

For International Women's Day

A Public Meeting on Sharia Law, Sexual Apartheid and Women's Rights

March 7, 2009

6:00-8:00pm

Conway Hall, London

Biographies of Speakers

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SARGOL AHMAD is a rights activist and heads the International Campaign against Civil Law in Kurdistan Iraq. She worked as a teacher in elementary schools during 1991-2000 in Iraqi Kurdistan; was a member of the representative committee of the Independent Women's Organisation in Kurdistan; and in 1998 co-founded the Centre for the Defence of Women's Rights in Iraqi Kurdistan. During 1998-2000 she served as Secretary of the Teachers' Organisation of Kurdistan and was head of the Centre for the Defence of Children's Rights. In 2000 she was forced to flee Iraq for Turkey where she was active with the Committee for the Defence of Iraqi Women. She has now resettled in Canada and is a member of the leading committee of the Organisation of Women's Liberation of Iraq. She is also anchor of the Kurdish programme of Secular TV.

YASMIN ALIBHAI-BROWN is a journalist and Chair of British Muslims for Secular Democracy. She grew up in Uganda and completed her M.Phil. in literature at Oxford in 1975. She has written for major newspapers and magazines in the U.S.A. and U.K., and is now a regular columnist for The Independent and the Evening Standard. She is also a radio and television broadcaster and author of several books, including: No Place Like Home, an autobiographical account of a twice-removed immigrant; Who Do We Think We Are? on the state of the nation; and After Multiculturalism, which looks at the globalised future. From 1996 to 2001 she was a Research Fellow at the Institute for Public Policy Research. She is also a senior fellow at the Foreign Policy Centre. In June 1999, she received an honorary degree from the Open University for her contributions to social justice. She is a Vice President of the United Nations Association, UK, and a special ambassador for the Samaritans.

NASER KHADER is a Danish politician and founder of Democratic Muslims. He was born in 1963 in Damascus. Khader graduated in Middle East Studies, Odense University, and has an M.A. in political Science from the University of Copenhagen. For many years, he was a member of the Danish Parliament representing the Center Party. He has served as City Councillor and as a member of the Danish Council of Ethics; the Management Committee of the Building and Works Foundation; the Management Committee of New Europe and the think-tank on integration. He is also an ambassador for UNICEF. In 1998 he received the Danish Authors' Association award for Peace and International Understanding.

KENAN MALIK is a writer, lecturer and broadcaster. He is visiting senior fellow at the Department of Political, International

and Policy Studies at the University of Surrey. His books include The Meaning of Race, Man, Beast and Zombie, and Strange Fruit. His new book From Fatwa to Jihad: the Rushdie Affair and its Legacy, will be published in April by Atlantic Books. He is a writer and presenter on Radio 4's Analysis a panellist on the Moral Maze and has written and presented many TV documentaries.

YASSI MOLAZADEH is the Legal Co-ordinator for the One Law for All Campaign against Sharia Law in Britain. She is a law graduate from the University of Essex. She studied LLB Law and received her BA in July 2008. She is currently taking a gap year to prepare for the Bar Vocational Course. She plans to pursue a career as a barrister in family and criminal law.

MARYAM NAMAZIE is Spokesperson for the One Law for All Campaign against Sharia law in Britain. She is also a founding member and spokesperson for the Council of Ex-Muslims of Britain; National Secular Society's 2005 Secularist of the Year award winner and an NSS Honorary Associate; spokesperson of Equal Rights Now - Organisation against Women's Discrimination in Iran; producer of TV International English; Central Committee member of the Worker-communist Party of Iran; Vice President of Gay and Lesbian Humanist Association; Distinguished Supporter of the British Humanist Association and co-editor of WPI Briefing. She is involved in the Third Camp against US militarism and Islamic terrorism. Maryam was one of Elle Quebec's 45 outstanding women of the year in 2007. Her blog has been ranked one of the top 100 atheist blogs.

PRAGNA PATEL Pragna Patel is a founding member of the Southall Black Sisters and Women Against Fundamentalism. She worked as a co-ordinator and senior case worker for SBS from 1982. She is currently the chair of SBS. She has written extensively on race, gender and religion.

FARIBORZ POOYA is head of the Iranian Secular Society, established to bring an end to the control of Iranian public life by religion. He is also one of the founding members and chair of the Council of Ex-Muslims of Britain. He took an active part in the 1978-79 Iranian revolution and opposed the establishment of the Islamic regime in Iran. He left Iran in 1979 and organised opposition to the Islamic regime in the UK and Europe. He currently hosts Secular Society TV on New Channel TV. Fariborz is co-editor of WPI Briefing and has written numerous articles on the role of Islam in maintaining dictatorships in the Middle East.

CARLA REVERE has an M.A. in English language and literature from the University of St. Andrews, and is a graduate of the College of Law. She specialises in civil law relating to property, commerce and employment. She teaches civil litigation and advocacy courses sponsored by the College of Law, as well as academic and advocacy courses to solicitors. She volunteers as a member of the Bar Standards Board Complaints Committee, and is Vice President of the National Secular Society. She represents the NSS at debates and conferences, including in the House of Lords at the launch of the "One Law for All" campaign.

SOHAILA SHARIFI (meeting chair) is a women's rights activist, author and writer. She is involved in the One Law for All Campaign against Sharia Law in Britain, is a Central Council Member of Equal Rights Now - Organisation against Women's Discrimination in Iran, Editor of No Hijab publication in Persian, Management Committee Member of the Council of Ex-Muslims of Britain, presenter and producer of TV International in Persian, and Central Committee member of the Worker-communist Party of Iran.

Biographies of Art Competition Judges

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DEEYAH was born Deepika Thathaal to Sujni Muslim Pakistani parents in 1977 in Oslo, Norway. She is a singer, composer and human rights activist. She is often dubbed the “Muslim Madonna.” Her style contains elements of pop, metal, electronic and world music, particularly a fusion of Pakistani pop and classical sounds. She trained under the great musician Ustad Bade Fateh Ali Khan. She was later signed by a large independent record company Kirkelig Kulturverksted where she recorded two earlier albums with her mentors and other maestros. Deeyah has since produced controversial tracks referring to free speech and women’s rights. She has appeared in several music videos in collaboration with renowned producers and singers.

ANTHONY GRAYLING is Professor of Philosophy at Birkbeck College, University of London, and a Supernumerary Fellow of St Anne’s College, Oxford. He has written and edited many books on philosophy and other subjects; among his most recent are a biography of William Hazlitt and a collection of essays. For several years he wrote the “Last Word” column for the Guardian newspaper and is a regular reviewer for the Literary Review and the Financial Times. He often writes for the Observer, Economist, Times Literary Supplement, Independent on Sunday and New Statesman, and is a frequent broadcaster on BBC Radios 4, 3 and the World Service. He is the Editor of Online Review London, and Contributing Editor of Prospect magazine. In addition he sits on the editorial boards of several academic journals, and for nearly ten years was the Honorary Secretary of the principal British Philosophical Association, the Aristotelian Society. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, and in 2003 was a Booker Prize judge. He is also Honorary Associate of the National Secular Society.

JOHANN HARI is an award-winning journalist who writes for the Independent. He also writes for the New York Times, the Los Angeles Times, Le Monde, Le Monde Diplomatique, The New Republic, El Mundo, The Guardian, The Melbourne Age, the Sydney Morning Herald, South Africa’s Star, The Irish Times, and a wide range of other international newspapers and magazines. In 2007 he was named Newspaper Journalist of the Year by Amnesty International for his reporting on the war in Congo. He has been nominated for many other awards, including Columnist of the Year at the British Press Awards, the Orwell Prize, and the David Watt Prize. He has reported from Iraq, the Gaza Strip, the Congo, Bangladesh, India, the United States, Venezuela, Rwanda, Peru, Mexico, the Central African Republic, Syria and the United States.

POLLY TOYNBEE is President of the British Humanist Association. She read history at St. Anne’s College, Oxford, but left before graduating to work in factories and schools to document the lives of low-paid workers for her book Hard

Work: Life in Low-Pay Britain. She worked as a hospital porter, “dinner lady” in a primary school, nursery assistant, call-centre employee, cake factory worker and home care assistant. She then went into journalism, and worked for The Guardian before joining the BBC where she was social affairs editor from 1988-1995. She rejoined The Guardian, and also writes for The Observer and the Radio Times. Currently, Toynbee serves as President of the Social Policy Association. She was awarded honorary degrees by London South Bank University and the University of Leeds. She was made an Honorary Doctor of The Open University for “her notable contribution to the educational and cultural well-being of society.”

