**SEXUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN MUSLIM SOCIETIES IN SOUTH / SOUTHEAST ASIA**
**Jakarta, Sept. 23 – 26, 2004**

**organized by**
**Women for Women's Human Rights (WWHR) - NEW WAYS**
**and Women's Health Foundation**

***"First South/Southeast Asian Conference on Sexuality and Human Rights in Muslim Societies"***

Twenty-five NGO representatives and researchers from Muslim societies in South and Southeast Asia met in Jakarta, Indonesia to discuss pivotal human rights issues related to sexual and bodily rights, sexual politics, power and gender in Muslim societies. The three-day meeting, organized by Women for Women's Human Rights (WWHR)-New Ways and Women's Health Foundation, brought together prominent activists, scholars and NGO representatives from Bangladesh, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Lebanon, Malaysia, Pakistan, Philippines and Turkey, who are working towards the realization of sexual and bodily rights in Muslim societies in the region and in the Middle East.

The participants called upon their states and the entire Muslim world, to take all possible legal, social and political measures to eradicate human rights violations related to sexual rights and bodily integrity.

A press conference was held on the last day of the meeting, where participants affirmed that "This meeting, a first of its kind in the region, constitutes another step in our determined efforts on the national and international levels to combat all human rights violations related to sexual, bodily and reproductive rights in Muslim societies". Emphasizing the fact that social justice and the dignity of women and men are enshrined in the Koran, the press statement concluded that sexual oppression was a result of a combination of political, social and economic inequalities and cannot be justified by Islam.

The discussions focused on the fact that conservative and religious right forces were on the rise not only in the Muslim world but all around the globe and were trying to reinforce traditional mechanisms of control over women's sexuality and create new ones through practices like sexual violence, forced marriages, honor crimes, female genital mutilation, marital rape, unsafe abortion and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, which are falsely related to Islam. The themes discussed during the meeting were,

- Sexuality, Islam and Politics
- Discourses on sexuality in Muslim Societies
- Human rights violations related to sexuality, including sexual harassment, FGM, honor crimes, sexual coercion and violence, marital rape, sexual abuse, forced marriages, virginity testing, barriers to safe abortion and sexual health, as well as human rights violations against gays, lesbians and transgender people.
- Women, gender, sexual orientation and sexual politics
- Current activism efforts to promote sexual, bodily and reproductive rights as human rights in Muslim Societies, challenges and strategies
- Sexual, bodily and reproductive rights at the United Nations Level

**PRESS STATEMENT**

**SEXUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN MUSLIM SOCIETIES IN SOUTH / SOUTHEAST ASIA**

**Jakarta, September 24-26, 2004**

We, as prominent NGOs and scholars from Bangladesh, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Lebanon, Malaysia, Pakistan, Philippines and Turkey have come together in Jakarta to explore issues concerning "Sexuality and Human Rights in Muslim Societies".

We are all committed to the realization of human rights and gender equality in our societies. We salute and support the efforts that have been taken by civil society groups in Indonesia to promote women's human rights.

In a majority of Muslim societies, sexuality, especially women's bodies and sexuality are increasingly becoming arenas of intense political and social conflict. Conservative and religious right political forces are fiercely trying to reinforce traditional mechanisms of control over women's sexuality and create new ones. Wide-spread practices such as sexual violence, forced marriages, honor crimes, female genital mutilation, marital rape, unsafe abortion and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity constitute blatant human rights violations.

Social justice and the dignity of women and men are enshrined in the Quran. Sexual oppression cannot be justified by Islam, but results from a combination of political, social and economic inequalities. We strongly protest the misuse of religion to legitimize any human rights violation.

This meeting, a first of its kind in the region, constitutes another step in our determined efforts on the national and international levels to combat all human rights violations related to sexual, bodily and reproductive rights in Muslim societies.

We call upon all states and the entire Muslim world to take all possible legal, social and political measures to eradicate human rights violations related to sexual rights and bodily integrity.

Signatories,

- Amal Abd-el Hadi, New Women's Foundation, EGYPT
- Anita Rahman, Women's Health Foundation, INDONESIA
- Asghar Ali Engineer, Centre for Study of Society and Secularism, INDIA
- Dede Oetomo, GAYa NUSANTARA, INDONESIA
- Dina Siddiqi, Independent Scholar, BANGLADESH

- Enayat ur Rahman, Population Association of Pakistan, PAKISTAN
- Faysal El Kak, Lebanese Family Planning Association & American University of Beirut, LEBANON
- Farha Ciciek, Rahima Foundation, INDONESIA
- Isabelita Solamo Antonio, Pilipina Legal Resources Center, PHILIPPINES
- Karin Ronge, Women for Women's Human Rights (WWHR) – New Ways, TURKEY
- Liz Amado, Women for Women's Human Rights (WWHR) – New Ways, TURKEY
- Margot Badran, Independent Scholar, EGYPT
- Mujde Bilgutay, Women for Women's Human Rights (WWHR) – New Ways, TURKEY
- Nazia Syed, UNPD Pakistan, PAKISTAN
- Ninuk Widyantoro, Women's Health Foundation, INDONESIA
- Pinar Ilkkaracan, Women for Women's Human Rights (WWHR) – New Ways, TURKEY
- Sabah Khan, Aawaaz-e Niswaan & OLAVA (Organized Lesbian Alliance for Visibility), INDIA
- Syirin Junisya, Asian Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women- ARROW, MALAYSIA
- Tahir Khilji, Vision, PAKISTAN
- Tan Beng Hui, IWRAW Asia Pacific, MALAYSIA
- Zaitun Kasim, Sisters in Islam, MALAYSIA
- Zinat Ara, Action Aid Bangladesh, BANGLADESH