SOAS-Brandeis Workshop on Gender, Religion and Equality in Public Life: Perspectives from the United States and United Kingdom.

Sponsored by the British Council under the “Bridging Voices” Initiative.

SOAS, Russell Square, Room 102 Brunei Building-19 May 2014, 9 am to 4.30

The struggle for gender equality is a key challenge in both domestic and international affairs. Every generation confronts the issue of how to reconcile changing civic ideals regarding gender relations with religious tenets. Recent decades have seen the rise of human rights as the global normative framework seeking to direct relations amongst citizens and most importantly between citizens and governments. The intersections of gender, religion and human rights give rise to competing claims that are difficult to reconcile in both domestic and international policy. Indeed, the global re-turn to religion(s) is also linked to dislocation and the heightened sense of physical and economic insecurity being experienced around the world. Human rights activists cannot afford to dismiss it as irrelevant, and to label religious adherents as irrational. Scope and space for meaningful conversations have to be found.

Academics and policy makers have addressed these conflicts in the context of a range of issues including marriage and divorce, reproductive decision-making, violence against women and children and women’s political participation. This research workshop will create a forum for the discussion of cutting edge research into the nature of these conflicts and innovative approaches for understanding and bridging the points of difference.

Contact: Fareda Banda fb9@soas.ac.uk

PROGRAMME

Registration: 9.00 to 9.25-Tea, coffee and pastries

Introduction and Welcome -9.30 to 9.45

Fareda Banda, Lynn Welchman and Lisa Fishbayn Joffe

Session 1 – 9.45 to 11.30

Frances Raday, Chairperson United Nations Working Group on Laws that Discriminate against Women

Religion and International Human Rights: Why women’s rights matter

Ziba Mir-Hosseini, Founding member Musawah and Professorial Research Associate at the Centre for Islamic and Middle Eastern Law, SOAS


Maleiha Malik, Professor of Law Kings College, London

Gender in an Age of Religious Difference

Mashood Baderin, Professor of Law, SOAS, UN Independent Expert of the Situation of Human Rights in the Sudan, Member, FCO Human Rights Advisory Group.

"Gender, Religion and Human Rights: The Gods are not to Blame"

11.30 to 11.40-Coffee Please collect a drink and take your seats.
Session 2 -11.40 to 1.15

Mavis Maclean OBE, Oxford, Oxford Centre for Family law, Ministry of Justice


John Eekelaar, FBA, Oxford Emeritus, Oxford Centre for Family Law

Marriage, Religion, the Supreme Court and the Church of Scientology

Lisa Fishbayn Joffe, Brandeis, Director, Project on Gender, Culture, Religion and Law

A view from the US: Jewish Law

LUNCH 1.20  Anatalya Turkish Restaurant (halal)-Southampton Row

Session 3 -2.30 to 3.30

Viviana Waisman, Executive Director, Womenslink Worldwide (Madrid and Bogota).

Not with them, but not without them: What can we do about religion and religious extremists in the abortion debate?

Sara Hossain, Advocate, Supreme Court, Partner, Dr Kamal Hossain and Associates and Honorary Executive Director, Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust

Litigating for Gender Equality: A snapshot from Bangladesh

3.30 to 3.40 Tea

3.45 to 4.30 Open discussion and concluding comments.

Special thanks to our panelists.