ADAB

Journal of Faculty of Arts, University of Khartoum

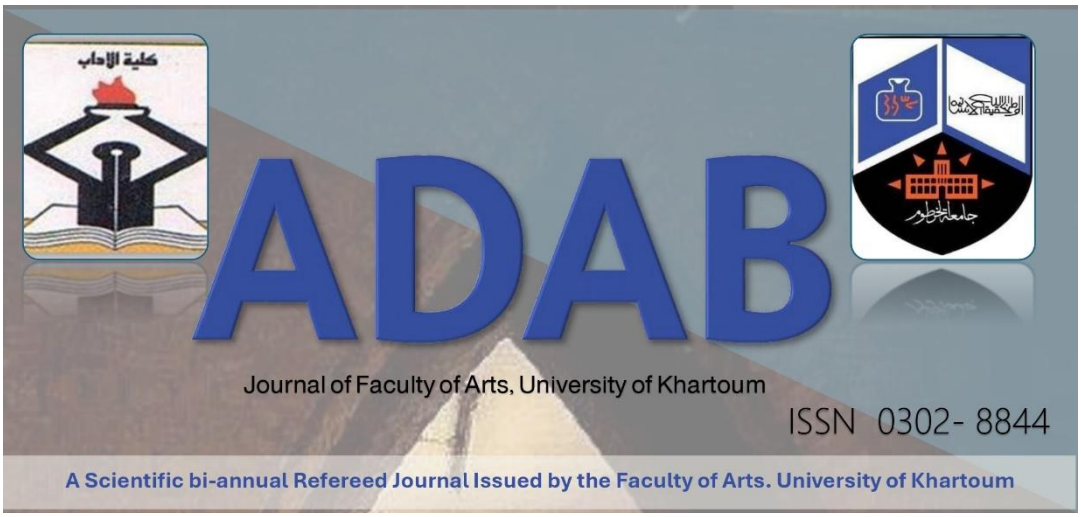
ISSN 0302- 8844

A Scientific bi-annual Refereed Journal Issued by the Faculty of Arts. University of Khartoum

Issue 54

Vol 1

January 2026



Issue No. 54. Vol. 1. Jan. 2026

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Islam and Feminism: Negotiating Identity Between Conflict and Reconciliation

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Abstract

This paper explores the intellectual and activist currents of Islamic feminism as a transformative force challenging patriarchal interpretations of sacred Islamic texts. Focusing on feminist hermeneutics of the Qur'an and Hadith, it examines how Muslim women across the Middle East and North Africa—particularly within Third-Wave feminist contexts—reclaim religious authority to advocate gender justice from within an Islamic framework. The study outlines the historical, socio-political, and theological conditions that have shaped Islamic feminist discourse, distinguishing it from secular and Western feminist paradigms. Through an analysis of key issues such as modest dress, marriage, legal rights, and religious authority, the paper argues that women's subjugation in Muslim-majority societies stems not from Islam itself, but from patriarchal exegesis and jurisprudence (fiqh). Highlighting the contributions of scholars like Amina Wadud, Ziba Mir-Hosseini, and Fatima Mernissi, the paper underscores the diversity and global reach of Islamic feminism while addressing its internal tensions and ongoing negotiations with secularism and tradition. Ultimately, it presents Islamic feminism as a dynamic and pluralistic movement that centers sacred texts in its pursuit of gender equality without abandoning religious belief.

Keywords: Feminism, Third-Wave feminist, Theory, Islamic feminism, Tafsir, feminist discourse

المستخلص

تتناول هذه الورقة موضوع النسوية الإسلامية بوصفها قوةً تحوّلية في مواجهة التفسيرات الأبوية للنصوص الإسلامية المقدسة. حيث تركز الورقة على دراسة التأويل النسوي للقرآن والحديث، وكيف يمكن من خلال ذلك أن تستعيد بها النساء المسلمات في الشرق الأوسط وشمال إفريقيا — وخاصة ضمن سياقات النسوية الموجة الثالثة — السلطة الدينية للدفاع عن العدالة الجندرية من داخل الإطار الإسلامي نفسه. كما تستعرض هذه الورقة الظروف التاريخية والاجتماعية والسياسية واللاهوتية التي أسهمت في تشكيل الخطاب النسوي الإسلامي، وكيف أمكن لهذا التيار أن يشق طريقا مختلفة عن النماذج النسوية العلمانية والغربية عبر تسلطيه الضوء وتحليل قضايا محورية مثل الحجاب، والزواج، والحقوق القانونية، والسلطة الدينية. تجادل الدراسة بأن تهميش النساء في المجتمعات ذات الأغلبية المسلمة لا ينبع من جوهر الإسلام ذاته، بل من التفسيرات الفقهية والتأويلات الأبوية للنصوص الدينية. بالإضافة إلى ذلك تسلّط الورقة الضوء على إسهامات عدد من المفكرات البارزات مثل أمينة ودود، وزيبة مير حسيني، وفاطمة المرنيسي، مبرزةً تنوع النسوية الإسلامية وانتشارها العالمي، مع تناول التوترات الداخلية والمفاوضات المستمرة التي تخوضها مع العلمانية والتقليد. وفي الختام، تقدّم الورقة النسوية الإسلامية بوصفها حركة ديناميكية وتعددية تتمحور حول النصوص المقدسة في سعيها إلى تحقيق المساواة الجندرية دون التخلي عن الإيمان الديني

الكلمات المفتاحية: النسوية، الموجة النسوية الثالثة، النسوية الإسلامية، التفسير، الخطاب النسوي

Introduction:

The emergence of the Third-Wave feminist movement has amplified new voices across the Middle East, advocating for a reimagined framework of feminism grounded in Islamic principles. A significant number of Islamic feminists from the Middle East and North Africa—regions where this movement has gained considerable traction—emphatically maintain that their critique is not directed against Islam itself. Rather, they challenge the patriarchal interpretations of Islamic doctrine, particularly those rooted in traditional readings of the Qur'an. These activists seek to demonstrate that Islam and feminism are not inherently incompatible. On the contrary, they argue that the pursuit of gender equality can coexist harmoniously with Islamic teachings, including those found in Sharia law.

Islamic feminists frequently utilize religious texts to support their claims, aiming to reconcile their commitment to gender justice with their spiritual identity. Their approach is largely inductive, drawing from the principles of Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) and its interpretive traditions. They contend that the rights of women are enshrined in the Qur'an, but that these rights have historically been overshadowed or distorted by patriarchal readings of scripture and subsequent exegetical works. In response, Islamic feminists advocate for the rejection of androcentric interpretations of the Qur'an. They promote the adoption of a hermeneutic framework centered on women's lived experiences and perspectives. Through this lens, the Qur'an can serve as a tool for advocating gender equity rather than reinforcing gender hierarchies.

This paper seeks to offer a preliminary analysis of both patriarchal and feminist hermeneutics of the Qur'an, focusing specifically on key issues such as women's dress codes, marriage, and gender equality. The central question guiding this exploration is whether the patriarchal interpretation of Islamic texts constitutes the primary source of women's oppression in the Islamic world. Prior to this analysis, however, it is essential to clearly define the term *Islamic feminism* and examine the socio-political and historical contexts that gave rise to feminist discourse in Muslim-majority societies.

Discussion:

In her seminal article *Feminism in Islam*, Margot Badran (2009) defines Islamic feminism as "a feminist discourse and practice articulated within an Islamic paradigm. Islamic feminism, which derives its understanding and mandate from the Qur'an, seeks rights and justice for women, and for men, in the totality of their existence" (Badran, 2009). This definition underscores a foundational characteristic of Islamic feminism: it is not positioned outside of religious life but operates firmly

within a spiritual and Islamic framework. As Mir-Hosseini (2006) states, one of the central tenets of Islamic feminism is that it is "a gender discourse that argues for equality within an Islamic framework" (Mir-Hosseini, 2006).

Despite its theological grounding, Islamic feminism has not always been universally recognized as feminist in nature. In *Opening the Gates*, Badran and Cooke introduce the concept of "invisible feminism" to describe early feminist consciousness among Arab women. According to Darraj (1999), "early feminist consciousness and voices were for the most part hidden from the 'larger world' or confined to the world of women while female seclusion and the segregation of the sexes prevailed. Much of the Arab women's feminist expression has eluded people because of its invisibility" (Darraj, 1999). This observation reveals the complexities of feminist articulation in patriarchal and segregated societies.

There is no singular or monolithic definition of Islamic feminism, just as there is no uniform model of the Islamic feminist. Anna Vanzan (2010) emphasizes that the term represents a multifaceted reality: "Rather, the locution implies a diversified reality of women who fight for their rights in an Islamic frame, either in the country of origin or in a migratory context. The phenomenon popularly called 'Islamic feminism' embraces a variety of Muslim women who fight for their rights while simultaneously affirming a strong religious identity" (Vanzan, 2010). While some of these women engage in gender-conscious reinterpretations of the Qur'an and other sacred texts, others work through social activism—yet all seek justice and gender equality rooted in Islamic teachings.

The Islamic feminist movement, as it is more formally recognized today, began with the contributions of Iranian women scholars such as Afsaneh Najmabadi and Ziba Mir-Hosseini. From Iran, the movement quickly spread to other Muslim-majority societies, including Egypt and Turkey, and to diasporic communities across Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Maghreb (Badran, 2009). These feminist scholars and activists aimed to defend the rights of Muslim women globally, while differentiating themselves from Western feminist paradigms. Their vision of gender equality was one that sought harmony with Islamic principles rather than opposition to them.

Najmabadi and Mir-Hosseini helped to popularize the term *Islamic feminism* through contributions to *Zanan*, a Tehran-based women's journal founded by Shahla Sherkat in 1992 (Badran, 2009). The term resonated across the Islamic world and gained increasing traction in academic and activist circles. Saudi scholar Mai Yamani used it in her 1996 book *Feminism and Islam*, while Turkish scholars Yeşim Arat, Feride Acar, and Nilufer Göle (whose book *The Forbidden Modern* was published in Turkish in 1991 and translated into English in 1996) also employed the term to describe a new feminist current emerging in Turkey. Similarly, South African

activist Shamima Shaikh and her colleagues, both women and men, embraced the term in their activism during the 1990s. By the mid-1990s, *Islamic feminism* had become a widely recognized term, created and disseminated by Muslims throughout the global *umma* (Badran, 2009).

Some women explicitly identified as Islamic feminists from the outset. These included contributors to *Zanan*, South African religious scholars and activists, and members of Malaysia's Sisters in Islam organization. In Europe, Patrizia Khadija, the current vice president of Italy's largest Muslim association, publicly endorsed the goals of Islamic feminism. She noted, "I am very close to the Islamic feminism's discourse, because it works on the interpretation of the holy texts and therefore it goes to the very heart of the matter. In fact, the arbitrary exercise of power against women...is due to the misinterpretation of some Qur'anic verses inside certain Muslim communities" (Vanzan, 2010).

Nevertheless, not all female Muslim thinkers and writers who contributed to the movement identify with the label. For instance, Moroccan sociologist Fatima Mernissi—author of *Women and Islam: An Historical and Theological Enquiry*(originally published in French in 1978 as *Le harem politique* and translated into English in 1991)—is widely regarded as one of the intellectual foremothers of Islamic feminism. Yet, she considered herself a secular feminist, rather than an Islamic one (Badran, 2009).

Islamic feminism primarily employs Islamic discourse—though not exclusively—as the foundation for advocating women's rights, gender equality, and social justice. While different Islamic feminist movements and figures have pursued various goals, one overarching objective remains consistent: to demonstrate that the Qur'anic text itself is not inherently misogynistic, and in fact promotes respect for women and acknowledges their equality. The movement challenges the notion that male authority over women is divinely ordained, instead attributing this imbalance to patriarchal societies and cultural conservatism rather than to the religion itself.

To this end, Islamic feminists engage deeply with religious scholarship, undertaking rigorous study and reinterpretation of sacred texts. Their efforts include revisiting the Qur'an, the Hadith, and legal traditions. For example, scholars such as Amina Wadud, Riffat Hassan, and Fatima Naseef focus primarily on Qur'anic exegesis. Others, including Aziza al-Hibri and Shaheen Sardar Ali, critically examine legal interpretations and Sharia-backed statutes. Meanwhile, figures like Fatima Mernissi and Hidayet Tuksal have reanalyzed the Hadith with a feminist lens (Badran, 2009).

A distinctive feature of Islamic feminism is its transnational nature. It is both global and decentralized, not confined to specific geographic or linguistic contexts. This widespread presence refutes claims by religious conservatives that only native Arabic speakers possess the authority to interpret the Qur'an. Scholars like Amina Wadud in the United States and Iranian theologians such as Azam Taleghani challenge such assertions. Pakistani scholar Asma Barlas (Vanzan, 2010) contends that "interpreting does not necessarily require a mastery of Arabic since interpretation is not an exercise in philology."

The reinterpretation of sacred texts by Islamic feminists has resulted in tangible shifts in legal discourse and the social positioning of Muslim women. According to Vanzan (2010), these efforts "reinforce the idea that women, be they secular or religious, are struggling for the same common goal, i.e., to improve their conditions of life" (Vanzan, 2010). The reinterpretive project has allowed women to challenge the authority of the *ulama* (religious scholars) and bring gender equity to the forefront of both religious and political discussions.

Despite shared goals, tensions often arise between secular and Islamic feminist factions, especially when navigating political landscapes. This division was apparent in Yemen in 1997 when a broad coalition of women succeeded in blocking a regressive personal status law, only to later splinter under political pressures (Badran, 2009). Nowhere are these divisions more visible than in Turkey.

In Turkey, feminist activism began in earnest in the 1980s, driven by women from diverse ideological backgrounds. Initially led by former leftist activists, feminist groups launched public awareness campaigns and feminist publications such as *Kaktüs* and *Feminist* (Sakaranaho, 2008). However, by the mid-1980s, a new wave of university students and academics began publicly embracing Islamic identity by adopting modest dress, including headscarves and long coats. The state responded with a ban on veiling in universities, prompting widespread protests known as the *türban*(headscarf) movement. Eventually, Islamic dress (*tesettür*) became normalized across Turkish cities, including Istanbul (Sakaranaho, 2008). This shift alarmed secular feminists, particularly within Kemalist circles, leading to a renewed defense of Turkish secularism. By the late 1980s, the Turkish women's movement had effectively fractured into two competing camps: one secular-liberal and the other Islamic in orientation (Sakaranaho, 2008). These internal divisions underscore the complexities of the Islamic feminist movement and the importance of distinguishing it from Western feminism.

Unlike its Western counterpart, Islamic feminism emerged in a context where religion remains a central pillar of identity. From its inception in the latter half of the twentieth century, Western feminism has frequently been in tension with religious

institutions. Many Western feminist theorists regard religion as a primary institution perpetuating women's subordination. As Simone de Beauvoir famously wrote in *The Second Sex*, "Man enjoys the great advantage of having a God endorse the codes he writes; and since man exercises a sovereign authority over woman, it is especially fortunate that this authority has been vested in him by the Supreme Being" (de Beauvoir, 2011). This view starkly contrasts with Islamic feminists, who argue that gender inequality stems not from the sacred texts themselves, but from their patriarchal interpretations.

Nevertheless, early Islamic feminists found resonance with certain nineteenth-century Western feminists, especially in their shared critique of religious texts. While many contemporary Western feminists have distanced themselves from religion, early figures like Mary Wollstonecraft and Elizabeth Cady Stanton did not reject sacred texts outright. Instead, they appealed to the higher moral principles of religion to advocate for gender equality. Wollstonecraft, in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), invoked biblical references to defend women's equal moral status. Stanton, writing in the late nineteenth century, compiled *The Woman's Bible*, placing feminist demands within a religious framework (Mir-Hosseini, 2006).

The divergent trajectories of Western and Islamic feminism can largely be explained by their geopolitical contexts. As Susan Muaddi Darraj (1999) notes, while Western feminism was shaped by Enlightenment rationalism and Cartesian dualism, Islamic feminism emerged in postcolonial, war-torn societies shaped by nationalism and economic disparity (Darraj, 1999). As Badran and Cooke (1990) argue, Arab feminism developed under Western colonial rule and has often been dismissed as either anti-religious or a tool of Western imperialism. Consequently, Arab feminists face a triple struggle: against patriarchy within their own societies, against colonial domination, and against nationalist forces that portray feminism as unpatriotic (Darraj, 1999).

Another key distinction lies in Islamic feminism's stance toward male authority. Unlike traditional Western feminism, which often positions itself in opposition to male dominance, many Islamic feminists do not identify men as adversaries. In Turkey, so-called *türbanlı* (veiled) feminists have insisted that men are not their oppressors but their "friends and helpmates" (Sakaranaho, 2008). They emphasize that their goal is not to overturn traditional gender roles entirely, but to achieve freedom and equity within them. Islamic feminism promotes gender justice while acknowledging inherent differences between the sexes, often encapsulated in the principle of being "equal but different" (Sakaranaho, 2008).

Islamic feminism also tends to prioritize communal and familial roles, whereas Western feminism is often more individualistic in its orientation. In many

Eastern societies, including those influenced by Islam, family constitutes a significant source of social capital and identity. As Darraj (1999) points out, Arab feminists are less inclined to prioritize individual autonomy over collective well-being (Darraj, 1999). In these contexts, a woman's faith and family serve as assets rather than constraints.

Ultimately, Islamic feminism maintains that the Qur'an affirms the essential equality of all human beings. However, this ideal has been undermined by patriarchal ideologies embedded in historical jurisprudence. Islamic legal theory (*fiqh*), which took shape in the ninth century, reflects the cultural and gender norms of its time. It is this patriarchal interpretation of religious law—rather than the foundational texts themselves—that continues to shape contemporary expressions of Sharia.

A central concern for Islamic feminists lies in the interpretation of the *Hadith*—the reported sayings and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad. While some *hadiths* are authentic, others have questionable provenance, and many have been employed selectively or out of context to reinforce patriarchal practices. For this reason, Islamic feminists prioritize direct engagement with the Qur'an, Islam's foundational text, using traditional methods of *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) and *tafsir* (Qur'anic interpretation) to reframe Islamic doctrine in ways that uphold gender justice (Badran, 2009).

The issue of *hadith* authenticity has long been a matter of concern within Islamic scholarship itself. Abdul Hamid Mutawalli asserts that any *hadith* contradicting the Qur'an, conflicting with established historical facts, or describing implausible scenarios should not be considered reliable. This view underscores the need for critical engagement with Islamic traditions—particularly those that have been historically interpreted and transmitted by male scholars. Indeed, the entire edifice of classical Islamic jurisprudence rests on interpretations made exclusively by men. As Hassan (1999) notes, male scholars have shaped the ontological, theological, sociological, and eschatological understandings of Muslim women by interpreting foundational sources such as the Qur'an, *Sunnah*, *Hadith*, and *fiqh* (Hassan, 1999). Within Islamic theology, Sharia (literally "the way") is understood as the totality of God's will as revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. In contrast, fiqh—literally "understanding"—is the human effort to derive legal rules from these sacred sources. Unlike Sharia, which is sacred and immutable, fiqh is human, temporal, and thus subject to change (Mir-Hosseini, 2006). However, patriarchal figh interpretations have often been mistaken for divine law, effectively curtailing Muslim women's legal and social rights.

This discrepancy between original Islamic teachings and their patriarchal reinterpretations is a key motivation behind the Islamic feminist movement. Dzevada

Susko, a professor of International Relations at Sarajevo University and activist with the NGO Nahla, encapsulates this view. She contends that feminism is unnecessary if Islam is correctly understood because the religion does not regard women as inferior. However, she attributes women's subordinate status in many Muslim societies to widespread misinterpretations of the Qur'an and *Sunnah*, as well as the lack of access to original sources and proper education (Vanzan, 2010). For Susko, feminism in Islam is less about altering religion and more about restoring its authentic, egalitarian message within contemporary contexts.

This feminist re-reading of Islamic texts gained momentum in the early 1990s, with scholars like Farid Esack offering transformative interpretations grounded in *ijtihad*. His work, along with others, reflects an intent not to apologize for Islam, but to reshape how its doctrines are applied in social and legal settings (Badran, 2009).

Among the most contested areas of Islamic jurisprudence is the question of women's clothing. Traditional interpretations of *hadith* and Qur'anic verses have often emphasized modesty and gender differentiation in dress. One oft-cited *hadith*from Abu Hurairah reports that the Prophet said: "I will not be a witness for two types of people who are destined for the Fire... women who, although clothed, are yet naked, seducing and being seduced" (Al-Qaradawi, 1995). This *hadith* associates moral decay with immodesty, illustrating how interpretations of women's dress codes are often linked to broader discourses on social and political control.

The Qur'an also encourages men and women to dress in ways that reflect their gender and comportment. Violating these expectations is considered a deviation from the natural social order (Al-Qaradawi, 1995, p. 43). Islamic feminists have pushed back against this gender essentialism, aiming to deconstruct the moral burden disproportionately placed on women. They argue that Islamic ethics—compassion, generosity, and devotion to God—apply equally to men and women (Sakaranaho, 2008). In this framework, morality is emphasized over rigid notions of equality, with the Turkish adage *Esitlik haksızlıktır* ("equality is injustice") encapsulating the view that goodness transcends gender (Sakaranaho, 2008).

The concept of *tesettür* (modest dress) is thus viewed not as a burden exclusive to women, but as a shared moral obligation. Within marital relationships, Islamic law recognizes reciprocal rights and responsibilities between spouses. The Qur'an affirms this mutual respect, though it also grants men a degree of authority, especially as providers (Al-Qaradawi, 1995). A *hadith* recorded by Abu Dawud and Ibn Hibban, for instance, states that a husband must clothe and feed his wife as he does himself and may not strike her face or demean her (Al-Qaradawi, 1995). While

discipline is permitted under certain conditions, it must be measured and respectful (Al-Qaradawi, 1995).

Polygamy is another contentious issue within Islamic feminism. Though the Qur'an permits men to marry up to four wives, this allowance is framed within specific social contexts—such as war, infertility, or illness. Al-Qaradawi (1995) defends this practice as a compassionate response to demographic imbalances and societal needs (Al-Qaradawi,1995). Nonetheless, modern legal reforms have challenged polygamy. In Bosnia, for instance, family law prohibits polygamy, ensures equal inheritance rights, and grants joint custody of children post-divorce. Yet, informal "secret" marriages still occur, prompting Islamic feminists to advocate both reinterpretation of sacred texts and adherence to progressive legal frameworks (Vanzan, 2010).

One of the most notable legislative achievements influenced by Islamic feminism occurred in Morocco in 2004. A landmark bill redefined marriage as an equal partnership, granting women the right to divorce, protecting them from unilateral repudiation (*talaq*), and securing equal rights in matters of child custody and inheritance—all within a Sharia-based framework. This legal reform is widely seen as a triumph of Islamic feminist advocacy, demonstrating the potential for religious interpretation to coexist with gender justice.

Islamic feminists have found it essential to recover a suppressed historical narrative and critically reread textual sources in order to demonstrate that the inequalities enshrined in *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) are neither divinely ordained nor intrinsic to Islam. Rather, they are human constructs—products of patriarchal interpretation. By exposing this constructed nature, Islamic feminists argue that such inequalities contradict the Qur'an's core message of divine justice and equality. As Muhammad Syed (1938) observes, numerous Qur'anic verses affirm absolute equality between men and women in terms of divine reward and punishment (e.g., 5:10–11, 4:124, 33:35, 40:40, 49:13). Commentators such as Abdullah Yusuf Ali and Muhammad Ali support this egalitarian reading. Yusuf Ali asserts that the Qur'an "not only recognizes the equal status of the sexes but insists on it," while Muhammad Ali emphasizes that Qur'anic verse 33:35 affirms women's equal spiritual potential (Syed, 1938).

The majority of Islamic feminist scholars focus on *tafsir* (Qur'anic exegesis) to uncover this inherent egalitarianism. They locate the roots of gender inequality not in the Qur'an, but in the legal traditions and cultural practices of early Muslim societies. According to Mir-Hosseini (2006), gender-biased assumptions were assimilated into Islamic jurisprudence through a set of socio-theological premises: women were seen as created for men, inferior, in need of protection, sexually

dangerous, and naturally subordinate. These ideas—particularly evident in the laws governing marriage and divorce—have shaped Muslim societies and justified systemic inequality. Thus, key elements such as unilateral divorce (*talaq*) and polygyny are not divinely mandated, but juristic constructs born of patriarchal legal reasoning (Mir-Hosseini, 2006).

One area where Islamic feminists unite in activism is the campaign against so-called "honor killings," which disproportionately affect Turkish women, including those in diaspora communities. Organizations such as AKDER (Organization for Women's Rights Against Discrimination) are actively working to combat these crimes. Comprising mostly lawyers and judges, AKDER lobbies for protective legislation, campaigns for women's shelters, and counters religious justifications of such violence by asserting that Islam does not permit mistreatment of women (Vanzan, 2010).

As Mir-Hosseini (2006) points out, popular statements such as "Islam says," "the Qur'an states," or "according to Sharia" often obscure the fact that these are interpretive claims, not absolute truths. Rarely do such assertions acknowledge that interpretations are subjective and varied, shaped by historical context and ideological perspective. Moreover, a crucial distinction is often missed between *faith*—with its moral and spiritual values—and *organized religion*—which includes legal, institutional, and patriarchal frameworks. This failure to differentiate results in rhetorical extremes: either glorifying Islam without addressing its abuses, or condemning it entirely based on misuses of its teachings (Mir-Hosseini, 2006).

Among the most significant aims of Islamic feminism is the empowerment of women through education. Goli Rezai-Rashti (2008) notes that in Iran, Islamic feminism has been effective in promoting women's legal rights—especially in the field of education—by working within an Islamic framework. She emphasizes that Islamic feminists have not only gained public visibility but also succeeded in encouraging legal reforms related to education, one of the most fruitful avenues for change (Rashti, p. 47). Education, for many Islamic feminists, is the cornerstone of liberation and long-term empowerment.

A noteworthy intellectual development within Islamic feminism is the emergence of *New Religious Thinking*, particularly within Iran. Thinkers like Abdolkarim Soroush have proposed a paradigm shift by distinguishing between religion itself—sacred and unchanging—and religious knowledge, which is human, mutable, and shaped by historical experience. Soroush's interpretative-epistemological framework critiques the rigidity of *fiqh*, arguing that it evolves with time and societal change. His discourse, which supports pluralism and democracy,

has formed the intellectual foundation of Iran's post-1997 reformist movement (Mir-Hosseini, 2006).

Though the notion that *fiqh* is temporal is not new—classical thinkers like al-Ghazali made similar arguments in the eleventh century—Soroush and others have revived this idea with renewed urgency and political relevance. Whether New Religious Thinking will translate into substantive political reform remains uncertain. Nevertheless, as Mir-Hosseini (2006) affirms, the process of desanctifying and secularizing *fiqh* has now reached a point of no return (Mir-Hosseini, 2006).

Conclusion:

In its current form, Islamic feminism is not a monolithic or centrally organized movement. It is richly diverse and often internally conflicted, owing to the vast differences in governance, legal systems, and cultural practices across the Muslim world. Some Islamic feminists advocate for secular reinterpretations of Islam, while others seek a broader understanding of its sacred texts to reclaim women's rights from within the tradition. Despite facing formidable resistance—social, political, and theological—Islamic feminists continue to engage in a dynamic struggle for justice.

As Badran (2009) reminds us, "Religion and the cultures in which it is imbricated are not going to go away. Nor are they monolithic and static" (Badran, 2009). This observation captures both the challenges and possibilities of the Islamic feminist movement. It is a project that balances between tradition and transformation, drawing strength from its inclusive, text-centered approach. By addressing gender inequality through reinterpretation rather than rejection of sacred texts, Islamic feminism remains accessible and resonant for many Muslim women who seek justice without abandoning their faith. The movement's continued vitality lies in its ability to uncover, question, and reframe patriarchal readings of Islam while remaining rooted in the very texts that have historically been used to marginalize women.

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