Is there an Islamic Feminism?
Is it an oxymoron?
Is Islam really compatible with Women’s rights?
What is Islamic Feminism?
"We need to start by asking some basic questions: Whose Islam? Whose feminism? Who is speaking for Islam? Who is speaking for feminism? These questions remain unaddressed in most debates, whether in academia, media, or activist forums."

Ziba Mir Hosseini, a founder of Musawah and an Islamic Feminisit
Muhammad Abdu (1849-1905) first one to make the argument, used today by Islamic Feminist “that it was Islam and not the West, that first recognized the full and equal humanity of women”

He claimed that regulations concerning polygamy and divorce are “backward” and “degraded”

Call for “Ijtihad” or legal reasoning to reinterpret the religious texts.
1892, first magazine, Al-fatat, for women edited by a woman, Hind Nufal, an Arab Christian

However, some reformists were so close to the British administration. When they proposed ideas to reform Islam, their message was rejected by the rest of the population. In Egypt Qasim Amin was one of them.
Malak Hifni Nassef (1866-1918): one of the very first voice of feminism in Egypt without affiliating herself with westernization.

“we cannot assume that all men who write about women are wise reformers. Their words must be carefully scrutinized, and we must be wary of man...being as despotic about liberating us as he has been about our enslavement”
EARLY FEMINIST

- Huda Shawrawi founder of Egyptian Feminist Union (1879-1945), greatly influenced by Eugenie Lebrun (French Feminist)

- Zeinab Al-Ghazali (1917-2005) more religious feminist

- Nawaal Sawdawi (1931-) more secular feminist
Haddad was a feminist. In the 1930 book “Our Women in the Shari 'a and Society” he advocated for expanded rights for women and said that the interpretations of Islam at the time inhibited women.

“a society in which women are not liberated is not truly free.”
FATIMA MERNISSI (1940-2015)

- Born in Morocco 1940
- Sociologist
- One of the very early Islamist feminist
- *In 1975: she publishes* “Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in a Muslim Society”
- “The Veil and the Male Elite: A Feminist Interpretation of Islam”
- She casts doubts on some hadiths attributed to the Prophet to justify misogynistic interpretations of the texts.
A global movement emerged around 2009.

**Sisters in Islam** civil society organization committed to promoting the rights of women within the frameworks of Islam and universal human rights, Zeinah Anwar is one of the founder.

**Musawah**: Equality in Arabic

Fight for justice and equality within the Islamic tradition
The notion of Qiwamah, usually interpreted as equivalent to man superiority over woman

Inheritance

Divorce. Three forms of divorce: consensual, by the man and by the woman
Divorce is twice. Then, either keep [her] in an acceptable manner or release [her] with good treatment. And it is not lawful for you to take anything of what you have given them unless both fear that they will not be able to keep [within] the limits of Allah. But if you fear that they will not keep [within] the limits of Allah, then there is no blame upon either of them concerning that by which she ransoms herself. These are the limits of Allah, so do not transgress them. And whoever transgresses the limits of Allah - it is those who are the wrongdoers. *Quran 2: 229*
A divorce is only permitted two times: After that the parties should either stay together on just terms, or separate with kindness. It is not lawful for you, (men) to take back any of your gifts (from your wives). Except when both parties fear that would be unable to keep the limits set forth by Allah. If you (judges) do fear that they would be unable to keep the limits set forth by Allah, then there is no blame on either of them if she gives something for her freedom. These are the limits set by Allah—So do not break them; If any (person) does step beyond the limits set forth by Allah, such persons wrong (themselves as well as others).
TYPE OF ISLAMIC DIVORCES

- Granting of Divorce by the Husband – *Talaq*
- Separation by way of consent between the parties – *Khula*
- Dissolution of Marriage – *Faskh-e-Nikah*
- When the power of *Talaq* is transferred to the Wife
“For men is a share of what the parents and close relatives leave, and for women is a share of what the parents and close relatives leave, be it little or much - an obligatory share.”

*Quran (4:7)*
“Allah instructs you concerning your children: for the male, what is equal to the share of two females. But if there are [only] daughters, two or more, for them is two thirds of one's estate. And if there is only one, for her is half. And for one's parents, to each one of them is a sixth of his estate if he left children. But if he had no children and the parents [alone] inherit from him, then for his mother is one third. And if he had brothers [or sisters], for his mother is a sixth, after any bequest he [may have] made or debt. Your parents or your children - you know not which of them are nearest to you in benefit. [These shares are] an obligation [imposed] by Allah . Indeed, Allah is ever Knowing and Wise” . Quran (4:11)
“Men are in charge of women by [right of] what Allah has given one over the other and what they spend [for maintenance] from their wealth. So righteous women are devoutly obedient, guarding in [the husband's] absence what Allah would have them guard. But those [wives] from whom you fear arrogance - [first] advise them; [then if they persist], forsake them in bed; and [finally], strike them. But if they obey you [once more], seek no means against them. Indeed, Allah is ever Exalted and Grand.”

Quran (4:34)
“idribuhunna” the word has been used many times in the Quran to mean: to hit, to travel the earth, to set up, to condemn and to give examples. Thus scholars interpret *idribuhunna* in different ways. Whereas many interpret it to mean "to strike", others hold that the term means "to separate".
The 2007 translation *The Sublime Quran* by Laleh Bakhtiar translates *idribuhunna* not as 'beat them' but as 'go away from them'. The introduction to her translation discusses the linguistic and sharia reasons in Arabic for understanding this verb in context. The Prophet never beat his wives, and his example from the Sunnah informs the interpretation of this verse. This interpretation is supported by the fact that some other verses, such as (4:101) which contains word *darabtum* (derivation from *daraba*), demonstrate also the interpretation of Arabic word *daraba* to have meaning “going” or “moving”.
- Officially launch in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
- 250 activists, scholars, legal practitioners, policy makers from 47 countries: Turkey, Gambia, Egypt, Pakistan
MUSAWAH, 2009, KUALA LAMPUR
Musawah operates on the belief that Islam is not inherently biased toward men: patriarchy within Muslim countries is a result of the way male interpreters have read Islamic texts.

Musawah empowers women to shape the interpretations, norms and laws that affect their lives, then push for legal reform in their respective countries.
According to progressive scholars, the concept of *idribuhunna*, which has traditionally been interpreted as “to beat,” also means “to go separate ways” and can serve as confirmation that it is sometimes permissible for a woman to end her marriage.
Women are claiming the authority to speak on Islamic law and to participate in the construction of meaning. Musawah’s ambition is to multiply and amplify this voice at an international level.
"The Quran has more than 6,000 verses, and only four of them can be explained in a patriarchal way," explains Mir-Hosseini. "The rest are clear-cut on the issue of gender equality. The question is why these four verses became the basis for so many laws." These are the kinds of questions Musawah wants to see discussed openly.
Secular feminists say that pursuing justice within Islam is a losing battle because the process of interpreting Islamic sources is inherently subjective.
Islam = patriarchy, old

Feminism = Western civilization, modern

How to reconcile both?
Western feminism did not reject the entire Western heritage

Leila Ahmed said

“Adopting another culture as a general remedy for a heritage of misogyny within a particular culture is not only absurd, it is impossible”
AND WHAT ABOUT THE MAIN STREAM SCHOLARS AND MUSLIMS IN GENERAL?

- Suspicion
- Marginalized
- Feminism is imported from the West then necessarily not genuine
- Bring back memories of colonialism, imperialism
In 2004, Moroccan Parliament passed a bill that defines marriage as an equal partnership between spouses, with equal responsibility for the family. It gave women the right to divorce and also protected them from talaq, an Islamic practice that gives husbands the right to dissolve a marriage at will.
In June 2012, Jordanian women demonstrated to protest a law that allows rape charges to be dropped if the perpetrator marries his victim.

In May 2013, the King Khalid Foundation in Saudi Arabia ran a highly visible campaign demanding legislation against domestic abuse, and in September 2013, in an unprecedented move, the kingdom passed the law.
In 1990, about 47 Saudi women collectively took to the streets in their cars to challenge the law that bans them from driving. Many were arrested and lost their jobs.

In October 2013, after Sudanese women were detained in anti-government protests, women formed a silent wall to demand their freedom, which resulted in President Omar al-Bashir releasing them.

Today’s battle in Saudi Arabia is about the male guardianship system.
The current Tunisian law permits individuals to distribute only one-third of their inheritance in a will, and cannot grant that third to any of their legally defined heirs (such as their daughters and sisters) without the consent of the others. (based on a Hadith)

The difficulty here is that allowing individuals to freely allocate all of their inheritance contradicts the aforementioned hadith limiting wills to only one-third. (accepted in Shia interpretation)

the International Republican Institute revealed that 63 percent of Tunisians—including 52 percent of women—oppose equal inheritance.
**SOME MAIN DIFFERENCES IN INTERPRETATIONS OF THE TEXTS**

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VERSES TO INDICATE EQUALITY

“Indeed, the Muslim men and Muslim women, the believing men and believing women, the obedient men and obedient women, the truthful men and truthful women, the patient men and patient women, the humble men and humble women, the charitable men and charitable women, the fasting men and fasting women, the men who guard their private parts and the women who do so, and the men who remember Allah often and the women who do so - for them Allah has prepared forgiveness and a great reward.” *Quran (33:35)*
“And their Lord responded to them: Never will I allow to be lost the work of [any] worker among you, whether male or female; you are of one another.” *Quran (3:195)*
“We have given dignity to the children of Adam.” *Quran (17:70)*
American scholar of Islam
She is interested in gender and Quranic Studies.
She delivered the Friday Khutba and led the Friday prayer in 2005.
She is one of the pioneer of the Islamic Feminist current

Many of her ideas are based on the notion of “Tawhid” in Islam. The unicity of God. Woman is an agent on Earth to do the “work” of God as well as the man.
Yussuf al-Qaradawi criticized her actions: “The currently extant juristic schools agree that it is not permissible for women to lead men in the obligatory Prayer, though some scholars voice the opinion that, under certain circumstances, a woman who is well-versed in the Quran may lead the members of her family, including men, in prayer on the basis that there is no room for stirring instincts in this case”
She is a Moroccan doctor
She was part of “The League of Oulema of Morocco”
Islam does not have an inherently unequal message.
The problem starts with the distorted interpretations of the sacred texts specially during the Golden Age of Islam
Colonialism made the problem worse
Professor at Richmond School of Law, in the US.

She founded Karamah. (Muslim Women Lawyers for Human Rights)

Its primary mission is to educate both Muslims and non-Muslims about the just, gender equitable foundation of Islam.

Al-Hibri work is centered on developing an Islamic jurisprudence and body of Islamic law that are gender equitable and promote human rights and democratic governance.
All the authors insist that there are many forms of Islamic Feminism.

They all believe in the sacredness of the Holy Text and don’t want a Feminism with a sexual liberation (copied on the Western feminism)

Trying to bring change in the religious and political institutions across the countries
ZITA BOURBON PARMA WIFE OF CHARLES, EMPEROR OF AUSTRIA, 1916
VEILED WOMEN ALSO KNOWN AS LES PLEUREUSES OR MOURNING WOMEN, WHOSE HEAD IS COVERED WITH BLACK CLOTH TO COMMEMORATE THE PASSION AND CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS TAKE PART IN A PROCESSION IN ROMONT, SWITZERLAND, FRIDAY, 18 APRIL 2014.
EASTER CELEBRATION IN ITALY, 2012
JEWISH WOMEN
YOUR THOUGHTS...