are trying to help the women to become independent and to take care of themselves. The employees at the organizations are always trying to look after the womens needs, what they demands for feeling better. The women who are visiting the organizations often need knowledge about several things. Many want to learn cooking, using a computer,

sewing etcetera. Many of the women have been housewives for a long time, they don't have a job or another place to go to. So without those courses they would just be at home cooking and taking care of the family. Those women are clever and have very good ideas, so the organizations try to give them some job opportunities. That is something that Islamic fundamentalists are against and mean that it is more important to help the men in the society to find a job. Because the Kurdish culture is based on the thoughts that men are the ones who should take care of their families. The organizations have also started courses for the illiterate persons and kindergartens for the children who follow their mothers to the organizations. It is because the mothers are often taking care of the children in the family. If there is a kindergarten it will be easier for them to receive the help they need. Islamic fundamentalists are trying to stop the work of the organizations with the argument that the organizations ideas are Western, not religious ideas.

To inform women about different things, like their human rights, the organizations have created some sub- organizations in the villages. The organizations have for example also started lectures and own newspapers that bring up women questions, like violence against women. Many of the women today don't know that they have rights, and think that their men have the right to use violence against them. Most of those women are illiterate. The persons who work at the organizations are also trying to inform people through the television. According to the organizations, the important groups in the society that should be informed are not only the women, but also the men and children. Sometimes the employees at the organizations and the department go out in the society and talk with the people. It is often hard to contact the people and starting a conversation with them, because they are often nervous and scared at the beginning. For the most time it takes about two weeks before they can talk and trust the employees from the organizations. It is therefore important to create a confidence between the people and the employees. The children are an important group to talk with, it is important to teach them in early years about human rights, and women rights. Today it exist many projects in the country about women- and children rights. The schools are trying to talk with the children in early years about their rights. It also exist a school subject called human rights. The people in Kurdistan are becoming more aware about their own rights. The work of human rights and many of the ideas that the Kurdish society has received are from the International NGO: s, which is doing their best to help the Kurdish people. Those ideas have been supported by Muslim

feminists that mean that the Kurdish society has for a long time been under oppression and therefore need new ideas from other countries. Those ideas will help Kurdistan to develop.

The women organizations don't just cooperate with organizations abroad, but also with the other organizations in Kurdistan. The department for human rights in Erbil and the department in Suleymaniya are also trying to cooperate. When it comes to the cooperation between the departments and the organizations, they are trying to have some kind of cooperation, in for example informing people about their human rights. That is something that Islamic fundamentalists are against and say that people should instead be more informed about Islam.

The kind of help the organizations receive from abroad is mainly information but they also receive economical support. The organizations hope to receive new information and new ideas about how to work for the women in Kurdistan. The money the organizations receive goes to expenditures like food, rent etcetera. The countries that have helped the organizations are for example Sweden, Germany and USA. Germany has now started a big project in Kurdistan, called WADI. The aim of the project is to inform people about women rights. Many women today know that they have rights, but don't know what kind of rights.

The organizations and the department have met some obstacles with their work with women issues. Many of those who have criticized their work are Islamic fundamentalists who think that the works the organizations perform are in contrary to Islam. The Islamic fundamentalists are for example trying to talk with the people in the society to struggle against the organizations work. The Islamic fundamentalists are also trying to prevent some law proposals, about women rights. For example honour killing and marriage against the womens will. Many of those fundamentalists are women, not just men. There are some fundamentalist women organizations that are striving against the feminist women organizations.

Some cities in Kurdistan are today against the organizations and their work. Therefore, it is harder to work with women right questions in some cities than in others. In some of them the opposition from the inhabitants is hard. If we take Halabja and Erbil as example, we will see that the opposition is harder in Erbil. The reason to that is that it today exist many tribes in Erbil. It is important for every tribe to take care of its members and the honour of

the tribe. Some people for example throw stones at the employees from the organizations. It is hard to know why, but it may depend on the conservatism of the many different cultures and traditions and people's interpretation of Islam.

Something to notice is that Kurdistan has been independent for a long time, so the Iraqi regimes opinion doesn't affect Kurdistans struggle for human rights. But it is today still hard to implement new laws about women rights in the society because of the internal factors. The problem is that the people in the society don't always follow the laws. An example is the law against honour related murder. The law was founded in 2002. There still exist such killings, but it has decreased. The organizations and the department believe that the fundamentalist thoughts can decrease if people get informed and educated about their own rights, many of the people are today illiterate. Such thoughts can be resolved, but it takes time. According to Muslim feminists it is important to teach the people, both men and women, to read the Quran. It is important because the men will learn that their oppression of the women, in many times, don't have any support in the Quran. The women will on the other hand learn that they have some rights.

According to the organizations and the department, they have reached some progress in implementing women rights, since Kurdistan became self- governed in the year of 1992. Today many of the people in Kurdistan respect women rights, more than they did before the independence. The organizations have now for example succeeded to solve 85 percent of all the problems the visiting women have had. Before the independence it was about 20 percent. It has several reasons. The Kurdish government has for example founded new laws for the women and their rights. For example a married man has doesn't have the right to marry a second wife without asking the first wife. But before the independence, a man could get married without his wifes permission. The law about honour killing is also changed. To kill someone in the name of honour today are the same thing as murder. But earlier, before the independence, the punishment was more mildly. Another thing that has helped people to change their thoughts is the contact from the international society. The people today have internet, satellite etcetera. When the Baath party ruled in Iraq, the people in the country didn't had any contact with the international society. According to Muslim feminists many people from different countries travel to Iraq today and many people from Iraq travel to other countries too. That is something good, because it will change the Iraqi people's thoughts and values about for example human rights.

The organizations work is something that has been influenced by Muslim feminist thoughts. The organizations, as Muslim feminists, are trying to use the Quran for implementing women rights. Islamic fundamentalists are also trying to use the Quran, but for struggling against women rights. According to Muslim feminists, the oppression of women depends on men's incorrect interpretation of the Quran. That is something that the organizations believe in, but say that it is not only men who struggle against the feminist thoughts, but also women. Both the organizations and the Muslim feminists believe in men's and women's equality in the society, but emphasize women's education and mean that women's subordination will decrease if women get educated.

As I earlier mentioned, Germany has started a big project in Kurdistan, called WADI. The project is supported by Muslim feminists, but not by Islamic fundamentalists that mean that the Western ideas are impossible to implement in a Muslim society. Muslim feminists don't agree with Islamic fundamentalists and say that it is not about religion and Western thoughts, it is about human rights that are important for every person. The project has had an important role for the women in the area. I will therefore hereinafter discuss the work of WADI.

#### **4.2 THE PROJECT OF WADI**

WADI is the name of a project and NGO founded by Germany. The goal of the project is to struggle for women rights, in not just Kurdistan, but in the whole Muslim countries. The project of WADI was founded in the year of 1991, but in Kurdistan in 1993. WADI is trying to cooperate with other women organizations in the country. One of the organizations it cooperates with is the NAWA center in Suleymaniya.<sup>115</sup> Muslim feminist support that kind of project. They mean that it will help the women to support themselves. It will help them to become more independent.

WADI has employees that help women and children, in different cities and villages in Kurdistan. Those places are except Suleymaniya also Erbil, Kirkuk, Mosul and Dyala. From the day when the organization was founded in Kurdistan, to the year of 2003, WADI helped more than 25000 people, both women and children. The kind of help WADI offered those women and children was different in different cases. It could for example be about

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<sup>115</sup> WADI. (31/3- 2004), *WADI. Brief Description of WADI's activities related to Women and Human Rights in Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan 1993- 2004*. Sulaymani: WADI. Sid. 3, 5.

medical help, but also in form of information. The women in some of the places in Kurdistan for example don't have any place to meet. That is one of the reasons why WADI has opened some women centers, so the women can meet and talk.<sup>116</sup> According to Islamic fundamentalists, the Kurdish society should forbid all not Muslim organizations and ideas in the country.

One of the things that the employees of WADI are struggling against is illiteracy. The employees are also trying to help the women in distress, women who live under oppression. Many of those women are the victims of the 1988s Anfal campaign. The organization can help the women with all their needs, like for example medical help.<sup>117</sup> That is not supported by Islamic fundamentalists, which mean that dishonest behaviour among Muslim women will increase in the society when the women know that they can receive help for their own actions.

One thing to notice is that WADI also has founded a place for living for the women who are under threat from their families, there they can find the help and protection they need. The German NGO has also founded a library for the women in the Kurdish area. Kifri is the name of the city there the library exist. Women can visit the library if they need books or if they want to go to different courses that are treating questions about women rights.<sup>118</sup> Islamic fundamentalists mean that the books should be censored, so they don't treat any questions that are against Islam.

In order to help the women to have more time for them selves, WADI has built some kindergartens. The NGO has not only supported the women in the area, but also the men. WADI has for example helped male prisoners with opening a library for them and starting literacy courses.<sup>119</sup>

Two small cities that WADI concentrates its work on are the cities near Halabja. They are called Biara and Tawela. The inhabitants in those cities have during history met many kinds of degradation, like Islamist occupation, massacres and so on. The Islamic fundamentalist

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<sup>116</sup> WADI. (31/3- 2004), *WADI. Brief Description of WADI's activities related to Women and Human Rights in Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan 1993- 2004*. Sulaymani: WADI. Sid. 10, 15.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid. Sid. 4, 6.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid. Sid. 5- 7.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid. Sid. 8, 9.

group that occupied the area was called Ansar Al Islam. The movement had a connection with the fundamentalist group Al Quaida. The women had no rights, and were for example forced to follow Ansar Al Islams ideology. They had to cover their hair, to stay at home from work and school and so on.<sup>120</sup>

Halabja is also a city where Islamic fundamentalists have ruled. The inhabitants in the city have also, like the inhabitants in Biara and Tawela, suffered many wars and so on. One example is when the Iraqi Baath regime in the 80's killed 5000 people at the same time, with poison gas.<sup>121</sup>

Those cities where the Islamist groups have ruled became better when the Kurdish area of Iraq become independent.<sup>122</sup>

### **4.3 STRUGGLING FOR WOMEN RIGHTS FROM A MUSLIM PERSPECTIVE**

To summarize all the women organizations and the departments aim, we can see that they are striving for women rights. They want the women in the society to become more independent. That is something that Muslim feminists also are striving for. To achieve that aim, it is therefore important to inform women about their rights. For informing, the organizations and the department visit people and talk with them. Not just with the women, but also with the men and the children. Most of the organizations think that it is important to talk with the young children, so they can teach how to become independent. The organizations also have lectures, newspapers and some shows at the television for informing people about their human rights.

The organizations, like Muslim feminists, want to abolish the patriarchal society and create a society where men and women are equal. Both are also striving against women oppression and believe in UN: s definition of women rights. They also believe in the Quran and say that according to Islam men and women are equal in front of God.

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<sup>120</sup> WADI. (31/3- 2004), *WADI. Brief Description of WADI's activities related to Women and Human Rights in Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan 1993- 2004*. Sulaymani: WADI. Sid. 11, 12.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid. Sid. 12- 13.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid. Sid. 13.



UN: s definition of women rights is the definition the organizations and the department believe in. But according to the organizations it is hard to implement all the points in a society like Kurdistan, which has been under oppression for a long time. Things like women rights are therefore hard to implement, it takes time. Especially when the employees at the organizations meet oppression from the people in the society, like for example Islamic fundamentalists. They think that the organizations struggle for women rights are contrary to Islam, because as we have seen fundamentalists are trying to refer to the Quran and mean that God has decided the differences between men and women. The women are created for being wives and mothers. Islamic fundamentalists therefore believe in the society's control of the women.

In this chapter I have discussed the Kurdish peoples struggle for women rights. I have also discussed what the women organizations and the department for human rights do to support the women and their rights in the Kurdish area of Iraq. Crimes in the name of honour are something that the organizations and the department are struggling against. I have mentioned the external and internal factors that have affected the organizations and the departments work of women rights. Muslim feminism and Islamic fundamentalism, and their view on women rights, is also something that I write about. I will now in the next chapter discuss the conclusions I have drawn during the work of this essay.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

Since the Kurdish area of Iraq became self-governed in the year of 1992, women's situation has become better. Kurdistan has for example found some women organizations and institutions for the implementation of human rights. The department for human rights in Erbil and the organizations for human rights in the cities of Erbil and Suleymaniya are trying to do their best for supporting the women and their rights in the society. The organizations and the departments aim, as the Muslim feminists aim, are to make the Kurdish women more independent.

Something to notice is that women oppression exists not only in the Muslim countries, but also in the rest of the world. Today it therefore exist several theories and movements in the international society that are against women oppression and that are struggling for the women right issues. Two of those theories and movements are Muslim feminists and Islamic fundamentalists. Something to notice is that the supporters of those two theories create those Muslim feminist and Islamic fundamentalist movements.

The aim of this essay was to assess if and how Muslim feminism and Islamic fundamentalism affects the struggle for women rights in the Kurdish area of Iraq. The conclusion I can draw is that both Muslim feminism and Islamic fundamentalism affects the struggle for the women in Kurdistan, but in different ways. Muslim feminists, as the women organizations and the department are trying to increase women rights through informing people about their rights. They also mean that the oppression of women will decrease if women get more educated. So they are trying to do their best to support the education of women, like for example visiting the women and teach them different things like for example human rights. Muslim feminists have also written poems, novels and essays about women issues. Islamic fundamentalists on the other hand struggle against the Muslim feminists, the department and the organizations thoughts about women rights. They mean that they are striving against Islam. Islamic fundamentalists are therefore trying to affect the struggle for women rights through contact people in the society and talk with them about the feminists work, and tell them that the work is against Islam and the Quran. They are also trying to prevent some law changes that favour UN: s definition of women rights, like fore example the abolishment of polygamy.

Another question that I also have mentioned in the beginning of this essay is what is the Muslim Feminism view on women and women rights and what is the Islamic fundamentalism view on women, in comparison with United Nations and the Quran? The answer is that according to Muslim feminism men and women are equal. The society should therefore follow UN: s definition of women rights. But Muslim feminism also think that some of those rights are hard to implement in a society like Kurdistan there the people have lived under the oppression of Saddam Hussein and his Baath regime for a long time. According to Islamic fundamentalism men and women are equal but have different responsibilities in the society. The fundamentalists discuss women, men and their connection to the nature and say that women are not born to be in the public sphere, they are only born to take care of the family. A man on the other hand should support his own family, and should therefore also be in the public. That is according to Islamic fundamentalism something that God has decided. Islamic fundamentalism believes in a patriarchal society system and its control of the women and their behaviour. The supporters of the movement don't believe in UN: s definition of women rights and mean that those rights are against the Quran. The international organization, UN, is one of the organizations in the international society that today are struggling for equality between men and women. All human beings should according to UN be treated by respect. Nobody should be punished because of his or her gender. That is something that UN has struggled for in many years.

Islamic fundamentalism, Muslim feminism, the women organizations and the department for women rights believe in the Quran and its meaning. That is the reason to why they are today trying to justify their own actions in women rights questions, by referring to the Quran. They all agree that according to the Quran there aren't any differences between the two sexes. The Quran discuss the sexes equality but even that they have different kinds of responsibilities in the society.

Women oppression is therefore, according to the department for women rights, the women organizations and Muslim feminism, something that the Quran doesn't always support. The oppression that today exists sometimes depends on people's incorrect interpretation of the Quran. The Muslim feminists, the department and the organizations aim are therefore to modernize Kurdistan and create a society where men and women have the same possibilities, not only in the private sphere, but also in the public sphere. Women rights are

therefore an important question for the Muslim feminists, the department and the organizations, which all believe in UN: s definition of women rights.

According to the Muslim feminists, the department and the women organizations, it is important that every woman in the society is aware about her own rights. Womens knowledge about their rights will decrease womens oppression in the society. Muslim feminists, the department and the women organizations also believe that the oppression has its origin in the laws that the men in the Muslim countries have created. Muslim feminists have trying to abolish some of those laws, like the law that accept polygamy, but it has been hard. Muslim feminists also believe that there are some internal factors that today affect the work of women rights in Kurdistan, like for example the cultures, traditions and religion. Many people think that the culture and the traditions are important to protect. It is hard to change people's thoughts, and therefore even the laws in the society. The women organizations, the department and Muslim feminists also believe in the external factors that today affect the Kurdish society and its modernization. The international NGO: s has tried to help Kurdistan with its struggle for a better society for the people. They have for example started human rights projects, like for example the project of WADI. Another factor, UN, has also an important role in Kurdistan. UN has helped the Kurdish society to adapt new laws that favour human rights. Many people in Kurdistan today believe in UN: s definition of human rights. I think that all of those external and internal factors have both negative and positive affects on the Kurdish society. Something positive about UN and the international NGO: s is that they help the Kurdish society to see things from other perspectives, not only from a Muslim perspective. A negative aspect on the other hand can be that many people get worried about the Western thoughts in the society, and therefore tries even harder to do their best to protect some of the traditions that the Kurdish regime are trying to abolish. Like for example circumcision. The internal factors are positive in the way that it is important to protect a society's cultures and traditions. But only as long as they don't oppress someone, like the women. The negative aspect is that many of the cultures and traditions that today exist in Kurdistan oppress the women. Those traditions should therefore not exist.

If the struggle for women rights can affect the Islamic fundamentalists view on women is another interesting question that I have discussed during my essay. The answer is yes. To struggle for women right issues is to struggle against fundamentalist thoughts. With

education and information about human rights it is possible to change people's fundamentalist thoughts about women and their rights. For affecting the Islamic fundamentalists view on women it is therefore also important to contact the people in the society and talk with them about human rights, to have lectures, newspapers and so on. It is also important to inform people about the Quran and its meaning and to teach the people to separate between the cultures, traditions and the religion of Islam. In that way the fundamentalist thoughts will decrease in Kurdistan. One example is female circumcision. Many people in Kurdistan still believe that it has to do with Islam. But it is wrong. Islam is against female circumcision. It is only about the culture and the tradition that the people have created. So informing people about that will decrease the circumcision of women.

The people in Kurdistan are starting to become more aware about their own rights. Today it exist many projects that are struggling for women- and children rights. Islamic fundamentalism is therefore something that has decreased in the last few years. It depends among other things on the government's implementation of the new laws that favour women rights. Like for example the forbidden of honour related killing. The societies struggle for women issues is therefore something that can decrease the fundamentalist thoughts in the society.

The conclusion I can draw from the work of this essay is therefore that although crimes against women rights are common in Kurdistan, they don't have any support in neither the Quran, nor UN. I have also realized that the Kurdish society is affected by different internal and external factors and that some of those factors affect the people in the society more than other factors. Some of the traditions affect for example the people in the society more than the religion of Islam. The honour of the family is very important in the Kurdish society. Muslim feminists, the organizations and the department all agree about the importance of women rights. They all believe in UN: s definition of women rights and they all use the Quran to justify women rights issue. Islamic fundamentalists on the other hand also use the Quran to justify their actions, but they don't believe in UN: s definition of women rights. So Muslim feminists, the organizations the department and Islamic funfamentalists use the Quran but interpret it in different ways, in the way they want. I can also draw the conclusion that both Muslim feminists and Islamic fundamentalists are something that exists in Kurdistan, and their engagement in women rights issues therefore affects the work of the organizations and the department. The Muslim feminists are

struggling with the organizations and the department, but the Islamic fundamentalists are striving against them. But by educating the people in the country, the Islamic fundamentalism thoughts will decrease. It is especially important to inform the people in the villages, because many of them are illiterate and the oppression of women is more usual in the villages.

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26/6- 2004

Amnesty Sweden:

<http://www2.amnesty.se/krq.nsf>

26/6- 2004

Human Rights Watch:

<http://www.hrw.org/women/>

26/6- 2004

### **Interviews**

Date: 28/3- 2004

Women organization: Khatuzeen Center, in Erbil.

The interviewee: Mahabad Amin Mansour, social worker.

Date: 28/3- 2004

Women organization: Khanzad, in Erbil.

The interviewee: Susan Khanlil Jabar, social worker.

Date: 28/3- 2004

Women organization: Women Union of Kurdistan, in Erbil.

The interviewee: Zakia Saydsaleh, chief of the media department.

Shirin Amedi, chief of the organization, a member of the KDP committee  
and member in the parliament.

Date: 29/3- 2004

Department: Human rights, in Erbil.

The interviewee: Ronak, jurist.

Parwin Ahmed, jurist.

Vian Ibrahim, social worker.

Date: 31/3- 2004

Women organization: NAWA, in Suleymaniya.

The interviewee: Suad Abdalrachman, coordinator for the German project, named WADI.

Date: 3/4- 2004

Women organization: Women Information Culture Center, in Suleymaniya.

The interviewee: Runak Faraj Rahim, chief editor for a newspaper.

Date: 3/4- 2004

Women organization: Saya, in Suleymaniya.

The interviewee: Saywan Rostam, chief of the organization.

Date: 3/4- 2004

Women organization: Women Union of Kurdistan, in Suleymaniya.

The interviewee: Kafeyah Salim Abdallah, chief of the organization.

## 7. APPENDIX 1- IRAQI LAWS

According to the new Kurdish law that was founded in 14 of August in 2002:

**Article 1:** It is no longer possible to refer to articles 128, 130 and 131 of Penal Code No. 111 och 1969 as a pretext for the clearance of one's family honour through act of murder.

**Article 2:** Any provisions contradictory to this law are invalid.

**Article 3:** The Council of Ministers shall responsible for the execution of the new law.

**Article 4:** The new law will be in effect as from the date of its publication in the Kurdistan Gazette.

The Iraqi Penal code from 1969, no. 111, says on the other hand:

### **Article 128**

In accordance to the law, an appeal may be either commutative or exceptive in terms of punishment. An appeal for murder is considered commutative if it is cited as a pretext for clearing the family name or as a response to serious and unjustifiable provocation by the victim.

### **Article 130**

If the appeal is commutative and the crime punishable by death, it shall be altered to life imprisonment. Provisional or minimum one- year sentences shall be altered to six months.

### **Article 131**

If there is a commutative appeal in an offence, commutative is applied as follows:

If there is a minimum period for the penalty, the court is not bound by this limit in deciding the punishment.

If the offence is punishable by both imprisonment and a fine, the court shall impose one of the two penalties.

If the offence is punishable by imprisonment of a minimum period, the court shall impose a fine instead.

Kurdistan Regional Government. (14/8- 2002), *New law voted by the National Assembly of Iraqi Kurdistan*. No. 14. Kurdistan Regional Governments representation in Sweden.

## 8. APPENDIX 2- HONOUR KILLING FROM 2001- 2002 TO 2003

Below here are statistics showing the murder of women in the name of honour, from the years of 2001-2002 to Mars 2003:

<u>Name of the city</u>	<u>Numbers of killed women</u>
Erbil	150
Towns and villages around Erbil	170
Kharanda	54
Suleymaniya	135
Duhok	80
Towns and villages around Duhok	310

Faraj Rahim, Runak. & Shwan, Hana. (2003), *Statistics on Violence Used against Women with an Article*. Suleimaniyah: Women Information and Culture Center. Sid. 11.

### 9. APPENDIX 3- FEMALE CIRCUMCISION, 1985- 2001

The statistics shows the percent of the women in Kurdistan who have been circumcised, between the years 1985 to 2001: in Erbil and its surrounding areas, the villages, camps and districts with both high- and low educational levels:

The year:	<u>1985</u>	<u>1995</u>	<u>2001</u>
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In the villages:	100	93	89
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In the camps for refugees:	lack of information	93	85
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Districts in the area there peoples education level is high:	75	61	25
--	----	----	----

Districts in the area there peoples education level is low:	95	85	51
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The statistics shows the percent of the women in Kurdistan who have been circumcised, between the years 1985 to 2001: in Suleymaniya and its surrounding areas, the villages, camps and districts with both high- and low educational levels:

The year:	<u>1985</u>	<u>1995</u>	<u>2001</u>
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In the villages:	100	91	79
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In the camps for refugees:	lack of information	89	75
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Districts in the area

there peoples

education level is high: 70 35 10

Districts in the area

there peoples

education level is low: 73 65 40

Faraj, Ronak. (vinter 2002- vår 2003), "Omskärelse av kurdiska flickor", *Kvinnor mot fundamentalism*. Nr 24. Stockholm: Stödskommittén för kvinnor i Iran. Sid. 19.



## 10. APPENDIX 4- COMMITTING SUICIDE IN 2001, 2002

Below are statistics showing the number of women, in Suleymaniya and the towns and villages around Suleymaniya, who committed suicide through burning themselves at the year of 2001:

<u>The month</u>	<u>The number</u>	<u>Number of women in each area</u>
January	8	4 Suleymaniya, 1 Kalar, 2 Ranya, 1 Chamchamal
February	11	8 Suleymaniya, 1 Takiya, 1 Kalar, 1 Said Sadiq
March	5	2 Halabja, 1 Ranya, 2 Suleymaniya
April	11	1 Salam camp, 5 Suleymaniya quarters, 1 Barzan, 3 Ranya, 1 Darbandikhan
May	16	1 Salam camp, 3 Ranya, 1 Darbandikhan, 1 new Halabja, 1 Takya, 9 Suleymaniya quarters
June	7	1 new Halabja, 1 Ranya, 5 Suleymaniya
July	8	2 Ranya, 1 Penjwen, 1 Qaladizah, 2 Kalar, 2 Suleymaniya quarters
August	11	1 Chamchamal, 3 Ranya, 1 Koya, 1 Taweela, 3 Qaladizah, 2 Suleymaniya
September	7	1 Haji awa, 1 Ranja, 1 Kalar, 4 Suleymaniya quarters
October	9	1 Kfry, 1 Ranya, 1 Kalar, 1 Qaldiza, 5 Suleymaniya

November 7 4 Suleymaniya, 2 Ranya, 1 Qaldiza

December 9 2 Kalar, 2 new Halabja, 1 Chamchamal,  
4 Suleymaniya quarters

According to the statistics, 119 women burned themselves in 2002. That only in Suleymaniya and the towns and villages around Suleymaniya:

<u>The month</u>	<u>The number</u>	<u>Number of women in each area</u>
January	10	1 Halabja, 2 Ranya, 1 Chamchamal, 1 Darbandikhan, 4 Suleymaniya, 1 Kfry
February	5	1 Halabja, 1 Chamchamal, 3 Suleymaniya
March	14	1 Halabja, 2 Chamchamal, 3 Ranya, 1 Said sadiq, 7 Suleymaniya
April	8	2 Kalar, 2 Ranya, 4 Suleymaniya
May	12	1 Ranya, 1 Halabja, 1 Khormal, 1 Darbandikhan, 1 Kalar, 7 Suleymaniya
June	14	1 Chamchamal, 1 Kaar, 1 Qaladiza, 11 Suleymaniya
July	10	1 Shabazeer, 1 Arbat, 1 Bazyan, 1 Sangaw, 1 Halabja, 5 Suleymaniya
August	10	1 Halabja, 2 Darbandikhan, 3 Kalar, 4 Suleymaniya
September	12	1 Kfry, 1 Chwar qurna, 1 Ranya, 9 Suleymaniya

October	12	1 Halabja, 1 Taweela, 1 Kfry, 9 Suleymaniya
November	7	1 Chamchamal, 1 Ranya, 1 Halabja, 1 Darbandikhan, 3 Suleymaniya
December	5	1 Ranya, 1 Kalar, 1 Balisan, 2 Suleymaniya

Faraj Rahim, Runak. & Shwan, Hana. (2003), *Statistics on Violence Used against Women with an Article*. Suleimaniyah: Women Information and Culture Center. Sid. 32, 33.

## **11. APPENDIX 5- INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

Date for the interview:

Name of the organization/ department:

Name:

Job position:

- How does the organization/ department define the concept of women rights?
- What does the organization/ department do to support women rights?
- Has the organization/ department met any kinds of obstacles in the work with the implementation of women rights?
- Has the organization/ department done any progress with the implementation of women rights?