

Mrs Emily Nasrallah at the Conference on Women, Democracy and Islam

The House of World Cultures - Haus Der Kulturen der Welt - held a conference about Women, Democracy and Islam, on March 31-April 4, 1992 in Berlin. Mrs. Emily Nasrallah, a prominent female Lebanese writer was a main participant in the Conference. She was invited to speak in the panel discussion about *Literature as a Mean of Expression for Arab Women*, a discussion on Feminine Creativity in Arab Literature, along with panelists, Salwa Bakr from Cairo, Egypt and Nadja Al-Baghdadi a specialist in Feminine Arab Literature from the University of Berlin, who is half German and half Iranian on her father's side. Mrs. Emily Nasrallah was also reserved a session in which she read passages from her book *A House Not her Own*, Stories from Beirut. with a discussion following the reading.

The program of the Conference included other prominent women scholars and writers in the Arab world, such as Fatima Mernissi (Morocco), Rashida Enneifer (Tunis), Khalida Messaoudi (Algeria), Najda Moustapha (Egypt), Islah Jade (Ramallah). These women joined in a series of panels and workshops to discuss: *Conditions of women in the Arab-Muslim World and How Women can actually change the mentalities; Breaking the walls of Silence* based on the results of the research project "Maghreb Women Horizons 2000" with further emphasis on Women and Media - Strategies for the Future by Fatima Mernissi, The experience of a writer's workshop by Rachida Enneifer, and Women and laws in the Arab Maghreb by Nouredine Saadi. Another day concentrated on *The Palestinian Intifada: What is the significance of militant culture on the domestic life of women?*

The Conference ended with an artistic touch, a belly dance from Layla Haddad (Tunis/Paris). The Institute for Women's Studies awaits the proceedings of the panels for further review in *Al-Raida* •

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(1) Eickelman, Christine. *Women and Community in Oman*. 1984. New York: New York University Press. pg.xiv.

(2) *Ubadism*, which is similar to the Sunnite in theology but differs from, both, Sunni and Shia' in practice, notably the emphasis on the pious and credible qualities of the Imam as opposed to descent and lineage to the Prophet.

(3) Eickelman, pg. 49.

(4) *Ibid*, pg. 83-84

The First Female Speaker of the House of Commons (UK) in 700 years (*)

Betty Boothroyd is the first female speaker in the House of Commons (UK) in 700 years. She now presides over the house consisting of 651 seats of which 60 are women.

The speaker cannot take part in debate but can direct it by determining whom to recognize. Her predecessor as speaker recall that he had to help

other deputy speakers control the Commons in its most unruly moments -- but not Boothroyd. She was elected by her mostly male peers. It was her natural authority that led many conservative MPs to support her. She brings to the job a brassy self-confidence.

(*) Information taken from *Newsweek, International* May 11, 1992.



Appeal To Uphold Algerian Women's Rights (**)

At the end of 1991, Algeria was getting ready to vote to elect its members of parliament: These were the first free, multi-party elections since its independence in 1962, and we could even say the first free elections, because during the 130 years of French colonization preceding independence, no elections were free and honest.

In the first round the Islamic Front for Salvation (FIS) won the majority of 188 seats. Indeed, the FIS announced that as soon as they had won the second round of the elections, they intended to make major changes in the Algerian constitution, some of which are that women would have to stop working outside the home, and sexual relations outside marriage would be punishable by death.

When the results of the first round

of elections were announced, a considerable number of demonstrators marched in Algiers and in other Algerian towns to demand the union of all democrats to stop the FIS from coming to power; the large number of women in these demonstrations is quite remarkable; it is also very interesting to point out that all styles of clothing, supposed to symbolize the politico-religious beliefs of the women wearing them, were represented: veiled or not, sporting jeans and make-up These women were demanding freedom of expression, a secular state, were saying "no to sadness".

Messages of support to uphold the rights of Algerian women can be sent to: Coordination des Associations des Femmes Algeriennes, c/o Nadia Liassine, 12 Parc Poirson, El-Biar, Alger



(**) taken from an Alert for Action by Women living under Muslim laws, International Solidarity network, BP 23-34790 Grabels, Montpellier-France, February 1992.