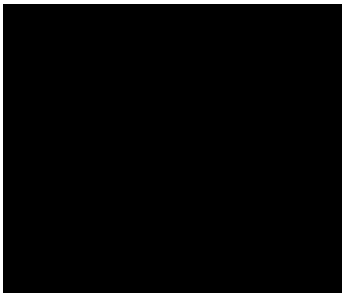
Mobilizing Faith for Women



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normal way of life. This suggests that the twin promises made to humanity in 1948 are being eroded.

While women's rights have advanced in many areas in recent decades, serious challenges remain in almost every nation. Two major factors that still prevent women from enjoying full human rights are the exclusive authority of men in many highly patriarchal religious and belief systems and the overall normalization of violence in society that permeates the family, community, and our foreign policy. The Carter Center convened the 2013 Human Rights Defenders Forum, titled Mobilizing Faith for Women, to explore these questions and generate dialogue and action to support those who are struggling to espouse peace and to advance the rights of girls and women, especially in the realm of religion and belief.

One participant asked the question: "If women are equal in the eyes of God, why are we not equal in the eyes of men?" The courageous leaders who joined us are determined to raise this question and to bring answers to their communities, engaging sacred texts as a source of legitimacy for their work. We were encouraged by the good work that many are doing, but it was also quite striking that entrenched attitudes and beliefs that women are inferior or different in God's eyes are still so prevalent.

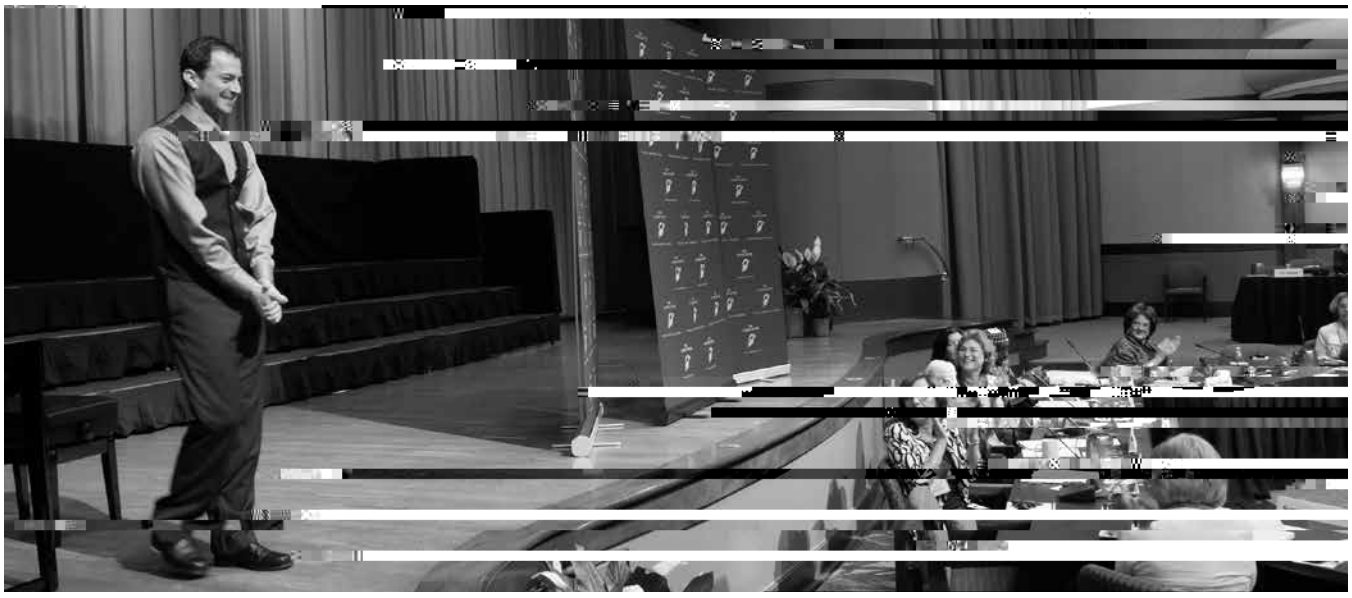
I hope that readers will take the time to consider carefully the testimonies of those who gathered at our forum and consider how they might respond to this profound exploration through individual or collective action. The Carter Center and I are grateful to those participants and to all others who have been engaged with us on this issue over a number of years.

Executive Summary

June 27–29, 2013, religious leaders, scholars, and activists joined former U.S. President Jimmy Carter and the U.N. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights at The Carter Center for the 2013 Human Rights Defenders Forum on the theme Mobilizing Faith for Women: Engaging the Power

of Religion and Belief to Advance Human Rights and Dignity. Building on earlier forums, which had explored the bases for human rights within religious traditions, participants pursued an ambitious agenda with the goal of mobilizing religious and political leaders to advocate for the human rights of women and girls. The forum was preceded by a day of workshops that allowed experts to delve deeply into how scriptural interpretation by mostly male religious leadership affects the rights of women globally. President Carter shared his hope that the conference would result in every individual speaking out and marshaling whatever influence they can bring to address the issue of human rights abuses against women.

In his opening remarks, President Carter noted, "The abuse of women and girls is the most pervasive and unaddressed human rights violation on earth." Testimony during the forum supported his assertion that communities of faith and religious leaders have a unique opportunity to make a difference in the fight for women's equal treatment and freedom from violence around the world. Various faith leaders, advocates, and scholars reported both experiences of human rights abuses against women and efforts to work from within their faith traditions to address such abuses. The participants shared findings and



recommendations that were synchronous and overlapping across geographic, cultural, and faith traditions. Examining sacred texts and sharing testimony from many countries, participants grappled with the difficult questions that emerge when attempting to reconcile the ideals and practices of religion and human rights principles throughout the world.

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—Mona Rishmawi

Mona Rishmawi, representative of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, observed in her opening remarks:

> The place of religion in our societies and in the state today, particularly in the Middle East, is the determining issue for our future. The issue of women's rights is the main battleground to determine where the identity of the state is going. If we get women's rights right, we get everything right. If we do not get women's rights right, everything will disintegrate.

Rishmawi emphasized human rights as our claims as individuals against the state. She reflected on the responsibility of the state to protect citizens and its failure to do so for women:

> The state has not invested in protecting women against violence. Religious leaders must stand up and demand that the state invest in the infrastructure needed—streetlights, police training, and prosecution against violators, among others. The United Nations Human Rights Council has called upon all governments to prioritize such actions.

Finally, she called on religious leaders to stand up and speak out against violence and discrimination against women, as this is clearly contrary to the concepts of justice and human dignity at the core of religion.

Tom England

President Jimmy Carter and Mona Rishmawi from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights opened the 2013 Human Rights Defenders Forum.

Participants framed violence against women as a problem that has a detrimental impact on each part of society and on all members of the community: men, women, and children. The issue has deep implications for the daily life and health of community members, mandating that religious and traditional leaders advocate for their communities and pressure the state to deliver on its duty to provide for the safety and security of women. Participants agreed that religious leaders have the power and responsibility to promote peace and human rights, including women's rights,

from their institutional platforms. The religious leaders in attendance embraced this call, giving examples of work that many are already carrying out and requesting organizational support and training in international human rights frameworks so they may learn to more effectively lobby their governments to address abuses in their respective countries.

leaders and fostered by many women and men working together in these communities. Through reinterpretation of religious texts and community dialogue, Tostan's transformative outcomes were presented at the beginning of the discussions, demonstrating the potential for engaging religion, rather than avoiding it, as a force for social transformation.

Participants from various countries reported that conservative clergy are generally receptive to promotion of faith-based justice but struggle to bring along their conservative congregations. Leaders cited this issue as a major challenge with which they need scholars' help. Engaging the media, reaching out through online platforms, and communicating in local languages were cited as key tactics for reorienting mainstream religious discourse toward support for women's rights. Working with the religious establishment is possible and essential. As Dr. Salah-eddin Elgawhary of the Biblioteca Alexandrina emphasized, progressive religious interpretation has to come from within the schools of religion for it to be a viable force for change in community practices. Working from within requires understanding local contexts and constituencies.

This point was driven home by Alhaji Khuzaima Mohammed Osman, executive assistant to the National Chief Imam of Ghana, who expressed the difficulty for religious leaders in his context to work effectively with those who do not appear, according to local standards, to comply with the principles or conduct they espouse. "We find that those human rights defenders who claim they are Muslims are often not living up to certain Muslim expectations, which makes us feel backed against a corner," he said, going on to contend, "This is an issue that needs to be addressed in order to encourage Muslim leaders to engage." This statement led to a robust dialogue with other participants, making it clear that such sensitivities and challenges are serious but can be overcome. Within such contexts, some institutions are making progress. Representatives of the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Sheikh Dr. Ahmad al-Tayyeb, head of the oldest center of Islamic learning in the world, were eager for collaboration and acknowledged the need for more concerted effort on the part of leaders and institutions. For example, they highlighted their work to consult both religious and secular women's organizations in the drafting of a forthcoming declaration on women's rights and committed to increasing the number of women scholars at Al-Azhar.

Tom England

President Carter stands with Imam Mohamed Magid, president of the Islamic Society of North America, and Molly Melching, founder of Tostan.

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Speakers addressed various faith-based efforts to combat human trafficking, which moderator Aaronde Creighton described as similar in severity to the trans-Atlantic slave trade because of the number of

Tom England

The National Chief Imam and Grand Mufti of Ghana sent a delegation to the conference. Pictured here with (center) Chief Zanzan Karwor of Liberia are (left to right) Rashidat Muhammed, Chief Sidiq Gimala III, Alhaji Khuzaima Mohammed Osman, and Abdul Basit Rufai.

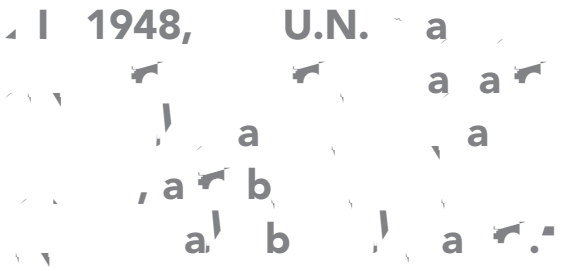
lives destroyed by the practice. The conversation addressed the role of religious communities, which have tremendous influence in either stigmatizing victims of sex trafficking or serving them. Pastor Paul Palmer of the Atlanta Dream Center also challenged leaders to consider the most fundamental driver of sex trafficking: demand. Pastor Paul lamented: We have not taught our boys and men that we need to honor all girls and women as our sisters. We have failed in religious leadership because we have assumed that this is just what young men are going to go through.

Fulata Moyo of the World Council of Churches called on religious service organizations that encounter victims of human trafficking not to instruct victims—in one case a young girl who was pregnant—to accept their fate as divinely ordained. Cheryl Deluca-Johnson of Street Grace in Atlanta described efforts to increase criminal penalties for those who purchase sex from minors, which the international community agrees is the most effective way to combat trafficking. In the past, criminalizing the victims has taken up the majority of law enforcement resources. The new consensus asserts that shifting the focus to the arrest and robust prosecution

of traffickers, pimps, and customers can be the basis of a common movement in which religious leaders, people, and institutions can play a decisive role.

While our age may not be comparatively more

even as we continue to document gender-based violence in conflict and gain unprecedented clarity on the causes and consequences of this aspect of the disparity. Several forum participants shared stories of the grave health and safety conditions in Iraq and Afghanistan following the U.S.-led invasion and occupation of those countries. In particular, the incidence of congenital birth defects implies the use of radioactive munitions in civilian areas, with a pattern that implicates the U.S. military in causing and failing to redress these terrible impacts. Participants testified to the degenerative effects of persistent insecurity on the very fabric of society, community, family, and even self. Iraqi pediatrician Dr. Samira Al-Alaani shared the experience of the women of Fallujah, "Iraq's Hiroshima," where couples' dreams of parenthood have been invaded by fear due to the prevalence of congenital birth defects. Participants from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Liberia also testified about the horrific impact on women and girls of the wars that raged in their countries while the world mostly ignored the underlying causes of those conflicts.



—President Carter

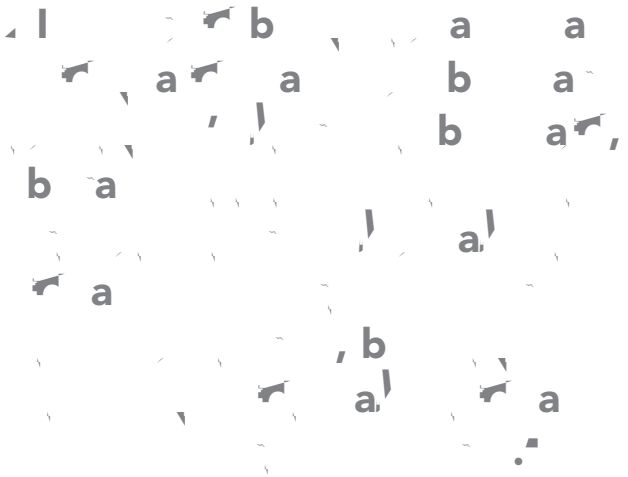
President Carter acknowledged the major role of the United States in normalizing war, since in the last 60 years this country resorted to war in almost every altercation rather than relying on peaceful negotiation. He presented the death penalty as another example of using extreme violence as a solution for society's problems, citing the fact that the United States is one of four countries that lead the world in numbers of executions. President Carter interpreted the state's use of excessive violence as tacit approval of the use of violence in society. Mild reaction to violence against women results in the perpetuation of a culture that implicitly and explicitly condones such acts. As Rishmawi discussed, the legal framework for addressing justice for women is very shallow. The preceding are examples of how the state has failed in its obligation to protect citizens who are women. The result is that living with the threat of violence is normal for most women.

Participants resoundingly dispelled any latent notion there are inherent contradictions between the principles of human rights and religion. Mona Rishmawi cited two verses from sacred text that support this position beautifully. The Bible says: Glory and honor and peace be for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also to the Greek, for God shows no partiality. From the Qur'an, she shared the verse that says: And their Lord responded to them: Never will I allow to be lost the work of any among you, whether male or female. "The Qur'an is clear there are parity and equality," Rishmawi declared.

Participants explained that positioning religions in opposition to the principles of individual human rights results from the selective use of scripture that ignores its comprehensive message of justice and peace. The often-cited verse on polygamy in the Qur'an—which creates an allowance for multiple wives to address a particular social need of the time but also cautions against potential injustice—is a case of such partial reading, suggested Zainah Anwar.

Sister Simone Campbell of NETWORK and Nuns on the Bus provided an example of the effect of the politicization of religion in the discussion of her advocacy of the Affordable Care Act. She noted that the opposition of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops stemmed from their ideological identification with the singular issue of opposing abortion

and contraception. Campbell described the conflict as "straight politics," revealing that even the strict separation of church and state in the United States has not exempted religion from being co-opted for political gains. Reframing the issue as one of citizenship, she declared, "As a person of faith in our democratic culture, I expect to use my voice and to be required to use my voice, and our text mandates that I use my voice!"



— Sister Simone Campbell

The moral and religious imperative for participation is echoed by the work of Musawah, a global movement for equality in the Muslim family, founded by Zainah Anwar and Dr. Ziba Mir-Hosseini. They and others asserted that women's voices and women's experiences of living Islam—as well as the reality of the condition of women living in Muslim societies—must be sources of legitimacy and authority in defining what religion means. The forum provided the opportunity for representatives of Muslim institutions to publicly commit to including female scholars in their work. Imam Mohamed Magid of the Islamic Society of North America responded to Mir-Hosseini's call for an inclusive dialogue in which women's voices are respected equally, stating, "This is not supposed to be a conversation of men only; come to our next meeting in Cairo [at Al-Azhar] and have a voice."

Rishmawi emphatically supported discussions of the relationship between religion and the state, asserting that they are the only way to settle the place of religion in society. However, she underlined that such discussions have been circumscribed by fear of intimidation and fear of reprisal. Indeed, participants shared the very real threat of harm that human rights defenders, especially women, face in contexts such as Afghanistan. In Muslim contexts, human rights defenders have, in some cases, become reluctant to share information about violations inside their own communities for fear of helping outsiders to deride their community, fuel stereotypes, and even bring on foreign intervention. For these reasons, it is vital to work actively to open up public space that is safe for dialogue, as violence threatens to close this space completely, participants warned.

Rishmawi raised the issue that as human beings none of us have a monopoly over the truth and that much of the diversity of human experience has been excluded from shaping our religious and political institutions when authority figures have preserved the mantel of absolute truth. Frances Greaves from Liberia highlighted the importance of establishing safe spaces for revealing such diverse truths, arguing, "To consolidate peace, you and your society must face yourself and face reality." The participation of women in Liberia's Truth and Reconciliation Commission paved the way for female representation in Parliament and the election of a female president, women who have fought for and achieved a rewriting of the laws and the narrative around violence against women in Liberia.

Reacting to Al-Alaani's call for transparency and investigation into the types of weapons used by the United States and coalition forces in Fallujah, Campbell stated: It is incredibly important that we demand that there be space for women's voices to be heard, because too often those who control policy

never have to deal with the consequences of their policies, but women oftentimes do have to deal with the consequences. The forum was credited as an unusually safe space that allowed deep and, at times, controversial dialogue to occur. The desire for this conversation to be sustained in some form was palpable.

In his opening remarks, President Carter pointed to male circumscription of women's religious leadership and service to God within religious institutions. He cited the position of some that women are inferior in the eyes of God and suggested that such views are perpetuated through the misuse of sacred texts that have been distorted to justify the dominance of men.

Dr. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza discussed this aspect of religious debate in her remarks:

> Throughout the centuries, the Bible has been used both as a weapon against and as a resource for subjugated women. The Bible has been invoked both for and against women's struggles for access to citizenship, public speaking, reproductive rights, theological education, or ordained ministry. Consequently, no serious reform of society in the interest of women's emancipation will be successful if it does not also seek to advance the reform of religion and of sacred scriptures.

Men's perception of women as inferior has been institutionalized as if it were fact. In some cases, it has been confused with divine law and used to excuse both violence and discrimination against women and the failure to protect. Participants reflected that in the early histories of each religious tradition women were integral contributors and respected members of the religious community. President Carter cited the statement of the Apostle Paul from Galatians 3:28: "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Carter referred to Romans 16, where Paul describes half of the heroes of the early Christian church as women apostles and priests. Participants referenced similar stories from the early texts and traditions of Islam and Judaism, rejecting the notion that patriarchy is core to the faiths themselves.

Participants from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan cited the co-opting and politicizing of religion as contribu-
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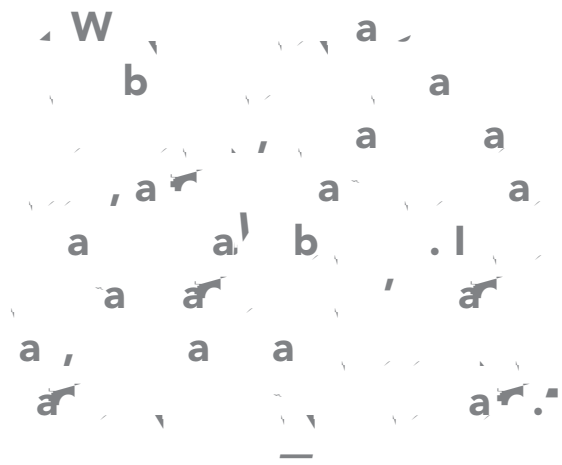
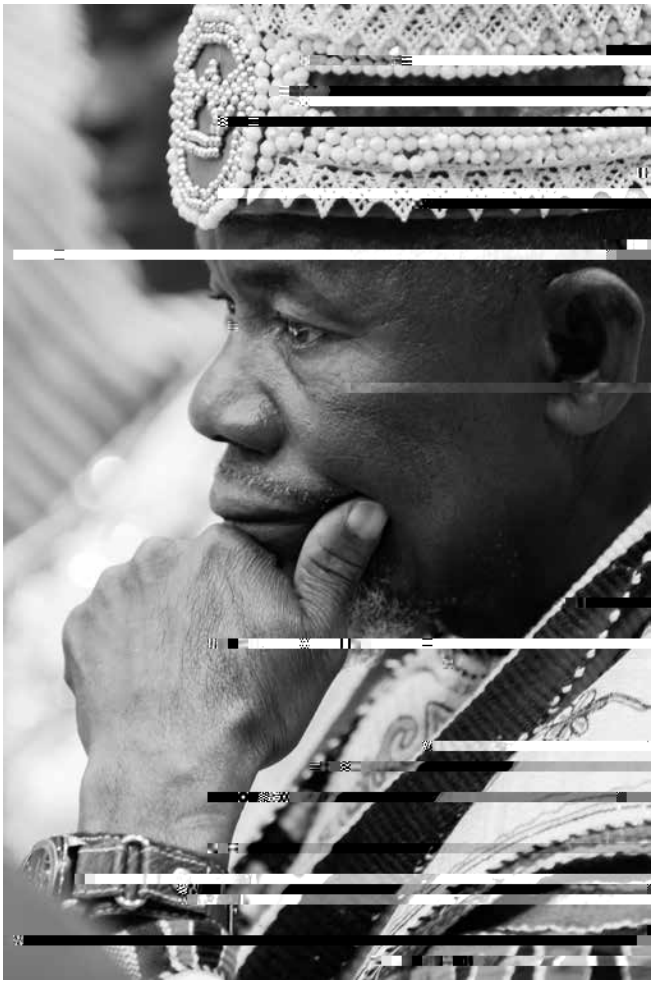
and allow them to “interrupt” our theological and academic investigations, according to Dr. Laurie Zoloth. All participants repeatedly emphasized the power of religion to aid in the pursuit of peace and in support of justice, despite its frequently being co-opted to justify harmful practices and inequalities.



In this report, there are numerous examples of the work being done to promote women’s rights and social justice both inspired by and working through religious mandates. Hauwa Ibrahim, a practicing lawyer in Nigeria, noted that while the law is important in the pursuit of justice for women, humility is an immensely powerful resource for winning over religious and traditional leaders, as their hearts are opened by the stories of women. A number of participants agreed that confrontational advocacy, which has proved effective in pressing governments to change abusive policies, is not effective in the religious context given the profound reach that religious leaders enjoy in the personal lives within their communities. While not deploring robust public advocacy, a balance of approaches was suggested.

Courtney reflected on the lust for revenge after the attacks against the United States on Sept. 11, 2001, that drove him to support the Iraq war, resolving: “If we are to normalize peace, we must normalize humility. We must normalize the possibility for us to say we were wrong, to say we are sorry, and then act

Participants listen to testimony on the potential of mobilizing faith for women. (Left to right) Larisa Friesen Hall, Palwasha Kakar, Ambassador Abdelrahman Moussa, and Mossarat Qadeem.



Chief Zanzan Karwor of Liberia reflects on deliberations.

to repair what we have broken. If our political leaders won't lead the way, then at least our religious leaders must come forward."

Rishmawi described the role religious leaders should play in holding the state accountable for its responsibility to protect, saying: "Religious leaders have a duty to explain the true spirit of religion. They have a duty to explain to people that protecting life is the core of religious values."

The energy throughout the forum reflected participants' recognition of their shared struggle and its power to unite rather than divide. Forming an emergent community of believers who are working to advance human rights for all from within a religious framers w Forminroru0id part worip.27d com25 o advi y ud nstitunts Ifposantssplain rang Fo advi y ud 0 i7/asadvgtad
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I can't think of a better way to start the discussion than with the beautiful music by Benjamin Warsaw. I think it brings to all of us the realization that there are things common to all human beings, the beauty of music that transcends artificial barriers between nations and between people. I've been touched by the beauty of this music this morning, as I felt you all have also. It's also a great pleasure to me to be followed on this program by Mona Rishmawi, who was designated many years ago as a hero at The Carter Center, when she represented one of the most courageous efforts I have known around the world to bring peace between the Palestinians, who have been deprived of their rights every day, and the Israelis. Al-Haq and B'Tselem worked side by side with her. Mona, we are proud to have you here.

This morning we are going to be discussing the most pervasive and unaddressed human rights violations on earth: the abuse of women that persists in almost every country and for which there is a great aversion among male leaders, and even some female leaders, to admit that it exists, that it is serious and troubling, and that it can and should be addressed courageously. It's not easy to do, as all of you know, particularly those of you who are heroes here, who come from countries where the abuse is so flagrant that it is difficult even to point out the abuse you yourself have experienced.

Our goals today are to educate and mobilize religious leaders and political leaders around the world—and to strengthen and inspire forum partici-

women. In itself, this would be a good result, and it is already being accomplished with this conference.

Also, I think it is good for us to be reminded of the incompatibility between certain religious practices on the one hand—as espoused by religious leaders who try to convince their own fellow worshipers that women are inferior in the eyes of God—and human rights on the other. Many great religious traditions hold an ordination by men that women are not fit to serve God on an equal basis. They are precluded from being priests, pastors, and chaplains, while men are considered to be worthy to hold those positions in the service of God. In some cases, there are even more gross abuses of religious scripture and texts, from the Qur'an and the Bible, including the Old Testament and the New Testament. Singular verses can be extracted and distorted to justify the dominance of men.

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I have here a copy of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and I would hope that all of you would get a copy and carry it with you. It spells out a commitment that was made back in 1948 by the

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might change in the near future; we hope so. There is progress being made in the world, very reluctantly in most cases, but it's not an all-pervasive change or improvement. The point is that the voices demanding these changes are very few and far between. They are sometimes very timid, because people who speak out are considered to be traitors of the male-dominated political and economic leadership.

Another very important global factor that contributes to women's abuse is the approval of violence as a way to resolve differences in our society. We in this country have been guilty of almost constant warfare for the last 60 years: beginning in North and South Korea and going on to Vietnam, then into Bosnia-Herzegovina, and more recently, Iraq and Afghanistan. In between, in almost every country where there has been an altercation, we have decided to go to war instead of negotiating peacefully to resolve disputes. Some countries still permit the horrible use of execution, of the death penalty. No Western European country has the death penalty, and only one country in Eastern Europe, Belarus, does. Canada doesn't have it either, but the United States does. Our country is one of four nations on earth where there are the most executions. When we accept war as a legitimate way to resolve disputes—or when we excessively use violence as a punishment for crimes—it says that violence is acceptable. That's another factor that hurts women, because they are most affected by violence.

I think almost every family around here is aware of this problem. When I was governor of Georgia, we had a houseguest who was raped, and she told Rosalynn and me about her abuse. We encouraged her to name her abuser, but when she talked to the prosecuting attorneys in DeKalb County, they strongly encouraged her not to do so, to let her rapist go free rather than submit her to the inevitable derogation of her character and the abuse of the trial that might be forthcoming. In the great universities of Atlanta today, it is standard policy not to prosecute male students who have raped women; this needs to be corrected. Atlanta, of which I'm very proud, is also one of the central trading posts for trafficking in slavery of women.

We've made some progress, but the progress is halting and quite often pursued without enough courage and commitment. I hope that one of the results of this conference will be for every one of us, individually, to speak out forcefully and use whatever influence we can marshal to bring about improvements in the treatment of women. It grieves me very deeply to see this continue, and I'm very proud of those of you who are heroes in your own countries. Child marriage, the physical abuse of women, women's slavery, and genital cutting are all human rights abuses that exist in the world in direct contravention of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and, in my opinion, in direct contravention of the basic premises of every great religion.

Tom England

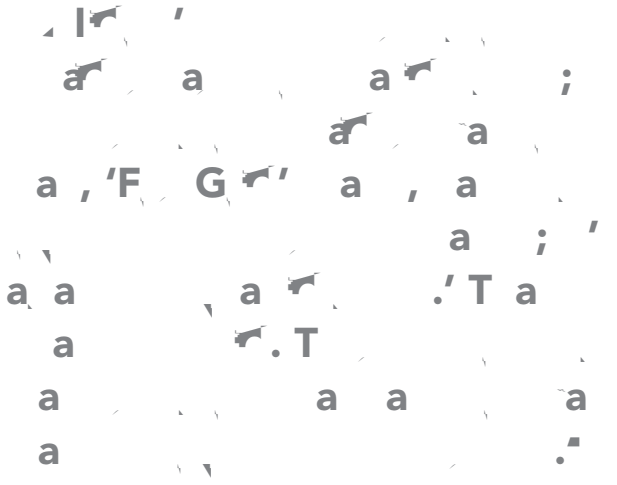
In her opening remarks, Mona Rishmawi, representative

Switzerland, so I am one of those who belongs to every place in the world, and my comments today come from that experience.

The place of religion in our society is a big topic. It has always been there, but today we see it as a determining issue for our future. Everywhere I go, particularly in the Middle East, I see the issue of women's rights as the main battleground on which to determine the direction of the state. If we get women's rights right, we get everything right. If we do not get women's rights right, I think everything will disintegrate, and we will have a real problem. Discussions about the role of religion in the state, especially in cultures like ours, are appropriate. I have no problem with the discussion; actually it is a very good discussion provided it is a discussion in which people raise their views without fear of intimidation, reprisal, or being mocked on television and in the media. This is fine; we have to settle these issues in our society. We have to settle the place of religion in the state, and the only way to go about it is to discuss it. There is no other way; we have to discuss it. But if fear and intimidation enter the picture, we will run into problems.

We are all human beings; nobody has, I would say, monopoly over the truth. We are not God; we are just his servants. We are not God, so we cannot pretend to be God and be the only ones who know the truth. Let me share two verses from the Bible and the Qur'an that say the same thing. The Bible says, "Glory and honor and peace be for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek, for God shows no partiality." God loves everybody. In the Holy Qur'an, an even clearer verse that is extremely nice says, "And their Lord responded to them: Never will I allow to be lost the work of any of you, whether male or female." The Qur'an is very clear: There are parity and equality there.

Allow me to say a few words about where I think the discussion stands today. We have a total imbalance in our legal system with regard to women's issues. When it comes to protection against violence, we have very shallow frameworks. When it comes to promoting practices that could lead to discrimination, we have ample rules. It is a fact that violence is a normal way of life for many women. It is a sad reality. When you walk in the streets, the hassle and harassment you get from the age of 2 or 3 are incredible. If you walk into a police station, the story that President Carter told is the story of many women throughout the world. If you speak about your abuser, you are mocked and are accused of being immoral. The law enforcement agents don't work to protect you; they work against you; the system works against you. Often, the streets are dark, and women cannot walk for fear for their safety. Many girls even fear going to the bathrooms in schools because they cannot be protected from violence. Violence against women, and girls more profoundly, is a normal way of life for many people. The state has invested very little until now toward addressing this problem.



—Mona Rishmawi

Human rights are our claims against the state. As a human rights person, I put a lot of emphasis on the state. I don't see why religious leaders are not standing up; why religious leaders cannot say, "For God's sake, hassling women in the streets is a sin; it's against human dignity." That is what we need. There is nothing in any religion that says you can hassle women in the streets. Why are people not standing up to say this has to stop? Why aren't we working toward

better infrastructure where the streets are lit, where people can walk in safety, where public transportation is safe? We've heard the story of the rapes that just took place in India. They convened an excellent commission. The late Judge Verma made incredible recommendations, but the state put them aside and did something else. Why would they do that when he has outlined exactly what needs to be done? The state needs to take these obligations seriously and treat women as equal parties. Religious leaders have a big role to play because this is not a question about culture. This is a question about honoring every human being in the country.

—Mona Rishmawi

Violence against women is an area in which religious and community leaders need to invest much more because it's about everybody and not one part of society only. President Carter told us why they don't do that: because they actually think women are inferior and that protection really isn't necessary. When you look at someone as less than a human being, then the abuse is fine. It's actually a joke. When boys talk about what they tell girls, other boys laugh. Within the family, the community, and the religion, these have to become taboos. The human rights system utilizes integrative approaches, but for some reason it is difficult to implement them. For example, the U.N. Human Rights Council just endorsed recommendations to address the issue of safety and security for women through the enactment of adequate legislation; instruction and training of law enforcement officials to take action to protect women; and investing in infrastructure such as public transportation, sanitation facilities, street lighting, and improvements in urban planning. Community leaders and religious leaders have to look at this and find ways to bring these issues into the mosques, churches, and villages, because these are the things that will make a difference in the daily lives of people.

The problem is that the investment is not there; the investment is in conflating two notions that I think should be kept separate: culture and religion. Religion comes from the divine; it comes from God. Culture comes from us; let's not confuse that. Culture is us. The divine we cannot change, but we absolutely can change culture! It comes with our progress: Some norms that were adequate at a certain stage don't serve their purposes anymore.

The problem is that in the area of women—because women are the weakest in society—culture and religion often are confused. In the past in Egypt, they managed to prevent female genital mutilation in public hospitals, and there was a religious [illegible] that the ban was in line with religion. When they realized that girls die from these practices, suffering throughout their lives and when pregnant, the state took measures. That was very positive, but the state can do much more in this regard. For example, I don't think any religion is in favor of "honor killings." If anything, religion would limit honor killings, because it says in cases of adultery you need a certain standard of proof. The issue is that people believe this is their tradition. But how can religion accept for a life to be taken on the basis of a suspicion? Culture and religion get conflated, and the state colludes with laws that actually give lenient sentences for these offenses, police who don't investigate, and the community that covers it up. This is where we need to invest. Religious leaders have a duty to explain the true spirit of religion. They have a duty to explain to people that protecting life is at the core of religious values.

These practices of violence and oppressive culture

lead to one result: Women fear to be part of the public space. Tell me which country today can afford to have half its society unengaged in its economic and political life? In a time of economic oppression, in a time where competition over influence is so high, we need every part of the society to play its role. Women don't feel protected to play the role they need to play: They protest and group themselves in organizations, but the majority of women still fear to be in the streets and in public places and are harassed at work and paid less. To remedy these problems and aggression, the state needs to do much more, and religious and community leaders have a bigger role to play than they are playing right now.

Let me conclude by saying I don't think women's rights are only an issue of women: Women's rights are about all of us. Women's rights are about the dignity of every person. Women's rights are about you and me: our boys and girls, our children, our future. It's about our outlook on the world not only today but 30 or 40 years from now. Where do we want to be? If we want to be confined as our people were 1,000 years ago, that's a choice. We can make that choice, but it has a price. If we want to go backward, that's a choice. If we want to go forward, that's another choice. And if we choose to go forward, we have to make different decisions today to bring everybody on board to respect the dignity of every human person.

We all have things that we can do within our sphere of influence. President Carter has showed the way. Throughout his career, he has done whatever he can within his sphere of influence in whatever position he was sitting. He has lived for his convictions. I think it is important that one lives for his or her convictions and moves things forward with a vision of where we want to be in the future.

Moderator: The Rev. Dr. Andrea White

Panelists: Bacary Tamba, Zainah Anwar, Sister Simone Campbell

The panel Aligning Religious Life With Equal Dignity and Human Rights at the Carter Center's 2013 Human Rights Defenders Forum addressed the need for greater connection between the wonderful messages of equality in our sacred texts and the reali-

religious texts are understood is pivotal in shaping the practices, traditions, and laws of societies around the world. While inspiring altruism and the pursuit of social justice, sacred texts also are used to justify violence and discrimination. How can we encourage inclusive scholarship and interpretation that honor the central message of justice in the world's major faiths and traditional belief cultures? For, as Anwar remarked poignantly, "God is not God, if God is not just."

Anwar founded Sisters in Islam to work for a women's rights framework within Islam in Malaysia by leveraging the just and empowering messages present in the sacred text. Musawah, which she co-founded with Dr. Ziba Mir-Hosseini, is a global movement seeking to work for equality and to expand tha Mi16

infallible. However, as Anwar asserted, "This is a constructed myth, a myth that must be broken," for this law is based on specific understandings and has been determined by human interlocutors.

Anwar and her colleagues are practitioners of "Islamic feminism," which—although a highly contested and often-rejected label—attempts to describe efforts to reread the Qur'an through a feminist or gender-sensitive lens. Instead of depending on "what men said it said," Anwar and her colleagues started asking rights-based questions of the text. They found that the text is very liberating. The Qur'an has many messages of justice and compassion, of men and women with equal rights and responsibilities before God. Then, they questioned, "Why should

Living Polygamy Today

Zainah Anwar referenced a study that Sisters in Islam conducted with over 1,000 husbands, first and second wives, and children of polygamous marriages, which found that polygamy's negative emotional, social, and economic impact was felt by all family members and lasted for decades. The testimony of Ella Musu Coleman, an activist from Liberia, illustrates these experiences: One wife, who was in a traditional polygamous marriage, shared with Coleman that while she was working very hard to support the entire family—brushing the trees, cutting the harvest, selling it in the market—her co-wife was doted on. After learning about her rights in a workshop with Coleman's organization, the woman asked her husband to support her with the farming. The reality today is that polygamous marriage tends to impact families negatively. "Even men are miserable," Anwar related. Sheikh Omar Ahmed Tijani Niass of Senegal emphasized that polygamy is permissible but not obligatory and that it is subject to stipulations that should ensure it is mutually desired and socially beneficial. The 0093rkt9ts of reigimousdoctrminy -

are slow to recognize and admit the abuses happening within their own communities. Yet when faced with the facts, they can be powerful allies in aligning practice with the ethical message of justice inherent in all religions. "Many feminists reject religion because they believe that religion is inherently unjust and patriarchal. Religion is not a source of change and liberation," said Anwar. "But, as a believer, that is not an option for me. I need to reconcile my faith and my feminism."

Public debate can upset the status quo in religious institutions that are traditionally hierarchical. As Campbell related, "Public action creates internal tension." Women's perspectives are often formed by community-level experience, as caregivers to loved ones, organizers of charity, and deliverers of humanitarian relief. Campbell shared how her organization, NETWORK, leveraged the grassroots authority derived from the historic role of Catholic sisters in setting up the first health care systems in the United States. The organization was founded to advocate for systemic change, responding to their bishop's call "to move from doing charity to doing justice."

The U.S. health care system founded by women is now controlled by men and serves more to generate profits than health. In 2010, NETWORK was involved in supporting the health reform bill before the U.S. Congress, citing the fact that more than 52 million people in the country living without health care is immoral. Though the Catholic Health Association also supported the bill, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops came out in opposition, causing what media called the first such public political divergence within the Catholic community.

Campbell's experience confirms Rishmawi's assertion that the real fight is about culture, not faith. "Catholic bishops have become ideologically identified with the so-called pro-life movement in our country—which is actually more like pro-birth than pro-life," she said. While the bishops objected

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Dr. Mahmoud Azab discusses the position Al-Azhar has taken to encourage protection of the rights of youth, women, and minorities, given the more central role of religion in politics since the Egyptian Revolution began in 2011.

of relative institutional positions allows them to "stand where people are and move the mission as far as possible."

Shiekh Mustapha Ibrahim, a member of the delegation of the National C 9 yvim0 Doa

Determined not to allow the rift with the bishops to interfere with NETWORK's larger mission, Campbell created Nuns on the Bus, a road trip across the country to draw attention to the larger issues where there is common agreement between the sisters and the bishops. The bus tour focused on "comprehensive common sense [and] compassionate immigration reform" and then on speaking out against Congressman Paul Ryan's proposed budget, which slashes services for the poor. The sisters were aided in this effort by a letter from their bishop declaring that the Ryan budget failed the basic moral test. In reflecting on the importance of standing with the oppressed and marginalized in society, Campbell lifted the hearts of the participants, saying, "Joy is released when we touch the pain of our time." It was a statement that reverberated with many for the rest of the conference. In conclusion, Campbell offered that "women's leadership has surprising things happening to it in my faith tradition" and, "As a person of faith in our democratic culture, I expect to use my voice and to be required to use my voice, and our text mandates that I use my voice"!

Inclusive public discourse and the empowerment of women in spheres of leadership are central to the reorientation of religious institutions to promote women's rights and social justice for all. As Sheikh Omar Ahmed Tijani Niass recommended, "Men need to support women in the issue of equality by sometimes just being silent." With men occupying the most powerful positions in government, business, and religious institutions the world over, active alliances are key and, at times, need to take the form of consciously leaving space for women to lead. Tamba, a former parliamentarian and national coordinator for Tostan in Senegal, reflected on the futility of juxtaposing men and women: "This is a fight for humanity. It is a problem for all of us human beings to change." No man exists in a vacuum, nor does a community exist independent of its female members, insisted Tamba. Tostan operates on the principle that the welfare of women, mothers, wives, and sisters impacts community well-being, a common value that often subordinates individual rights. Through dialogue and education, Tostan has helped communities redefine women's rights as a central aspect of community health, eliminating the practice of female genital cutting on that basis.

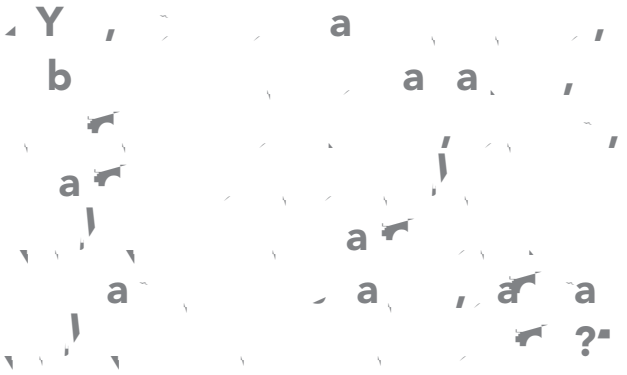
Women are often equally implicated in the perpetuation of harmful practices such as female genital

cannot stand up for women and say violence is a sin?" Dr. Ziba Mir-Hosseini, an Islamic scholar and co-founder of Musawah, asserts, "Religion is not free from power, and culture is not free from power. When we speak about religious leaders, they are a product of their culture, and this culture is patriarchal. Patriarchy existed long before the coming of religion."

Mir-Hosseini and Imam Mohamed Magid spoke about the challenge of confronting the common perception that human rights has become a tool for promoting Western interests. The international community's mild response to the aggressive wars and abuses perpetrated by the United States in pursuit of

is that women, and also men, are afraid of entering politics and being in the public eye. As Ritu Sharma, president and founder of Women Thrive Worldwide, shared, "The other side has guns, zeal, and power. They will use violence." She illustrated how real the fear is for women, from activists in Afghanistan and Iraq who receive threats every day to those who fear backlash from news media if they speak out on controversial issues in the United States. Campbell, while traveling the country with Nuns on the Bus, found that "while all faiths tell us 'fear not,' society is controlled by fear—fear of the other, fear of attack." Sharma responded, "Yes, scripture talks to power, but when power has a gun, how do we strengthen, protect, and inspire our nonviolent movements to stand strong in the face of the zealous, radical movements on the other side?" Anwar highlighted the importance of opening the space for public debate before it is completely closed by violence in places such as Pakistan and Afghanistan where "death awaits you." Every time Sisters in Islam is publicly attacked, they use it as an opportunity to widen public awareness on those controversies, eventually garnering a huge public constituency and public resonance to their work.

Rishmawi contended that "it will all be sorted out the moment violence is finished." In the meantime, human rights defenders exhibit extraordinary bravery driven by their faith. Exemplifying this, Campbell said, "My heart has broken for people who have experienced injustice. And when my heart is broken, what is fear to me? Living for me, in a Christian context, is living out the Gospel. Jesus was all about going to places where people ache and hurt, so how can I not? Too often we focus on the fear and less on the need. Faith is always about walking, willingly, into trouble."



—Ritu Sharma

Pa II

Trafficking as Modern-Day Slavery

Moderator: Aaronde Creighton

Panelists: Pastor Paul Palmer, Dr. Fulata Moyo, and Cheryl Deluca-Johnson

The panel Trafficking as Modern-Day Slavery: People of Faith Arise focused on the responses of religious communities to human trafficking, in particular of women and children for sex. "The issue of human trafficking is one that concerns every country on earth, and Atlanta, in particular, is a major hub because we have the busiest airport in the world," Karin Ryan of The Carter Center stated in her introduction, drawing the link between the global significance and local resonance of this problem. The panelists, Pastor Paul Palmer, founder of the Atlanta Dream Center; Cheryl Deluca-Johnson of Street Grace; and Dr. Fulata Moyo of the World Council of Churches discussed how they each have used the resources their faith offers, both personal and communal, to guide their work.

Moderator Aaronde Creighton of Street Grace opened the session by transporting us to Goree Island, an infamous point of departure for African slaves in Dakar, Senegal, where President and Mrs. Obama visited recently: "A photographer captured an image of the Obamas at the 'door of no return.' Many people

Tom England

Aaronde Creighton, moderator of the panel Trafficking as Modern-Day Slavery: People of Faith Arise, listens as Fulata Moyo of the World Council of Churches gives her remarks.

choice but to use someone else. This is an example of the powerful relevance of scripture to the lives of the suffering.

There is a powerful message of love at the center of the faith traditions. Palmer spoke about the inspiration and sustenance he gains from his reading of this message in scripture. The Bible says, "They will know you by your love for one another—not just loving others in the faith world, but loving the unlovely." This principle drives the work of the Out of Darkness program at the Atlanta Dream Center founded by Palmer. The group goes to neighborhoods and befriends those who are being sold on the street for sex, which Palmer sees as an opportunity to reach into a world that seems destitute. He says, "I am an advocate not only for women and boys in the sex industry, but for everyone who seems to have been forgotten." He emphasizes the need to take immediate action as individuals when needed to redress the plight of humanity. He concluded, "It is a duty of all of us as Christian leaders to suffer the consequences, to step into uncomfortable situations. As Sister

acceptable. In workshops preceding the open forum, delegates explored in depth the question of masculinity and the oppressive masculine customs that our society has accepted as inevitable. Molly Melching said that though everyone would say they are against sex trafficking, it is accepted on some level and excused, using the fallacy that men are "just like this." Citing this as a failure of religious leaders, Palmer asserted, "We have not taught men that we need to

The work that many of the participants do is highly controversial in many religious communities. As an example, Ruth Messinger noted the projects the American Jewish World Service runs to support sex workers as part of its anti-trafficking campaign. “We have to answer ethical questions about how we can support this,” Moyo responded. “We live in a world of such disparity that the only commodity some women have is their body. If we cannot change that disparity, then we have no option but to be on the streets with those women as well as with women who are in the pews.” As Messinger stated, “The world is burning,” and in such a context people make decisions they would never make if they had true choices.

Imam Magid illustrated the global scope of human trafficking, drawing the connection to the “legalized trafficking” of the Middle East, where the freedom of foreign workers is in the hands of their employer and sponsor. Residence laws in many countries enable the employer to hold the employee’s passport, restrict their movement, and deport them at any time. These workers enter a country legally but are often sexually, physically, and psychologically abused by those who employ them, with little to no recourse to the law -1.2j6ally, anoth

protection. Refugees are particularly vulnerable to human trafficking and abuse, and host countries are reluctant to prosecute their own citizens for abuses. “I have seen children rescued as victims of war, only to be abused by those who were supposed to protect them,” Imam Magid related, calling for legal reform

Pa III

The Normalization of Violence and Impact of War on Women

Moderator: Rev. Dr. Susan Thistlethwaite

Panelists: Claudia Furaha Nfundiko, Frances Greaves, Dr. Samira Al-Alaani Abdulghani, and Jeremy Courtney

The Normalization of Violence and Impact of War on Women panel explored examples that illustrate how violence has been accepted as normal in society. Challenges in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, and Iraq were presented by panelists Claudia Furaha Nfundiko of the Episcopal Commission for Justice and Peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; Frances Greaves, founder of Voice of the Voiceless in Liberia; Iraqi pediatrician Dr. Samira Al-Alaani Abdulghani; and Jeremy Courtney, founder of the Preemptive Love Coalition. Rev. Dr. Susan Thistlethwaite, a senior fellow at the Center for American Progress and professor of theology at Chicago Theological Seminary, moderated the discussion in which participants from many countries added examples of insights, drawing important connections about the impact of war and militarization across regions.

Tom England

Imam Mohamed Magid reflects on ways religious institutions and leaders can pressure their governments to uphold human rights laws.

Thistlethwaite began by describing a "just peace" concept developed by Christian theologians, later developing into a global interfaith book outlining 10 steps that increase peace, reduce violence, and promote justice. The courageous work of the panelists, she suggested, exemplifies such practices. Thistlethwaite said, "This I know from decades as a peace activist: that violence loves the lie. It calls war security. It calls missiles peacekeepers. It calls the battering of women submission or God's will. In the "just peace" practice, we must say, 'No, you are not telling the truth. The truth about war is that it has an exacerbated impact on women. Militarism is undeniably a women's issue, as it is an issue for all those who profess peace.'"

The panel was brought together to discuss the normalization of violence and war in our society, yet what emerged was a dialogue that delved into the deepest recesses of human nature, examining the role of trust and truth, humility, and forgiveness. Both state and individual violence were examined, along with the role of the individual in taking a stand against both. Advocating for peace does not

of depleted uranium munitions during the assault on

Alhaji Khuzaima Mohammed Osman, executive secretary of the National Chief Imam of Ghana, reacts to the panel on the Normalization of Violence and the Impact of War on Women, calling it a "moment of truth."

and identities, defending them with intensified vigilance. The weight of this societal regression falls disproportionately upon women, who often represent the identity and projected dignity of the community. This irony was discussed by the group: that wars waged in the name of promoting human rights and democracy may have the opposite effect of entrenching outworn and repressive cultural practices.

Courtney shared that in Iraq "everyone distrusted everyone, it seemed, at the height of the conflict, making every interaction open to suspicion and fear." Yet, with dedicated effort, people can overcome fear to build relationships and plant the seeds of trust.

Courtney related a story of what he calls "preemptive love." A father was forced to place his ailing daughter in the hands of a surgeon from another sect, and "the enemy doctor," the doctor who never should have been trusted, saved her life. The father had taken a risk against all odds and walked into enemy territory to love his daughter. The surgeon had taken a great risk to dislodge one of his own people and provide surgery for an outsider. Through necessity, driven by love, they were able to see the truth about the other and achieve "forgiveness, reconciliation, and a normalization of peace." Campbell responded to Al-Alaani's story by committing to do what she can to raise awareness about the aftermath of the war in Iraq, saying, "When your heart breaks on behalf of someone else, what is fear?"

"How do we normalize peace? The corollary question is 'How can you eat an elephant?' Answer: One bite at time. One step at a time," Courtney asserted. He acknowledged the desire for revenge he felt following the attacks on the United States on Sept. 11, 2001, and how that led him, as many others, to support a war of aggression that devastated the

—Jeremy Courtney

lives of millions of Iraqis. “If we want to normalize peace, we have to normalize humility,” he said. “We have to normalize the ability to say we were wrong.” Religious leaders from Ghana and Senegal were deeply moved by this statement, recounting their challenges when speaking about human rights within their own communities because of the suspicion that it represents a Western concept, imposed from the outside. The expressions of humility and truthfulness about the impact of America’s wars would go a long way to build trust and open the hearts of others in the effort to build a universal movement for human rights and peace, they said.

Calling the forum “a moment of truth,” Alhaji Khuzaima Mohammed Osman reacted to this call for acknowledgment and acceptance of responsibility, sharing that many in Muslim communities are reluctant to reveal “glaring facts” about the impact of military intervention and counterterrorism policy for fear of being labeled terrorists. The use of drones is a clear example of the disastrous impacts, which Mossarat Qadeem described as including not only the loss of civilian lives but also the spread of fear and increased radicalization. President Carter expressed his agreement, condemning the use of drones as “counterproductive.”

Distilling the collective sentiment of these assembled believers, Courtney appealed to religious leaders as “the people who should be leading this conversation above all else, for if our religious communities can’t lead the conversation on this, then our religion is absolutely worthless to us.”

Moderator: Ritu Sharma

Panelists: Imam Mohamed Magid, Professor Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, and Dr. Laurie Zoloth

In the final session of the 2013 Human Rights Defenders Forum, From Local to Global: Connecting Religious Study, Action, and Advocacy, forum participants attempted to capture the essential ideas, relationships, and commitments that had emerged in the preceding days of robust exchange, profound storytelling, and call to action. The panelists were Imam Mohamed Magid, president of the Islamic Society of North America; professor Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Kristen Stendahl Professor of Divinity at Harvard Divinity School; and Dr. Laurie Zoloth, president-elect of the American Academy of Religion and a professor at Northwestern University. Inspiring and expansive in their scope, the panelists reflected on the momentum generated by the forum and sought to reaffirm the commitment to purpose that binds the forum participants and their work to each other. Moderator Sharma began the conversation by issuing a challenge to the room, asking, "What are you going to do when you leave here today?"

The importance of working from within—as well as across different faiths and together with secular organizations and structures—cannot be overemphasized. Magid began by relating that "the challenge for a religious leader is to be able to address this issue in the language that their community understands," suggesting that leaders should begin by working with their own colleagues, leaders, and activists on the ground in their own communities. By forging a united voice of activists and religious leaders through translating concepts and language for the local context, communities can overcome superficial differences and create space for grappling with some of the more difficult issues, including problematic sacred texts.

Magid argues that instead of always and only turning to friendly texts, religious leaders and scholars must address those texts that have been misused through discussion and examination of alternative interpreta-

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to erode the moral authority of religious institutions, leadership, and activists. Joséphine Ngalula related how Catholic priests in the Democratic Republic of the Congo have engaged in political activity that legitimizes the undemocratic system, which is perpetuating the conflict and grave human rights abuses occurring in the country. She appealed for religious leaders to uphold the moral standards they espouse.

As Alhaji Khuzaima of Ghana noted, the perception of ethical integrity is critical to effective collaboration with religious communities: We want to believe that defenders of human rights live up to the principles they have set up. When we meet those who claim they are Muslims and are defending human rights, and when we find that they are often not living up to Muslim expectations, we feel backed against a corner.

Quite controversially, Muslim women not covering their hair was cited as an example, reinforcing the point that perceptions of conformity with religious mores are often the measure, even with traditions that are highly contested within the religion, such as the hijab in Islam. The principle of working within is worth reiterating here. In Ghana, it is difficult for religious leaders to work with those who appear impious based on the expectations of that community. This is a reality of collaboration; while leaders may understand the complexities of different practices, they often feel they have to conform to certain expectations.

Key Approaches

- Translate this discussion for our local contexts and into local languages.
- Beginning with our colleagues, religious leaders and activists should work together to raise a united voice.
- Build partnerships within community and consult with community members.
- Include women scholars in conversations about reforming jurisprudence and theology.
- Build the capacity of religious leaders to engage the political system and do grassroots mobilization for human rights and nonviolence.
- Promote progressive interpretations without attacking the opposing view.
- Expand focus to include duties and responsibilities toward women, as opposed to a sole focus on rights.
- Insist on justice; don't just advocate.
- Find common value to enable interfaith and interdenominational work.
- Always work to advance nonviolence in all girlude dus towsing view.
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Working with leaders to develop greater awareness and acceptance of diverse expressions of faith and piety is the way to shift cultural norms toward greater inclusiveness. Progressive Islamic scholars and activists vigorously contested this statement, and it was agreed that continuing the conversation in the future is necessary and desirable in order to make progress. It was noted that the emergence of these issues demonstrated that participants are being deeply honest about what lies ahead in reconciling human rights with religion, once again returning to the importance of proceeding with truthfulness and humility.

Melinda Holmes

Ritu Sharma (left) moderates the panel From Local to Global: Connecting Religious Study, Action, and Advocacy with Imam Mohamed Magid and Dr. Laurie Zoloth.

Magid highlighted the need for transparency about violence within communities and accountability of religious leaders for their conduct. Individuals with religious authority have a duty to ensure that religious communities are upholding their own principles of equality and justice for women and men alike. He gave an example of a declaration that was signed by imams after they participated in trainings on domestic violence: "The challenge was to get this signed declaration in front of every mosque, so that when a man or a woman walked in, they would see it, making our private talk public." Such visible support for the rights of women and other marginalized groups is incredibly powerful. Even subtle gestures like introducing the community to members working to prevent and redress abuses constitute important emotional support from leadership and can open up public discussion about difficult issues that are often kept silent.

The need for cross-disciplinary learning was repeatedly made clear. Dr. Sita Ranchod-Nilsson stated, "It is important to invest in building the relationships between scholars, activists, and religious leaders," noting that "we share goals of social, gender justice, and human rights, though our benchmarks along the way may be different."

Participants expressed the need for religious leaders to be trained in human rights and in ways to leverage their own civic rights and leadership platforms to pressure those with political power to address abuses. Ruth Messinger articulated this recommendation: "Train religious leaders about how to mobilize others, how to move outside the top-down approach of preaching. Not every religious leader knows how to get people together to move on an issue." Yet, there are powerful bases for social justice activism present in the texts and traditions of the Abrahamic faiths. Fiorenza asserted that we must not simply advocate but must insist on justice. Relating the story of the Persistent Widow from Luke 18:1–8, Fiorenza said, "She battered the judge, the unjust judge, until he got tired of her and gave her justice," explaining that the common reading of this text shifts the emphasis away from demanding social justice and toward quiet resilience and prayer. It is always dangerous when this shift takes place. Justice is too easily forgotten in religion."

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—Palwasha Kakar

methodologies to bring peace into the lives of our communities."

Participants agreed that an expansive list of stakeholders—including law enforcement, judges, and teachers—should be at the table when women's rights and human rights are addressed. "Partnership in the community is key," Magid shared, challenging those present to "go back home and think about the partnerships we can create." Building coalitions with

interaction of scholars and activists is a vital part of Zoloth's "theology of interruption." By engaging with the stories of activists, the scholarship is disrupted and forced to reconcile text and tradition with lived experience.

One proposed mechanism to connect activists and academics is to develop a "people's request for proposals." Conservative organizations have shaped policy through targeted research, and by creating a channel for activists to direct research toward the issues people face on the ground, religious scholarship can be responsive and relevant to ongoing social justice struggles. Fiorenza called for the creation of a think tank to conduct and collect such research, including a continuation of the work of the forum: debating scriptural interpretations and exploring religions in terms of justice for women, which always includes justice for men.

This call to continue the conversation was reframed by those who are threatened in their local contexts due to the conduct of their work. Mir-Hosseini articulated, "This has been an unreal safe space. We share the same values, and we can speak our minds. Tomorrow we go back to our own worlds, and we will be pulled by other forces. I want this safe space to endure." The participants overwhelmingly echoed this wish to convene again, to continue the conversation. The forum was "a conversation about having a conversation," Mir-Hosseini described, "and now we need to have the real conversation."

Presentations

Good morning, everyone! My name is Molly Melching — but in Senegal, my Wolof name is Sukkeyna Njaay. I'm here with Bacary Tamba from Tostan, and I'd like to give you a brief presentation about what's happening in Senegal and the seven other countries in which Tostan is working.

Tostan's mission is "dignity for all." We seek to empower African communities to bring about sustainable development and positive social transformation based on respect for human rights.

Today I would like to invite you to go back with me to Senegal to share the story of a village where Tostan has worked, a village representative of many of the communities where we work in eight African countries. It's a community in which 15 years ago there was no electricity, running water, school, or health center. And it was a place where no adult had been to school. The main values of this community were — and still are — peace, family, and community well-being. They use religious scripture — Senegal is 94 percent Muslim — so it was very important for them to follow the teachings of Islam to achieve their goals. They were also following customs and traditions (beliefs of their parents and ancestors) that they felt would help them achieve peace as well as family and community well-being.

Courtesy of Tostan

Marième Bamba, a solar engineer and Tostan facilitator, works to electrify communities, including her home village.

I want to introduce you to Marième Bamba, a member of that small community in Senegal. She was a participant in the Tostan program who had never previously attended school. She could not read and write in her own language or in French. She had never played an important role in community decision making. She had undergone the traditional practices of her parents and her ancestors, female genital cutting, and she was married when she was only 14 years old and had her first child at 15.

To really understand Marième, we must understand

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they discuss how to best change practices that might violate these human rights within their community.

Participants learn that they have a right to peace but also the responsibilities related to this human right. Peace resonates deeply with participants, because the aspiration for peace is so important and is so embedded in most African languages. All greetings revolve around peace. Phrases any foreigner learns immediately if he or she wants to fit in upon arriving in the community include: “Peace be with you!” “Are you in peace?” “Peace only!” “Is your family in peace?” “I pray that you will always be in peace.” “May God grant you much peace.” Within the context of the discussion on the human right to peace, we ask what African ancestral wisdom and religious teachings would say about this human right, and people agree that the religious text and traditional teachings always call for peace and well-being.

When participants examine certain deeply entrenched customs as part of the study of ways they can promote peace, they begin to realize that many of their practices are not leading to the goals they are seeking. Critical in this process is that people realize that it is not the custom or practice that counts most but rather the contribution that custom will makegs always call for pef, they begie, we that it isants

up about experiences, the more they feel empowered to take action for change.

The program not only incites social empowerment, it also leads to economic empowerment during the following years of the program. In order to improve health, the environment, and their economic conditions, people need literacy and numeracy skills as well as leadership and management skills.

Tostan uses empowering pedagogical methods to support the learning process. Women rehearse in the classes so that they feel comfortable speaking out in public. They even require that the men let their voices be heard. This is not about excluding men but is about promoting participation and rights for all people: men, women, and children. By including men, everyone becomes involved in building a society that is more just and equitable where there are peace and well-being for all.

Tostan teaches literacy through SMS texting because we found that this is what people wanted to learn and realized this was a wonderful way for participants to practice and use their new literacy skills.

Courtesy of Tostan

"Tostan" means "breakthrough" in Wolof. This human rights organization, based in Senegal, promotes a three-year, nonformal education program to help rural communities create their own vision for development.

They aren't going to be reading novels (we don't have many of those in national languages), but almost everyone now has a cell phone. They just didn't know how to do SMS texting. So Tostan developed a special module so participants could learn to navigate the phone and write messages to friends and family both near and far. Evaluations have found that this method has greatly improved literacy skills.

We also give value to all those African traditions that are positive and bring people together through song, poetry, and theater. The methods actively engage everyone and get even the shyest learner to discuss issues in a lively way. Classes are fun, so women love to attend after a hard day of work. They can express themselves for the first time, and gradually they learn to speak out, often for the first time. The oral tradition works because it is what people do best. We start where they are, using culturally familiar ways of learning and promoting community conversation around issues . Theeost

I want to emphasize that the results of our education program go far beyond ending female genital cutting. By using a holistic program, we are taking into consideration the deeper concerns of the communities and their goals for better governance, education, health, the environment, and economic growth. We introduce and allow people to discuss and find solutions that help achieve the well-being that people who live in remote and isolated rural areas are so desperately seeking.

We have achieved results in the community participation of girls and women who now are able to speak out with confidence and become engaged in issues previously too taboo to even mention. We have seen an increase in birth registration, which is so important for citizen participation, because one cannot vote, obtain an ID card, or go to school without
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Courtesy of Tostan

Women learn how to cook chapati with a solar oven. They report that when it is sunny, they cook their meals easily without getting dirty or inhaling smoke. In addition, they spend less money on firewood, and fewer trees are cut down.

who attends the public declaration abandons on that day. This is only part of the process, but we have learned that it is an essential part because it is a social norm, a question of reciprocal expectations and sanctions. When there is a social norm in place, it is necessary to build a critical mass toward change over time. The declaration is a way of saying "today we are publicly declaring that a great majority of people believe that this is no longer a good thing to do." Religious leaders speak out during these ceremonies and relate Islam's point of view, emphasizing that it is not a religious obligation.

I want to congratulate the participants here today from Al Azhar University, because we sent village participants to Egypt to meet with them. After their discussions, they returned to Senegal and traveled near and far, spreading the message that leading authorities of Islam told them that it was all right to abandon this practice. That was extremely important to everyone. We feel the momentum is building and that female genital cutting will soon be a thing of the past, even within our generation. We really believe we are on the way.

What happened when Marième and others in her community became educated? In the photo of her, she is in front of the health hut that the villagers themselves constructed. The community sent a participant to be trained as a health worker. Vaccination is now 100 percent, and health has greatly improved. Participants have constructed a school with five

Results in Marième's Village

- Total abandonment of female genital cutting
- One hundred percent vaccination
- Construction of school
- End of child marriage
- Solar power and SMS technology that aids economic development

classrooms for their children. They have ended female genital cutting and child marriage, and evaluations have shown that the abandonment is 100 percent in this village. They also have solar-electrified their village.

Marième was chosen to travel to India to train. Her husband told me, "If I hadn't been through the Tostan program, I would never have allowed her to go so far away." She went for six months to Barefoot College, became a solar engineer, and came back and trained others in her community. Together, they put up 50 solar units in her village.

When I went to visit, Marième said, "Molly, you must come to the next village with me and see the unit I installed in their church. Even though we are Muslim, our village decided to donate a solar unit for their church because we believe that nobody should discriminate because of religion." That is not all they have accomplished. A team of Tostan participants from five neighboring villages traveled to 148 other communities to speak with their relatives, explaining why they had abandoned female genital cutting and child marriage. This is what is so powerful about this whole process: It is the people themselves who are leading this movement. They have received new information, and they are spreading the information to others who matter to them. They are fulfilling their important goals of peace, family, and community well-being.

Marième's granddaughter will not be married at 14. She is going to school, she will finish school, she won't get pregnant at 15, and she will be allowed to travel and work wherever she likes.

At Tostan, we believe and have seen that change is possible within one generation, not just in Senegal but in all the African countries where we are working.

I'm pleased to open this seminar by reaffirming the power of education. Through education, grassroots dialogue, and collective and inclusive action—using the guiding principles of human rights and human dignity for all—we will be able to achieve positive change in our world more quickly than we ever could have dreamed possible.

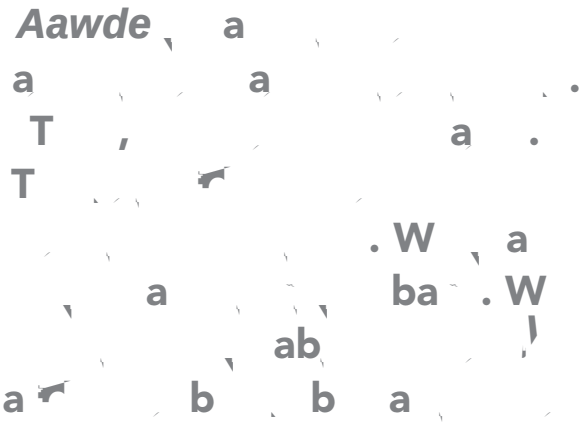
In 1983, I was chosen as the youngest person ever to represent the Jola-Fonyi ethnic group of the Ziguinchor area in Senegal in the Senegalese National Assembly. A good representative, when elected, is one that has in mind the defense of one's constituency, the population that has elected you to be its eyes, ears, and voice. Thus, as a member of Parliament, for five years I defended the communities that had elected me to govern on their behalf.

After serving in the National Assembly, I met with Molly Melching of Tostan in 2000, and we discussed my intention to bring Tostan to Casamance. At this time, there were serious challenges to implementing Tostan's model in Casamance, because it was an area with an active rebellion and many land mines. Casamance is an area from which people had fled, taking refuge in bordering countries such as The Gambia, Guinea Bissau, and Guinea, and in the capital of Senegal, Dakar. So it was difficult for a nongovernmental organization to be established in Casamance, but I had a conviction. And as President Carter once said: It is necessary that we know what we want and we know where we want to be. As a Jola-Fonyi, I was trying to save my people from all of the evils from which they were suffering. I was also trying to save all my sisters: the women, who were facing enormous difficulties. I decided it was necessary to go straight to Tostan to work on these issues.

Tom England

Bacary Tamba of Senegal speaks about mobilizing personal conviction to change social norms and end harmful practices such as female genital cutting.

Each time Tostan enters a community, they conduct a study at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of the program. We know that in each locality there are other nongovernmental organizations that have intervened and failed, perhaps because of ancestral habits or practices that slow down change. Thus, it is necessary to consider any previous cases in detail. At the end of each project, we must evaluate and be accountable to the people on the ground.



We started with 20 centers in an area near Casamance and Bounkili, working with Tostan's Community Empowerment Program. The program builds community capacity toward positive social transformation for the development of communities with respect to human rights. Know that wherever war breaks out, someone's right was not respected. If people are educated, all the religions—Islam, Christianity, and all others—will be practiced

properly. I will borrow from the Islamic tradition, which emphasizes learning to know oneself, to study, and to possess knowledge in order to learn how to respect others and oneself.

The community empowerment program is delivered in two modules: focused on preparation through discussion, and focused on learning and developing skills. It is necessary to know in order to plant. means to stir up the earth to prepare it for sowing. Thus, we stir up the earth. The ground we stir up is the spirit of the people. We make them want to come back. We question them about their lives and their being but also their participation in the development of human rights, because they have human rights, though they might not know it yet.

There are many rights, and imagine what these rights will do in the community. The first is the right to life. If each person has the right to life, then how can someone give himself or herself the right to kill? We know that the circumcision of a young girl is usually due to ignorance. Customarily, no one will know how the girl feels. Because these were the social norms of the society, the family would think they are doing what is good for the girl and for the community, so the girl can later find a husband. If one breaks down the standards of communities, one finds three types of standards: social, administrative (laws that say this and that), and personal conviction. (Because I believe it is moral, I will marry only one woman, despite prevailing social standards to the contrary. This is my personal choice.).

People gain understanding through education, and science has brought change and progress. We understand that education is also a right, necessary not only for the boys but also for girls. We did our best to register the maximum number of girls in school and to ensure they remained there. For future equality, women need to be able to earn diplomas, to balance the diplomas earned by men. To achieve parity in capacity, women must gain the knowledge that will enable them to take the places that men have occupied in their stead: to become ministers, directors, and anything else they want to be in life. For these reasons, people should be educated.

Addressing the right to hygiene and health also makes it possible for pregnant women to visit private clinics in the hospitals for pre- and postnatal testing. After childbirth, this right should give the child access to vaccinations, and a birth certificate will enable the child to obtain a national identity card, passport, and other legal documents, which are necessary for full exercise of citizenship.

We at Tostan believe that education is in the interest of the community and that teaching should not stop in the classes. Teaching reaches beyond the walls of the school through several methods: A person from the class agrees to take a few people from the village and teach them what was taught that day in the class. Teachers are allowed to teach the courses in public places, in the village centers. Finally, we have what is called community management, which continues the program after the Tostan training is complete. Community management makes it possible for Tostan to move into other villages that do not have the program and to share it with others. This is organized diffusion: creating a snowball effect and allowing the program to spread. As we are not able to be everywhere, we want to share our knowledge with the entire population of a village or locale where Tostan is established.

Female genital cutting is an ancestral tradition

allowing the pro ram to spread. As we are n t ablisi0 -1.273 T

With a great deal of humility—because he could have easily blasted me—he showed me that all it would take was to try; that trying would be enough for his family. So I agreed to meet with the father, and a couple of days later the father rounded the corner of the hotel with his little 6-year-old girl in tow. As that little girl turned the corner and I saw her, I was a goner. I thought about my own little girl, and that was it: There was nothing left to discuss. As Sister Simone Campbell said, "When your heart breaks on behalf of someone else, what is fear?" The fear that I would mess this up, the fear that I didn't have the expertise required to help this family, was gone. Suddenly, I had a broken heart for this family and their child with a broken heart, and I wanted to jump in to try and help.

I took the files and began knocking around to friends, contacts, and colleagues to try to see what I could do. The more I dug into this issue, the more I realized that it wasn't just this one girl. I heard Kurds saying that it was Saddam Hussein's chemical weapons that had played some role in drastically increasing the number of children in the city of Halabja who are born with these types of birth defects. The more I investigated and the more I learned, I actually saw American soldiers raising their hands saying, "My wife just gave birth to a child, and we have no history of cancer in our family and our child has cancer. We have no history of heart disease in our family, and our child has heart disease. We have no history of birth defects, and our child has a grotesque birth defect."

Following those stories and those soldiers and the story inside Iraq, I became aware of the research and the work of Dr. Samira [Al-Alaani]. Over time and through a lot of connections, serendipity, and God's providence—I believe God brought us together—I was able to respond to some of the research that she was issuing out into the world. She was calling for attention, saying, "This is what we are experiencing here in Fallujah in the wake of the war;" never making claims about causality, being careful not to point the finger or claim scientifically that she knew what was going on, but issuing numbers, reports, and photos, and saying, "Here, this is what we're seeing; you draw your own conclusions." Now I will hand over briefly to Dr. Samira, and then I will respond to what she is saying.

First, [illegible] the greeting of Islam that means "Peace be upon you with God's mercy and blessing." Ladies and gentlemen, this year, 2013, marks the 10th anniversary of the 2003 Iraq war. Since the invasion, the occupying U.S.–U.K.-led coalition forces and the Iraqi authorities have failed to fulfill their obligation to protect people's right to life and health, with devastating results for Iraq's people. Grave human rights violations, against international law, have been reported during and after the Iraq war. Most of the alleged violations have not been properly

Today, I am here among you as a messenger from Fallujah, or let me say, as a very close witness of the Iraqi Hiroshima. I have decided to tell today the life stories of the mothers in my city: aware of who did what, who encouraged, who kept silent, and who paid. I am a pediatrician, and I have worked in Fallujah since 1997. The story started in 2004 and has continued in a tragic series of events every single day until this moment. The mass use of dirty weapons in a city crowded with people has caused congenital malformations.

Women in Fallujah have different educational levels, different ideologies, and different ages, but they all share the same fear: congenital malformation. In the hospital where I serve, about 14 percent of the newborns come to life with various kinds of malformations. About 5 percent of children die during their first year of life, with about 55 percent of those deaths being due to congenital malformations. With such a high rate of malformations, an integrated chain of social and psychological consequences has appeared and evolved to become a barrier between every couple and their dream to become parents one day.

As a part of Iraq, my city's people never have had a proper chance to learn, educate themselves, and get enlightened, due to the wars, death, blood, sanctions, and poverty. In such a society, the mother suffers the blame either explicitly or implicitly for giving birth to a malformed child. This is what women in my city are going through every day: the dream of being a mother turned into a nightmare. Personally, I have witnessed the daily pain of watching children with no future and no hope in life. As a physician, I feel the pain. What about the mothers of those children?

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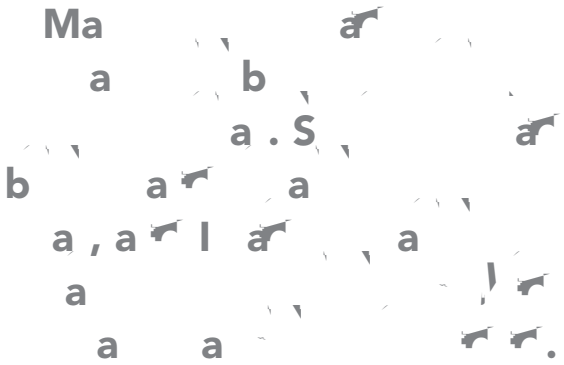
"other" anymore, the enemy; suddenly he was a Muslim just like Mathi. Mathi had come to see him in a totally different light as this doctor had saved the life of his daughter. The enemy monikers were gone as we all engaged in what we call "preemptive love." Mathi had engaged in preemptive love on behalf of his daughter: He had taken a risk against all odds and walked into enemy territory to love his daughter. The surgeon had taken a great risk to love me, to dislodge one of his own people to take in and provide surgery for an outsider. All across the board, we saw expressions of "Wow, he's just like me," of forgiveness, reconciliation, and a normalization of peace. I don't think that peace is a destination or a binary state, on or off. It's a discipline, and in that moment we were in peace, because we were flexing our peace muscles, we were exercising them. We call it "preemptive love."

When I attended the previous conference at The Carter Center on this subject, it was an eye-opener for me in the work that I do with women, and I want to thank President and Mrs. Carter for this opportunity. What I learned here is valuable, because we work to ensure that women in the church get information from policy documents, which they do not have access to otherwise.

The women of Liberia played a major role in bringing stabilization and an end to civil war in Liberia. The initiative taken by these women has healed Liberian women and caused many others to come to our country to emulate the work we did. As a result, there is a documentary called "Pray the Devil Back to Hell." It shows what women can do if they are together.



During the days of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), I worked with an organization called the Women's NGO Secretariat to raise the voices of women to testify about the gruesome acts committed against them during the second civil war. Many women had serious health problems resulting from the war. Some still had bullets and shrapnel from the war, and I had to make sure that these women received the assistance they needed. It was also my job to ensure that these women infused their thoughts into the final recommendations of the TRC.

The TRC process was a reality check for all Liberian women. We declared: Never again! Never will we permit ourselves to sit and let the men make the decision for us to be dehumanized and defamed and to become subjects and objects of sex. In the peace efforts, women, again, did not sit down. We asked ourselves what we wanted to do to ensure that women's voices continue to be heard. Among the initiatives we took during the transitional government was to make sure that women were represented in all the three facets of government: the executive, legislative, and judiciary.

During that time, we had three women representatives and more than 60 men in the legislature. But those three women fought, and during that period,

Tom England

Frances Greaves shares the gains Liberian women have won and discusses ongoing challenges to the consolidation of peace in Liberia.

two pieces of legislation came into being through the support of Liberian women: the Act on Rape, to criminalize rape, and the Inheritance Rights Bill. Women in indigenous marriages finally could acquire rights to the property they had gained collectively with their husbands. Prior to that law, women were chattel, and it was often said that women could not own property. Though it has been an ongoing struggle, for the first time in 2005, there were 14 women representatives in the national legislature. It was all because of the efforts of women who said our voices needed to be heard.

Since then, many actions have been taken and many commissions have been created in Liberia in which women are major players. For example, there are two women in the Governance Commission; the Anticorruption Commission is headed by a woman; the vice chair of the Law Reform Commission is a woman; and the Land Commission, National Election Commission, and several others have women representatives.

All these processes have helped consolidate the peace. However, the consolidation of peace also comes with facing yourself and facing the reality of what it is that you must not do to avoid resorting to violence anymore. Last week in Liberia, the national reconciliation process was officially launched, after almost 10 years of brainstorming and about five years after the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report. The report had called for prosecutions of responsible officials, and so it had been tabled. The 2011 elections almost resulted in political violence, so the reconciliation process was restarted. The women of Liberia continue to consolidate peace.

With all the gains, Liberia has not yet taken legal affirmative action for women. Having the first female president in Africa, we took an initiative last year to go to Senegal to find out how they had been able to acquire 40 percent representation by women in the Parliament. What a disgrace when the Senegalese women told us, "Why would you come to us when you have Africa's first female president?" So we decided to "tie our lapas" as we say in Liberia and go back and take initiative. We are in the process of popularizing a document that will enhance women's participation in all facets of government to ensure that when women's voices are heard, things that happened to us throughout the 14 years of our civil crisis will not be repeated.

I am really very happy to speak before this imposing assembly to tell you a little about what has happened in my country with regard to the normalization of violence against women. For more than a decade, my country, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), has been the victim of an unprecedented civil war. My country has fabulous flora, fauna, and natural landscapes, which are a gift from God. The population is ready to invest in the landscape for a lasting peace. Rich by our natural resources, this gift is not exploited by the population but torn away by invisible hands. The area is like a virgin among monsters. Arable lands, lakes and rivers, historical sites, and folk dances—all or almost all of this natural and cultural landscape is being irretrievably lost. Wars often are orchestrated by the multinationals and militias supported by foreign governments that build their fortunes with innocents' blood. Forced, violated, tortured, robbed, and killed, the populations are victims because their country has a wealth that nobody can deny. The country's cultural and ethnic diversity, which should be a source of pride and an asset as it is in the Americas, is instead one of the causes of the war. The population is poor: In the country of gold mines, the population cultivates vegetables. They have no houses to sleep in. The roads are not maintained.

Claudia Furaha Nfundiko reports from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, urging people of faith and religious leaders to pressure for an end to the war in that country in which women, families, and communities are facing the devastating consequences of the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war.

Congo, as you know, has earned the label "rape capital of the world." The consequences of this war are innumerable to the people. Without being exhaustive, we can list some of the violations: loss of human life, extreme poverty, permanent handicaps, proliferation of light arms, targeted assassinations, burning and destruction of villages, massacres of the civilian population, captivity of women, internal displacement, human capacity flight, and environmental destruction.

Since the beginning of the war, violence against women and children in the eastern DRC has become pervasive. Indeed, sexual violence is being used as a weapon of war. The bodies of women have become another battlefield for the attackers. It is the war within the war, because it is strategic and the results have proved it effective. Amnesty International reports that the conflict in eastern DRC has resulted in tens of thousands of women and girls becoming victims of systemic rape and sexual assault by armed groups.

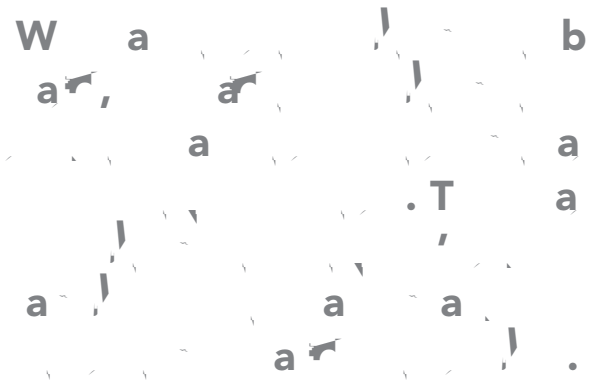
Women and girls have been attacked in their homes, in the fields, and wherever they conduct their daily activities. Many have been raped on several occasions or were victims of several assailants.

Others have undergone sexual torture, including the introduction of objects into the genitals. In many cases, armed groups have used women and girls as sexual slaves. Young boys also have been victimized. Rapes were sometimes accompanied or followed by physical abuse, torture, or murder. Acts are often made publicly, in front of the victim's family members and children. Some women have become pregnant without knowing the father of the child due to cases of mass rape. These poor children are born without love and without a sense of belonging, not even to their mothers who guard their lives. The community ostracizes them because they are regarded as the children of the enemy.

Now I would like to look at the role of the Catholic Church in this matter. It is a recent phenomenon to speak about sex acts on church premises. Speaking about rape is taboo because it relates too closely to sexuality; yet rape touches communities. Rape was used in a general and a systematic way as a weapon of war, as a tactic of destruction and dismantling of the family unit, which has the effect of destabilizing the whole community. Courage was required to speak about rape in the community,

We have talked a lot about the importance of working with religious leaders and the important role of those leaders to bring about social changes. I agree, but in some contexts, such as in the United States and especially in Muslim societies that are very patriarchal and conservative, religious leaders actually play a leading role in opposing social change. They join hands with the patriarchs and authoritarian governments to justify why there cannot be equality between men and women; why there cannot be law reform. They justify this in the name of Islam, in the name of God.

Many people forget that in many Muslim-majority countries, Islam is the direct source of law in public policy. The alliance between religious leaders, who uphold patriarchal and discriminatory understandings and practices of religion, and authoritarian governments is very often perilous for women's rights. Many Organization of Islamic Cooperation governments still maintain reservations about the U.N.'s human rights' treaties. A recent report shows that when



questioned why there cannot be changes in their law and practices to comply with the treaties' obligations, the most common answers were: because the laws in our countries are divine law; it is God's law, therefore, it cannot be changed as it is infallible. This is a constructed myth, a myth that must be broken both in national and international spheres.

I want to share the work of Sisters in Islam and Musawah, through which women are taking ownership of their faith and asserting their rights to define what it means to be living Islam on a daily basis as well as the role of faith in public policies. What makes us different is that since our beginning in 1989, Sisters in Islam has engaged religion from a rights perspective, long before it became fashionable to do so. Also different in our societies is that we want our own voices to be heard, instead of the voice of the religious authorities or scholars with whom we work. These are the voices of women's rights activists who want changes in our society and in our lives. We want to take the lead, to engage in public space and public debate on matters of religion that affect us as women.

Tom England

Zainah Anwar of Malaysia speaks about the work of her organizations to create public debate that is inclusive of women's realities on religious matters.

Working with scholars is extremely important because it provides us with knowledge that encourages us to speak out and challenge the religious authority, the patriarchs, and autocrats in government. It also has encouraged us to challenge the justification for men and women having different rights in Islam, because too often this means that in the substance and practice of the law, women have inferior rights.

Ziba Mir-Hosseini said yesterday that Islamic feminism is the unwanted child of political Islam that has emerged as a response to the failure of our religious leaders to engage with the realities of our life and their use of Islam to justify their control over women. I grew up with the belief that God is just and Islam is just. I always understood that the different treatment of my brother and me at home was due to culture and tradition, not religion. As an adult confronted with issues of domestic violence, polygamy, marital rape, obedience, and all forms of inequality in the private and public spheres—which are justified in the name of Islam—I was outraged. For me, God is a simple article of faith: God cannot be God if God is unjust. I

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means. How did we do this? We were just eight women. How did we open 1,400 years of patriarchy based on religion? We did this by using the media. We started by sending letters to the editor responding to contentious issues about religion: polygamy, domestic violence, hijab, etc., to argue with different interpretations and understandings and to share with the Muslim public the existence of diverse opinions in Islam, diverse interpretations in religion.

We started engaging with the public on the basis that if Islam is to be used as a source of law in public policy, there have to be public discussion and public debate about it. Public law must be open to public debate. It really began with us trying to create that public space. The greatest impact is that 23 years later, whenever matters on religion come up, the media comes to us, women come to us, and others come to us. They recognize us as a source of authority, even though traditionally we are not recognized as such. Understanding religion as a public issue, a moral issue, is extremely important for bringing about the changes we want to see.

Good afternoon. I am Fulata, and want to start from my name. I was born , which means I was born feet-first. By the time I was born, I was the youngest. My mother was in her 40s, but when my first sister was born, my mother was 18 years old. She was the third wife to my father. She was married as a third wife to escape the stigma of being divorced at age 16 from her first husband. She did not have much education, but one thing I remember about my mother was that every day she had a Bible next to her pillow. This Bible was the Tumbuka translation, one of the languages in Malawi, and every morning she would read the Bible before she did anything else. I became very curious about this book, so one day I asked her, "What is in this book?" She said, "Read it for yourself! I thought that you go to school!" I was not sure. I really wanted to read it, but because curiosity had the better part of me, I started sneaking to read the book.

As I read it over and over again, I discovered that I didn't identify very much as a Christian because, as the third wife's children, we were not baptized and, therefore, not accepted as proper children of my father. Thus, I was not very interested in this religion. But seeing how the Bible influenced my mother's decisions over and over again, I realized that to her the Bible was contextually an African book that was like a manual for daily life; it answered her questions. I don't know how at that time. I am so grateful to

I have found that using the Bible is very important, and one experience four years ago especially brought this home for me. I started at the World Council of Churches in 2007, and I am responsible for the program on Women in Church and Society. We have focused mainly on addressing violence against women by working with women and men. Three years ago, I was in Thailand for a meeting. With a team of 30 people, I was taken to a center where they keep women who have been rescued from trafficking. There are so many young women who are trafficked through the borders of Thailand. One particular girl was 14 years old and eight months pregnant. She was looking at me as I was walking toward her, and it was like I could not see her, in her face and in her eyes; she was not in her body. It was like I was meeting a body that didn't have a life in it.

It haunted me for a long time, and then I started talking to the people running this ministry, taking care of these young women, young girls, actually. I asked one of the leaders, "What do you do? How do you deal with these girls?" She said, "We teach them the Christian principles of forgiveness, because most of them have been trafficked and then abused sexu-

My journey into women's issues began with President and Mrs. Carter, when I marched for the Equal Rights Amendment many years ago in South Georgia. It changed the focus of my life and, ultimately, led me here. I am director and CEO of an organization called Street Grace, which began as a collaboration of churches that learned about the issue in Atlanta of domestic minor sex trafficking. We use this term to distinguish it from international sex trafficking that also occurs here. In our society—in our affluent, influential society here in the United States—we have this idea that we do not have these issues and problems. Yet, in my home state, the state I am proud to share with President and Mrs. Carter, hundreds of children will be trafficked to thousands of men.

Atlanta has been listed by the FBI as one of 14 cities where domestic minor sex trafficking is a major problem. I love this city, and this is not the way I want it to be recognized. The good news is that we are also beginning to be recognized at a national level for the work we are doing to combat trafficking through successful collaboration. I am going to talk specifically about collaboration around advocacy.

Street Grace's mission is to lead people, organizations, and leaders on a comprehensive path toward ending domestic minor sex trafficking. It begins with awareness. If you don't know that something is happening, then there is nothing you can do about it. The awareness that has been raised at this forum has been phenomenal. If we don't give you any way to do something about it after you are aware of an issue, you will simply be frustrated. So the second step is empowerment. Once you have been empowered, we want you to do something about it. That is why we have 52 community partners with volunteer opportunities that support the lives of children so everyone can become engaged. Someone said earlier that one person doing one thing, one time, in the life of one person—in our case, a child—can change their life forever.

I am going to talk about the importance of social change, and the indicator I am going to look at

Tom England

Cheryl Deluca-Johnson presents the collaborative strategies Street Grace has employed to combat domestic minor sex trafficking in Georgia.

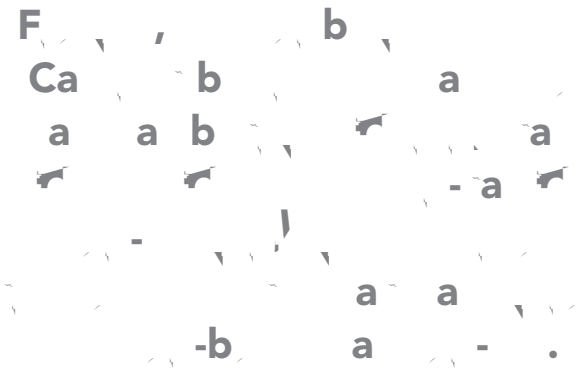
laid out that reasoning and got this question: "You're telling me that there is not a single child who is doing this to get an iPad, get their nails done, get their hair done?" I said, "That is not what is going on; nobody would choose this." They said, "You're telling me that no child has made this choice?" I said: "Yes, they have made a choice. And it is like us standing on the sidewalk watching someone jump from the sixth floor of a building. We look at them and think that this is a dangerous choice—this is going to hurt and probably kill them. What we don't know—that the person jumping knows—is that the building is on fire and they are making the choice that they think will cause the least harm in their lives. As a society, we have allowed that building to burn."

In 2011, we passed a new law that changed the penalty to life in prison and a $100,000 fine for anybody who trafficks a child. This is the result of collaboration between faith-based and community organizations and government officials. We also partner with the Georgia Department of Education to educate all the teachers in Georgia on this issue. Our men's group has also partnered with the attorney general to put out public service announcements about this issue. This is collaboration.

I moved to Atlanta from a different country: California. I grew up in good home, became a hippie, and came to Christ during the Jesus movement in the ’70s. My life has been forever changed. I am an advocate not only for women and boys in sex trafficking, but for anybody on whom the world seems to have turned a blind eye.

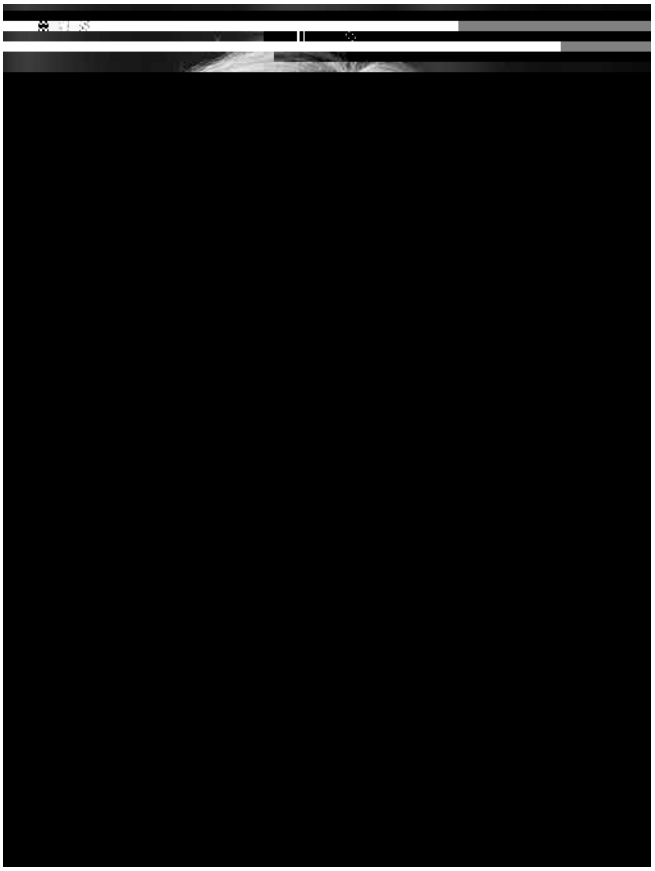
I want to share how our public actions have created internal tension. My organization, NETWORK, was founded 41 years ago in Washington, D.C., by 47 Catholic sisters who responded to a letter from our bishop. It said we should change from doing charity only; that we must do justice and work for systemic change. So we started working to change the laws that cause suffering among our people.

I have been the leader of NETWORK since 2004. Our first encounter of being publicly challenged by our Roman Catholic Church leadership was in 2010. There was an effort to change the health care system in the United States so that more people could have access to affordable care. Currently, we have over 52 million people who do not have health care; it is a scandal, it is immoral, it is wrong. This fight was a political battle, but in the end this bill is being passed and our Catholic Health Association came out in favor of it. I was helping them by writing a letter in support of the bill; we circulated the letter to ask Catholic sisters and congregation leaders to sign it.



What you may not know is that Catholic sisters helped create the U.S. health system in the first place—ironically, the system is now controlled by men, since they found out there is money in it—so Catholic sisters have authority in the issue of U.S. health care reform. I thought we could go public, using the media, if we had 20 signatures. Unfortunately, we only had 48 hours to do this. We got 58 signatures; I was deeply humbled and honored by this. What you need to know is what happened when our letter was ready to be published: Our U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops came out opposing the bill. I was told by a lot of media that it was the first public divergence within the Catholic Church on such political issues. But we won: We got the bill passed.

For me, the problem with the Catholic bishops is that their staff has become ideologically identified with the so-called pro-life movement in our country—which is actually more like pro-birth than pro-life. They said that the bill would allow federal funding to pay for abortion, which was different



Tom England

Sister Simone Campbell discusses the role of politics in religion and the desire for a clear faith voice she found while touring the United States with Nuns on the Bus.

work, emphasizing woman's personality and a respect for her unique existence. God says, "I will allow not the work of any worker from among you, whether

Working Groups Report

Presented by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Laurie Zoloth, and Ziba Mir-Hosseini

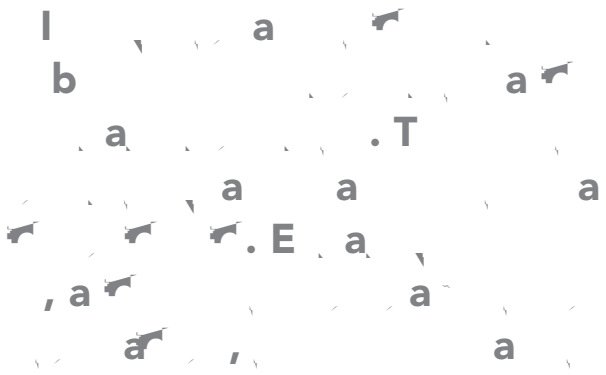
Religious leaders, scholars, activists, and experts participated in four working groups divided into four topic areas: physical integrity (including violence and harmful practices), family law, access to education and economic participation (including human trafficking), and public and political participation (including religious and political leadership). Working group moderators were Ziba Mir-Hosseini, Andrea White, Sita Ranchod-Nilsson, and Ritu Sharma, respectively.

Facilitator Seana Steffen set up processes that helped the working groups accomplish a range of outcomes—from reflection into the impact of scriptural interpretation on the rights of women to exploration of strategies effective in making fundamental shifts toward greater respect for human rights, case studies, and ideas for future work and collaborative approaches. Alison Boden worked closely with each of the four moderators to capture the results of these discussions. All participants agreed that more time should be allotted to these discussions and that only the surface has been scratched. Therefore, continued collaboration and a widening of the conversation are main recommendations that emerged from the forum as a whole.

Sacred and normative texts have tremendous authority, legitimacy, and power to establish norms for communities and families. Interpreting texts,

textual interpretations or practices subvert them. Religions do not endorse violence, for instance, so we need to point out when violence is actually done in the name of being faithful to a text.

- The effectiveness of humility and nonconfrontational communication was highlighted, in addition to discussions about "interruptive" voices of women, which some might view as confrontational. Both approaches are necessary, depending on the circumstances.
- Also discussed was the necessity of using language that is accessible and acceptable to those whose minds one wants to change (e.g., sometimes saying "mother, sister, daughter" instead of "women"). Some urged refraining from using the word "feminist" if it will be heard in a negative light. The concept here is that it is important to build relationships, whereupon trust can lead to expanding understanding and, eventually, to expanding and inclusive language.
- The groups discussed the importance of relying on a person or institution with the religious authority and the community respect to affirm that a harmful practice or interpretation is not consistent with the religion's history, ethics, or texts. The example was given of an imam from Senegal traveling to Al Azhar in Egypt to hear from religious authorities there that female genital cutting is not an Islamic practice but rather a cultural one. This approach can prevent naysayers from holding out.
- It is important to use existing networks for sharing information and changing habits. Everyone has networks, even the village beggars.
- Changes in interpretation need to begin within communities, not from without. Finding (or creating and/or training) allies within communities is a necessary first step for those who wish to see changes to interpretations and the resulting enhancement of women's rights.
- Community, community, community. Successful work for changed interpretations and practices needs to acknowledge and use the fact that many people simply don't act in isolation but in relationship to family members, civic community, and ethnic community, not to mention religious community.
- It is critical to identify the "prompt," as one group called it—the deeply held need or ethical conviction in a local person that will summon them to action. Organizers might call it their "self-interest." What will make a person become involved in change, in reinterpretation? Sometimes it is their own bodily integrity; sometimes it is that of those they love most; sometimes it is the simple desire to live as faithfully as possible, living in accordance with the religion's accurate intentions and meanings and a desire to live in greater accordance with their religion's ethical mandates.



- There is a need to get people to rethink things that they have always assumed are natural and inevitable because they are all they have ever known (e.g., pain and suffering for women in childbirth or intimate relations). We all defend what we know to be natural and inevitable (in this case, genital cutting) without learning what is behind it that is constructed and responsible and what is human agency.
- Stories and narratives about real people are the most powerful tool. Human interest and compassion respond to the joys, sufferings, and real experiences

of real people. Stories create empathy and can begin the process of breaking the silences on taboo subjects.

- Create a book of best practices
- Provide collections of stories of courage in advocacy for women's rights in religious communities
- Publish a gender-sensitive edition of the Qur'an and other religious texts that have not already been reimagined in this light
- Distribute movies and videos that can tell stories most effectively and convey information to those who can't read
- Publish training manuals
- Publish translated advocacy tools from the United Nations into the concepts and theologies of religious communities
- Publish documents that come out of this conference

Convening

- Bring together area clergy for training on women's rights and textual interpretations
- Plan meetings that permit scholars and activists to work together in a nonconfrontational setting, teaching them how to partner on women's rights
- Request that The Carter Center and the American Academy of Religion convene an annual gathering of scholars interested in these issues
- Convene experts on how advances in science can improve advocacy for women
- Bring together both secular and faith-based advocacy organizations to increase the power of their partnerships
- Convene people on mental health and women's rights in Iraq postwar

Advocacy

- Request public declarations on women's rights from leading religious institutions (Al Azhar)
- Have the international community hold others accountable for the agreements to which they willingly have become a party (e.g., the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework)
- Advocate for admitting more women into institutions of formal religious education
- Cultivate partnerships with village leaders
- Translate disadvantage into opportunity, as one participant said. Know more about how our advocacy for and with others can teach them to turn their disadvantage into opportunity or how those of us not disadvantaged can be a support or advocate in that process
- Use digital formats so that the tons of good work can be more accessible
- Integrate religious leaders into shadow-reporting to the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women; request help with data collection and dissemination to treaty bodies in Geneva
- Advocate to hold religious leaders and communities accountable to the Women's Convention and other instruments

Programming Collaborations

- Mentor community-based collaboratives (i.e., Tostan training center in Senegal)
- Ask academic departments, activists, and faith-based organizations to partner to share wisdom and action plans
- Partner with the United Nations for religious liter/Acro(Convene peovide s)Tj/ceaty bodU.N. ingffhe tons o7 cacy organreligi-1.2ar admitting

women, including measurable recommendations and deadlines for action

- Establish a collaborative process on human trafficking based at The Carter Center, where various stakeholders can gather and examine best practices
- Ask the World Council of Churches and The Carter Center to organize regional forums, such as this forum, where discussions can be organized across sectors, cultures, and religious communities
- Establish a working group for an international conference/workshop/seminar to bring together organizations with Al Azhar, Musawah, etc. Could possibly be held at the Biblioteca Alexandrina in Egypt and could start a new conversation on an Islamic jurisprudence of human rights and translate the idea of human dignity into legal norms and laws within an Islamic framework. Would also hope the conference could create a new curriculum

Good morning, it is a great honor to be here. I am grateful to Karin Ryan of the Carter Center's Human Rights Program for inviting me to this important conference and for her and her associates' work preparing for it. I am especially appreciative that we heard the story of Tostan before we go to a different story, namely the story about a woman in the New Testament.

To approach our topic, sacred texts and women's rights, I want to share some reflections as to how scripture can be a life-giving word that sustains justice for women and radical democratic equality rather than a monument of stone inculcating the inequality of women and anti-democratic mindsets in the name of God. After only sketching these questions in a short run-through, I want to focus attention on a story in the New Testament, in order to place a

think twice, if not three times, to adjudicate whether we are meant by so-called generic terms—such as humans, men, slaves, Americans, or brothers—that are deeply inscribed in sacred scriptures. Since according to Ludwig Wittgenstein the limits of our language are the limits of our world, such a change of language pattern, which sounds trivial, is a very important step toward the realization of a new feminist consciousness when reading sacred scriptures and other religious or cultural texts.

Moreover, reading the Bible for justice or women's rights, one cannot afford to engage in a purely apologetic or purely academic reading. Rather, by making feminist discourses on kyriarchal prejudice central to the exploration of sacred texts, we are able to attend both to the kyriarchal politics of otherness and subordination inscribed in scriptures and to their visions of justice and well-being. Throughout centuries, the Bible has been used both as a weapon against and a resource for subjugated wo/men. The Bible has been invoked both for and against wo/men's struggles for access to citizenship, public speaking, reproductive rights, theological education, or ordained ministry. In these often bitter debates and struggles, the opposing parties continue to cite religion not only for and against wo/men's full participation in religious leadership but also for and against the full citizenship of free-born wo/men; the emancipation of enslaved wo/men; colonized wo/men; the equal rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people; or against economic and reproductive rights of poor wo/men and their children.

Consequently, no serious reform of society in the interest of wo/men's emancipation will be successful if it does not seek also to advance the reform of religion and of sacred scriptures. Since all reforms are interdependent, one cannot change the law, education,

greater (God). If the judge reacts to the pestering of the widow, how much more will God respond to the prayers and outcries of God's people?

In Luke's redaction, the story of the woman is used to inculcate the admonition to prayer. It is very clear that this Lukan text draws a problematic kyriarchal image of God by likening God to the unjust judge who only gives in because he is pestered. Scholars sense this problem when they try to explain why the parable speaks in such a negative fashion about God. Most importantly, when read in a situation of violence against women, the Lukan version does not empower women to resist such violence but encourages us to pray harder so that a male God will come to our rescue. It fosters a spirituality of quietism that accepts violence and, in typical feminine fashion, waits for the all-powerful man to come to one's rescue.

The story has a contrary meaning, and functions quite differently, if it is read against the grain of the Lukan meaning. If one pares away the Lukan interpretation in verse one and verses six through eight, a different story emerges. In this story, the two characters, the judge and the widow, are drawn as opposites. The judge is clearly marked as unjust, because he is said to "neither fear God nor respect people." The widow is defined not by her gender but by her actions; she is characterized as tirelessly insisting on justice. "She kept coming to him, asking

many widows lived in poverty and dire straits. Rather, I want to point to the pitfalls of this argument: Not all Jewish widows were poverty-stricken and needed male support, since widows could own property, live independently, and inherit their husband's estate if they were so designated in his will. The book of Judith portrays such a wealthy and independent widow.

To see the woman of the parable first of all as a victim of the social system overlooks that she acts as an assertive member of the community. Moreover, such a reading keeps women in violent home situations from recognizing and identifying the powers and resources for resistance and survival still available to them. The story works because of its stark opposition and sparse characterization: It is a widow at the center of the action. The widow is characterized as bold, assertive, and persistent; she has suffered injustice and will not rest until she gets her rights. Justice must be done. She won't be silent and tolerate injustice. She is trying to ensure that justice prevails, but in her view, the cause of justice and her side of the case are

I want to thank the two previous speakers: Molly [Melching], for a stunning and beautiful example of how empowerment looks and works in the lives of individual women, and the great teacher of us all, Dr. Schüssler Fiorenza, for the way a beautiful textual example can enliven us. I want to begin by speaking both conversationally and academically. I want to make four points and then talk about them in a more careful way. The four points I want to make are these:

First, although I'm a huge fan of human rights and am incredibly happy to have been invited to represent my university and the American Academy of Religion here, I have a quarrel with the term "rights" because I believe that rights are not freestanding but are always correlative and need to be seen in relationship to correspondent and correlative duties. When we think of rights—the right to life, the right to food, the right to health—we always have to think of our obligation to feed, to plant, to heal, and to teach. We have duties that are correlative that enabhr71puiralTe qf our

No, this is the fast I desire [not the one you've been doing]: to unlock the fetters of wickedness, and untie the cords of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free; to break off every yoke. It is to share your bread with the hungry and to take the wretched poor into your home; when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to ignore your own kin. Then shall your light burst through like the dawn and your healing spring up quickly; your vindicator will march before you, and the presence of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then, when you call, the Lord will answer and when you cry he will say: , , here I am.

Now to read the Hebrew scripture is to read the powerful call for justice. To accept the duties of the covenant means to understand that the text calls us toward an inescapable and fundamental responsibility for the poor, the vulnerable, and the marginalized—too often women. In this text, the usual call and response of the Hebrew Bible are reversed, because unlike the many stories when God calls and human beings then struggle to say, "Here I am, , ," in the Isaiah text of the haftorah, God is present, , only after human beings act with justice and compassion toward the vulnerable. Because I believe in human duties and the rights correlated with duties, I believe that scripture can allow us to understand that our duties and moral actions have to come first and that they are prior to the building of a just world. Act first, act righteously, says scripture, for faith is the first act of ethics.

How does this work for teachers? When one is teaching theology, one is teaching translation. For when one engages the texts with our students, the moral gesture has already begun. Theology is an orality, an encounter interrupted by urgencies and nrk fias ur oso tabuted, becauxt of tan oralaxt con(revnslatfiaselfrlds ad, becauof)TjT*(tis misggle tp(breabouteD(,eve Jewisa

of what it means to have a thing. Ought this not be the case that theology is intrinsically and structurally optimistic? I'm going to suggest that theology is "just between us," and try to present the fact that while all these claims that theology must be just, and intimate, and other-regarding, it's always a matter of a collective, of a community of meaning, which is in its very core revelation a translation to a social whole. Thus, translation is this fundamental theme, and if that's the case, how we speak to each other is central.

Another text: In the Hebrew scripture, the Torah is given to the Jews, who are assembled, several times. Sometimes they accept it and sometimes they reject it. But the last time it's given is in Deuteronomy, right before they go into the land. After it's given, a separate command is made: Take this text, take this Torah, and build a big wall, a stone edifice, and write the words of everything that I've said, says Moses in Hebrew scripture, on these stones. And here is the text: "After that they brought the stones, built an altar, and plastered it with plaster. And they inscribed thereon all the words of the Torah in 70 languages," as it is said very plainly.

Let's spend some time on this text, for it gives such a powerful and vivid image of a public theology. Look at the work and the energy of the people: bringing huge stones, maybe rolling them, lifting them, so they are firmly placed one wide slab across the next one; drawing the sand, the water; making plaster and taking it to hand and smoothing to make a white blank face on which to write carefully each and all the words of the Torah, in language after language after language 70 times. Does each one step up to whisper the translation to the scribe? The letters are black against the white, very plain. Anyone can see and read them, women and men, with a shock of familiarity. "There is my language up there, my words." Surely the Torah is translated at that moment, and surely it's intended to be so. Surely, the "as told to me and I tell it to you" quality of revelation is an act of translation. But let me note that the translation is always a choreographed event in time

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the work. As we just saw, that is the whole point of such thinking. Our thinking is stopped, and started again and again, as the cases and the people of the cases—the women we just saw—asked for our attention and help and corrected us when we picked up our text, and they become part of our analysis. In contemporary ethics, this is like the complex world in which we see in the Torah and the Talmud, always being interrupted by the need to adjudicate the case, as the one Elisabeth just showed us, which comes in from the marketplace.

I also want to make a profound claim about the act of love that teaching is, if it is truly teaching. We must love the stranger we teach. We see this gesture as a moral gesture across defended terrain. In religions, the boundaries we struggle with are not geographical. They're temporal, linguistic, and cultural, and because of that, I think they may be even more defended. In the world of teaching, the complex relationship between text, community, and practical reason is at stake. How do we think about how to live a good life and then how do we do it? Thinking and arguing and argument are all that academics have in our moral community. We have to think ourselves into the position of the other; that is the moment of ethics. To understand this moment—to slow it and reflect on the encounter of ethics and on what is occurring—means that each separate self can understand that the plight of the other is only a breath away from one's own plight. That reversibility makes ethical encounter possible and makes it decent.

All of us live in some kind of a hypertext modernity in which many intense, rapid, and powerful paths and languages emerge at once—in which the language of theology, redemption, miracle, and resurrection are taken from us and claimed by science, especially the biological sciences. I argue that argument over the semiotics of scriptural texts, as we just did, becomes the way that the rabbis allow us to reread them and thus to transmit the Torah. That is the way that antiquity gets translated into modernity.

In the academy, we are faced with a loss of our power. In fact, it sometimes seems to me that the theological language is the only language that is left against the power of the marketplace, which has taken up against all the other languages. There has been a sweeping victory for accountancy, the organizing principle of the market. What appears to matter most are units of things you can buy. They are measured by weight and size. We are asked in the university to do outcome studies, in which students rate us by number. They rate their happiness with our class and the amount of pleasure they have from how a professor uses her audiovisual equipment. We judge one another by the amount of money we are paid, which we are paid in recognition of the amount of money we bring to our universities with grants or football tickets. We are directed by excited faculties of computer science to use the enormous arena of the Internet to create large classes, and we measure students in the tens of thousands. We can now teach a whole crowd of people and never even see their faces.

One can "have" students this way—having as in possessing many great things—and one can produce knowledge this way, as in producing a great many

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100 years, we've divided knowledge into parts or units and counted their worth, which is to say we have used engineering as a way of understanding the world and observational science as a way of knowing the real as a series of organizations of the smallest part. But ought this to be the case for us now? Or should we be asking a different question about wholeness, communities, and power? Should we be teaching one another a basic concept: What does this text mean to you? It is about meaning0E

I always enjoying listening to theologians, but I am an anthropologist, and I am afraid that my presentation is going to be very down to earth. I would like to talk about the politics of religion, gender, and state. I want to make the claim that we are at the threshold of a new phase in these politics, both locally and globally. One of the important features of this new phase is that it starts by unmasking the global and local power relations and the structures within with which women have to struggle for justice and equality.

In the Muslim context, this struggle for equality is as much theological as it is political. It is hard, and sometimes futile, to decide where theology ends and politics start. It is really impossible for me to separate them from one another. In the last two decades of the 20th century, we saw a major confrontation between political Islam, on the one hand, and feminism and human rights, on the other. Later I will define what I mean by political Islam. This confrontation made very clear and transparent the intimate link between theology and politics. The link has been inherent in the Muslim legal tradition, but not everybody recognized it. Now, though, it is exposed in front of us, and many Muslim women feel it in their bones. As a result, we see the emergence of new voices and new forms of activism that no longer shy away from engagement with religion as well as activist Muslim women who are reclaiming their faith and are speaking in the name of their religion. Musawah, the organization that Zainah Anwar and I founded, is one of those voices.

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on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) put the issue of women's rights and gender equality at the heart of international human rights law. Even though the issue had been there before, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and in other conventions, CEDAW gave it a new international legal mandate and also helped to create a transnational feminism. In the Muslim context, in the 1980s we saw the emergence of women's nongovernmental organizations. Women had been active from the beginning of the 20th century in organizations but not in nongovernmental organizations, not in getting funding from outside their own governments. We also see the transplantation of new ideas and a global feminism as well as the start of a new conversation.

Also, political Islam gained its biggest success in the form of the popular revolution in Iran in 1979. The 1979 revolution in Iran turned into a near-dictatorship, not that different from the monarchy it replaced, but let's not forget that it began full of hope and promise; political Islam then was more or less unknown. What really made the Iranian revolution was not a demand for a return to the premodern interpretations of Shari'ah but popular support for change, for justice, for democracy: Different forces came together to topple the shah's regime, which had the full support of the United States.

What we then witnessed in the 1980s was really a confrontation between two "isms." One is political Islamism. We know now after 34 years what it is about, but in the 1980s it was still a promise—a promise of justice, a promise of democratization, and a promise of independence—and many women joined political Islam because religion is the essence of justice for them. Political Islam came with the slogan of "return to Shari'ah," but what we got, in practice, was a return to premodern, patriarchal, and tribal interpretations of Islamic law. Shari'ah is the essence of justice for Muslims; in Muslim belief, it is the revealed law as found in Islam's sacred texts. Shari'ah literally means "the way," but what we get from the Shari'ah is always an interpretation of these texts by the community of scholars. Different interpretations led to the different schools of Islamic law: the Sunni 4, Hanafi, Shafei, Maliki, Hanbali; and the Shia. At the time these schools of law emerged, as with other premodern systems of law, the notion of gender equality was not inherent to the conceptions of justice. In the earlier part of the 20th century, we witness the reform and modernization of legal systems and laws. In all areas of law—with the exception of family law—Islamic jurisprudence, or fiqh, was replaced by new laws inspired by Western concepts.

Thus, 1979 is important because we see the return of premodern Islamic legal concepts; we got the laws in Pakistan, which didn't come through a popular revolution but through a coup d'état, using Islam as an ideology. In Egypt, we had the abandonment of certain legal reforms, and in Iran we had the abandonment of the 1967 family law reforms. The 1980s also saw the expansion of the human rights discourse, the emergence of international women's nongovernmental organizations, and a growing confrontation between Islamism, or political Islam, and international feminism. By the end of the decade, however, new feminist voices emerged among Muslim women, aiming to reclaim their faith and the justice they knew to be inherent to Islam, from the Islamists who, they felt, were distorting their religion. In my writing I have characterized these new feminist voices as the unwanted child of political Islam, unwanted because the political success of the Islamists in countries like Iran actually brought home to Muslim women what it means to live in a so-called "Islamic

state." Political Islam also achieved power at a time of unprecedented literacy, when women themselves could read the sacred texts and recover and reclaim the voice of justice. Many women came to distrust the dominant patriarchal interpretations of the texts.

The second turning point came in the aftermath of 9/11/2001. The illegal invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq were both justified partially in the name of women's rights and human rights. Remember, political Islam oppressed people in the name of Islam, but invasion and violence now were done in the name of women's rights and human rights. Of course, that has a history in the colonial era, so it is not new. In the new century, we see the failure of political Islam, unable to deliver justice, and at the same time human rights and feminism unable to deliver, unable to protect. It is then that the gaps between the various ideals and practices become clear: There is a gap between the ideals of Islam and what is done in its name; also there is a gap between the ideals of feminism and human rights and the practices of

it is here that the feminist voices and the scholarship in Islam have something to offer, because they are also addressing the past, which has been patriarchal. Let's face it: Muslim legal tradition, like any other legal and premodern tradition, was patriarchal. Feminist voices in Islam are important because they enable us to look at our troubled relationship with religion and to re-examine the dogmas. In the 20th century it has become clear that the complete privatization of religion is not going to happen. Religion is now back in the public space, as the Arab Spring has made clear. The theory that religion should be private and kept out of politics isn't an option, at least in the Muslim context.

I think it is important to ask what it means to be

Mobilizing Faith for Women

Friday , June 28 , 2013

9:30 A.M.	Piano Selection, Benjamin Warsaw
9:40 A.M.	Welcome and Introductions, Karin Ryan
9:50 A.M.	Opening Remarks, Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter
10:15 A.M.	Remarks, Mona Rishmawi, O ce of the U.N. High Commissioner of Human Rights
10:35–11:00 A.M.	Overview from Working Groups • Alison Boden
11:00–11:25 A.M.	Break
11:30–12:15 P.M.	*Pa el I*-Aligning Religious Life With Equal Dignity and Human Rights • Moderator, Andrea White o Bacary Tamba o Zainah Anwar o Simone Campbell
12:15–1:00 P.M.	Discussion of Panel I
1:15 –2:15 P.M.	Lunch

Dr. Riham Bahi is an associate professor of international relations in the faculty of political science at the American University of Cairo. Her research interests include Islamic feminism, global and transnational aspects of political Islam, and U.S. relations with the Muslim world. Dr. Bahi's work includes papers on Islamic and secular feminism and Muslim women's movements.

Chief Sidiq Gimala III leads the delegation from Ghana of His Eminence Sheikh Dr. Osman Nuhu Sharubutu, National Chief Imam and Grand Mufti of the Republic of Ghana. Chief Sidiq Gimala III is acting president of the National Council of Muslim Chiefs in Ghana.

Sheikh Mustapha Ibrahim is chairman of the Islamic Council for Development and Humanitarian Services and SONSETFUND and is also a key member of the advisory board of His Eminence the National Chief Imam of Ghana.

Alhaji Khuzaima is executive secretary of the Islamic Peace and Security Council, charged with implementation of the National Chief Imam's Peace and Security Project. The organization is working to sustain and maintain peace and security through collaboration with law enforcement and work within the Muslim and Zongo communities in Ghana. Alhaji Khuzaima is personal assistant to the National Chief Imam of Ghana.

Rashidat Muhammed is a human rights activist in the Muslim community in Ghana and co-founder of Answarudeen Women. She is a member of the delegation of the National Chief Imam of Ghana.

Abdul Majeed Abdul Mumin is assistant to Chief Sidiq Gimala III, acting president of the National Council of Muslim Chiefs. He is a member of the delegation of the National Chief Imam of Ghana.

Abdul Basit Rufai is assistant to Chief Sidiq Gimala III, acting president of the National Council of Muslim Chiefs. He is a member of the delegation of the National Chief Imam of Ghana.

Dr. Ziba Mir-Hosseini is a legal anthropologist and activist, specializing in Islamic law, gender, and development. She works with the Women's Islamic Initiative in Spirituality and Equality and is a founding member of Musawah Global Movement for Equality and Justice in the Muslim Family. She has held many professorships and fellowships and is an author, film director, and commentator on Iranian affairs and women in Islam, with expertise on the role of male authority in Islamic family law.

Sheikh Ali Al-Khafaji is the secretary-general of the Islamic Gathering for Reform and Peace in Iraq. As one of Iraq's most prominent voices, Sheikh Ali pursues reconciliation and demonstrates interdenomination, interethnic, and interfaith peacemaking. Sheikh Ali promulgates that theology would strengthen the recognition of human rights, including women's and children's rights. He also spearheads initiatives in orphan care in 16 provinces in Iraq.

Jeremy Courtney is co-founder and executive director of the Preemptive Love Coalition in Iraq, which trains Iraqi heart surgeons and nurses in the skills necessary to treat the prevalence of heart defects in children, a terrible consequence of the recent conflict. Jeremy's vision is driven by his Christian faith; both he and his wife, Jessica, see their work as a way to strive in pursuit of the Christian mission of healing and love.

Dr. Samira Al-Alaani is a pediatrician at Fallujah General Hospital and part of the Preemptive Love Coalition who has firsthand experience treating the birth defects brought on by the war in Iraq. She has documented the increase in rates of birth defects in Fallujah, reporting an astonishing 37 anomalous births in one three-week period in her hospital alone.

Frances Greaves is the founder of an interdenominational women's organization in Liberia called Voice of the Voiceless, which was involved in working with women who testified at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), providing medical referral for war victims of sexual and gender-based violence and infusing women's views into the final recommendations of the TRC report. She has previously served as project coordinator and consultant on women's issues with numerous organizations. She is now vice chairwoman of the board of directors of an umbrella organization that brings together over 75 women's, community, and faith-based nongovernmental organizations.

Ella Coleman is assistant secretary-general for social services at the National Traditional Council of Liberia. Previously, she has served as a member of the Task Force for Free and Compulsory Primary Education in Liberia, encouraging young people, especially girls, to go to school. Mrs. Coleman also has served as a community coordinator assigned in West Point township under the Forum for African Women Educationalists, encouraging girls to go to school and monitoring students on the various campuses to ensure safety from sexual harassment. In addition, she works to educate women from traditional communities on their rights and responsibilities.

Chief Zanzan Karwor is national chairman of the National Traditional Council of Liberia and the country's head Zoe (spiritual leader). In 2012, the Liberian National Legislature created the independent National Council of Chiefs and Elders, of which Chief Karwor is also chairman. The function of the new council is to help preserve positive aspects of Liberia's traditional culture, to assist the government in achieving sustained peace and reconciliation, and to provide independent advice on national issues. The Carter Center has partnered with the National Traditional Council at national and local levels for the past four years in a dialogue on issues related to custom and the rule of law, including women's rights and traditional practices, and has supported the council at national and local levels to resolve disputes and improve local governance.

Pewee Flomoku is a Carter Center program officer and native Liberian who is now helping to coordinate the Liberia justice project. The project is focused on strengthening the rule of law in Liberia through partnering with grassroots civil society organizations.

Zainah Anwar founded Sisters in Islam 25 years ago in Malaysia to advocate for a women's rights framework within Islam and is also a founder of Musawah,

a global movement focused on equality within the Muslim family, launched in 2009. As a Muslim and a feminist, she sees her faith and the Qur'an as an asset in the struggle for social justice, arguing that oppressive Muslim practices are a perversion of the true message of Islam.

Hauwa Ibrahim is visiting lecturer on women's studies and Islamic law at Harvard Divinity School. She is also senior partner at Aries Law Firm in Nigeria, which she founded there to continue to work for women's rights from within the Shariah court system and where she has tried over 150 cases. She has written the book on advancing women's and human rights within the Islamic court system: "Practicing Shariah Law: Seven Strategies for Achieving Justice in Shariah Courts", published this year.

Mossarat Qadeem works with religious and tribal leaders from the Federally Administered Tribal Areas in Pakistan to counter extremism. She founded PAIMAN Alumni Trust, a nonprofit group promoting socio-political and economic empowerment for marginalized Pakistanis. With PAIMAN, she established the country's first center for conflict transformation and peacebuilding. Her on-the-ground experience contributes to her knowledge in political processes and international standards for political inclusion, civic education, and women's leadership in Islam.

H.E. Sheikh Omar Ahmed Tijani Niass is the high representative of H.E. Sheikh Ahmed Tijani Ibrahim Niass, spiritual leader of the Tijani Sufi order of Islam, one of the largest sects of Islam in West Africa, with an estimated 50 million followers.

Sheikh Muhamed Chérif Dioup is an Islamic rights specialist and Child Protection Program officer at Tostan in Senegal. He has deep understanding of Islam and Islamic education and has been active in advocating for better regulation of Islamic schools while supporting their important role in society.

Molly Melching is the founder and executive director of Tostan, named for a Wolof word meaning "breakthrough," whose mission is a product of her vision to achieve sustainable development through respecting and empowering local communities. Molly has gained international recognition thanks to the outreach work of grassroots communities to abandon female genital cutting and child and forced marriage in Senegal, Burkina Faso, The Gambia, and Guinea after having participated in the Tostan program. Molly has been honored for her expertise in nonformal education, human rights training, and social transformation.

Bacary Tamba is national coordinator of the diaspora for Tostan, as well as regional coordinator of Ziguinchor. Founded in Senegal in 1990 to promote an innovative approach to development involving community empowerment through indigenous language and learning methods, Tostan's model has now spread to programs in eight countries and 22 languages in Africa. It has been widely recognized for its success in addressing the practice of female genital cutting and has been endorsed by figures such as former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

Birima Fall is the national coordinator of Tostan's Community Empowerment Program in Somalia.

Tostan's program in Somalia has made considerable strides, working with the community, the culture, and the religion in beginning to reduce the practice of female genital cutting.

Dr. Fulata Moyo is program executive for Women in Church and Society with the World Council of Churches. In this capacity, she coordinates the council's work around the globe with regard to women. She is a theologian, historian, activist, and academic in the areas of gender and HIV/AIDS. Her work and interests have focused on gender and ecological justice and sexuality in the context of HIV/AIDS.

Mona Rishmawi is chief of the Rule of Law, Equality, and Nondiscrimination branch of the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). She has held many different positions throughout the U.N. system and has established herself as a leader in the field of human rights law over more than two decades, with roles such as legal adviser to the OHCHR and senior human rights and gender adviser to the special representative of the U.N. secretary-general in Iraq, Sergio Viera de Mello.

President Jimmy Carter served as president from Jan. 20, 1977, to Jan. 20, 1981. Significant foreign policy accomplishments of his administration included the Panama Canal treaties, the Camp David Accords, the treaty of peace between Egypt and Israel, the SALT II treaty with the Soviet Union, and the establishment of U.S. diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China. He championed human rights throughout the world. In 1982, President Carter became a university distinguished professor at

Dr. John Hardman is president and CEO of The Carter Center, providing leadership to achieve the Carter Center's commitment to prevent and resolve conflicts, enhance freedom and democracy, and

change in the public policy arena. In addition to serving as executive director of NETWORK, a Catholic organization lobbying for social justice, she is also an attorney and poet. She is perhaps most well-known for the letter she wrote to Congress in support of health care reform and helping to organize the Nuns on the Bus tour of the United States after American nuns of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious were chastised by the Vatican for their feminist views and activism.

Dr. Alison Boden serves as dean of religious life and the chapel at Princeton University. Her writing and teaching interests have focused on such topics as human rights and religion, religion and violence, religion in the academy, and a variety of social justice issues. She has authored a book titled "Women's Rights and Religious Practice" and is an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ.

Dr. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza is the Krister Stendahl Professor of Divinity at Harvard Divinity School and has done pioneering work in biblical interpretation and feminist theology. Her teaching and research focus is on the question of biblical and theological epistemology, hermeneutics, rhetoric, and the politics of interpretation as well as on issues of theological education, radical equality, and

committees within the U.N. system. Prior to being appointed principal representative, Dugal served as director, Office for the Advancement of Women, at the Baha'i International Community. Before she relocated to the United States in 1988, she practiced law before the Supreme Court of India.

Dr. Randall Bailey is the Andrew W. Mellon Distinguished Professor of Hebrew Bible, Area I, at the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta. His work is focused on ideological criticism and how race, class, gender, sex, and power intersect in the Bible text. The Interdenominational Theological Center is a Christian, ecumenical, graduate professional school of theology.

Dr. Ann Kruger is an associate professor at Georgia State University's College of Education. Her research interests include discourse analysis and development of social cognition. She has published on cultural learning and the learning of culture and, most recently, on the mimetic theory of religion and culture.

Cheryl Deluca-Johnson is the executive cirector of Street Grace, a faith-based organization in Atlanta, Ga., dedicated to ending sex trafficking of minors in Atlanta and eventually the United States. Ms. Deluca-Johnson has been responsible for the overall development of the organization's mission and priorities and is the organization's main representative in the public arena.

Aaronde Creighton is a member of the board of directors of Street Grace and a professional management consultant specializing in leadership and organizational development.

Pastor Paul Palmer founded the Atlanta Dream Center with his wife, Patty, after following their faith and trust in God to move to Atlanta from California, where they originally found their faith and began their ministry. The Atlanta Dream Center is a faith-based nonprofit located in the Old Fourth Ward, one of downtown's most vulnerable neighborhoods. The center has had a huge impact on the community with its message and community outreach programs.

Dr. Sita Ranchod-Nilsson is director of Emory's Institute for Developing Nations (IDN), a joint project started in 2006 with The Carter Center. She leads IDN in working to build a community of scholars, practitioners, and policymakers who are committed to working together to fight global poverty. IDN supports multiple projects with a gender focus, from transitional justice in sub-Saharan Africa to gender-based violence and rule of law in Liberia, as well as health initiatives. Ranchod-Nilsson's previous research and experience as a professor and fellow have focused on gender politics, nationalism, and the state.

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Dr. Elizabeth M.Bounds is an associate professor of Christian ethics with the Candler School of Theology at Emory. She has authored and edited numerous books and articles, including “Coming Together/Coming Apart: Religion, Modernity, and Community” (1997) and “Welfare Policy: Feminist Critiques” (1999). Her interests include peace-building/conflict transformation, restorative justice and the prison system, democratic practices and civil society, feminist and liberation ethics, and transformative pedagogical practices.

Blank is an independent philanthropic consultant. Formerly, she served as the vice president of network support of Teach For All, the vice president of alumni affairs and the deputy vice president of admissions for Teach for America, and as the executive director of GirlVentures in San Francisco, a nonprofit organization with a mission to inspire adolescent girls to develop and express their strengths. Dena was the founding chair of American Jewish World Service’s Global Circle. She specializes in the curriculum development, management, strategic planning, and development of nonprofit organizations focusing on youth.

We Can't Wait: We Must Mobilize Religion and Belief to Advance Women's Rights

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even support them.

In countries where religion is a source of law and public policy, particular interpretations of sacred text can lead to discriminatory and unjust rules which are presented as divine law, infallible and unchangeable; women's efforts at law reform to achieve equality and justice are demonized as an attack against religion or sacred text itself.

With the growth of global trade and international travel, the proliferation of human trafficking threatens the lives of millions of victims of this pernicious form of slavery.

Lack of access to education and independent economic opportunities feminize poverty and lead to premature marriage and traffi

We call on religious and traditional authorities to guide their communities to align their spiritual and social lives with the promise of universal human rights, duties, and human dignity and to focus on religious traditions and texts that support this task.

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Statistics

FAITH **WOMEN: THE CHALLENGES** THAT

FAMILY LAW AND NORMS

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

One out of three women experience violence, in 85% of cases the woman's husband or partner is the perpetrator.[i]

One third of the world's countries have no legislation against domestic violence[ii]

FEMICIDE

Globally, 38% of female murder victims were killed by their intimate partners.[iii]

In Australia, Canada, Israel, South Africa and the United States, between 40 and 70 percent of female murder victims were killed by their intimate partners.[iv]

EARLY " ##!

Over 60 million girls worldwide are child brides, married before the age of 18, primarily in South Asia (31.3 million) and sub-Saharan Africa (14.1 million)...

Women who marry early are more likely to be beaten or threatened, and more likely to believe that a husband might sometimes be justified in beating his wife.[v]

PHYSICAL INTEGRITY

SEXUAL ASSUALT

Up to 76% percent of women, varying by country, say they have experienced sexual assault, but less than 11 percent reported it.[vi]

In the U.S. it is estimated that one in every five women will be raped before leaving college.[vii]

The first sexual experience of some 30 percent of women was forced.[viii]

Worldwide, up to 50 percent of sexual assaults are committed against girls under 16... An estimated 150 million girls under the age of 18 suffered some form of sexual violence in 2002 alone.[ix]

FEMALE GENITAL CUTTING

Approximately 100 to 140 million girls and women in the world have experienced female genital mutilation/cutting, with more than 3 million girls in Africa annually at risk Ô aq ∃ Ī #C ₾ ή

FAITH **WOMEN: THE CHALLENGES** THAT

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FAITH **WOMEN: THE CHALLENGES** THAT

THE DISPROPORTIONATE IMPACT OF AND MILITARISM

ENVIRONMENTAL AND HEALTH HAZARDS

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“Carter Says Faith Used Against Women.”

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“Voices of Faith Challenge Violation of Women’s Rights.” Also on July 8.

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“Speaking Truth.”

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