

In Memory of Fadime Sahindal Thoughts on the Struggle Against “Honour Killing”

By Shahrzad Mojab and Amir Hassanpour

Fadime Shahindal, was a young Kurdish-Swedish woman, studying in one of the universities of Sweden. On 21 January 2002, Fadime’s father shot her dead while she was visiting her sister in Uppsala. The murderer confessed to the killing, telling police that her daughter had shamed the family. Fadime had “shamed” her father and brother for rejecting arranged marriage, and for choosing her partner. She had also “shamed” the family in 1998 for a highly publicized court case against her father and brother who had threatened to kill her.

The court gave the father a suspended sentence, and the then 17 year old brother was sentenced to a probation for one year. Fadime had to hide from the male members of the family; however, she did not remain silent. She campaigned against this form of patriarchal violence known as “honour killing.” Killing for reasons of “honour” is of ancient origins, but has occurred more frequently in recent years in the Middle East and in parts of Kurdistan devastated by war (Iraq and Turkey). Violence against women for reasons of “honour” also happens among refugee and immigrant communities in Western countries. It is not a uniquely Kurdish phenomenon; it has been practiced in both the West and the East.

The short and tragic life of Fadime has turned into a site of struggle over patriarchal violence and beyond it. In Sweden and elsewhere, there was extensive protest to “honour killing” in general and Fadime’s killing in particular. The problem and the debate over it are, however, far from resolved. Public policy in Sweden, often lenient on such “culturally” motivated crimes, has come under a new round of criticism. In civil society, racist or White supremacist appropriations were present, although they were overshadowed by mass protests of Kurds and non-Kurds. On the Kurdish side, widespread condemnation was prominent, although it has not obscured the tendency among nationalist organizations to downplay such crimes, which are thought to bring shame to the nation. The media and academia are also involved, the former in a rather intensive way, and the latter in a subtle manner. We intend to contribute to the debate as academics engaged in the study of Kurdish society and gender relations, and as activists opposed to all forms of violence against women. We strongly condemn the killing of Fadime, and argue that serious efforts should be made to prevent patriarchal violence against women. We will argue that the institutions of the state, religion, family, education, and the Kurdish nationalist movement are all involved, in different ways, in the perpetuation of the crime of honour killing.

Honour Killing as Culture: Politics and Theory

Is “honour killing” part of Kurdish culture? Is it Islamic? These and similar questions have been raised in the debates over the killing of Fadime and in other cases, both in Europe and in Kurdistan. There are many political and theoretical underpinnings to these questions.

We will argue that violence against women should not be reduced to a question of culture (more on this below). As a cultural phenomenon, however, “honour killing” is, in our opinion, definitely part and parcel of Kurdish culture. We emphasize that this is not the whole answer.

Such a statement may readily lend itself to racist interpretations and appropriations.

Kurdish culture, like other Western and non-Western cultures, is not a homogeneous or monolithic entity. Kurdish gender culture, like its Western counterparts, consists of at least two conflictual components. One component is *patriarchy* and *misogynism*, readily present in folklore, language, literature, jokes, manners and, in a word, the “lived experience” of individuals. In its violent forms, this culture is inscribed in the blood of Fadime and countless women who have lost their lives in obscurity. The other component of Kurdish culture is generally not known, affirmed, valorized, confirmed, or promoted: this is the culture of struggle for gender equality. This culture emerged in the Kurdish press of the early 20th century (Klein 2001). It was inspired by the liberal feminist and women’s movements of the late 19th and early 20th century Europe. By the mid-20th century, the greatest Kurdish poet of the modern period, Abdullah Goran (1904-1962), strongly condemned honour killing in one of his poems, *Berde-nûsêk* “A Tomb-Stone” (see text in Mojab, forthcoming). Since the 1990s, there has been considerable struggle against honour killing in Iraqi Kurdistan, where the 1988 genocide known as *Anfal* and the two Gulf Wars had destroyed the social fabric of society, and unleashed waves of patriarchal violence.

Denying or ignoring the existence of a culture of struggle for gender equality in Kurdistan or in other non-Western societies is a political position. It is patriarchal politics in the sense that it denies the universality of oppression of women and the struggle against it. It is racist in so far as it denies the ability of non-Western, non-White women to understand the conditions of their subordination, and ignores their determination to resist it.

It would be more accurate, then, to state that the killing of Fadime is in line with the dictates of Kurdish *patriarchal* culture. This culture is similar to, if not the same as, the Western, Christian, *patriarchal* culture which has allowed men and women to blow up abortion clinics and assassinate doctors who conduct abortion in the United States and Canada. One may argue that the culture of honour killing is traditional, tribal, feudal or rural. But what is the significance of this traditionalism if we consider the fact that in the United States men kill 10 women every day? While these murders are not necessarily motivated by “honour,” the motivations are hardly more humane: the decision of a woman to end a relationship prompts the male partner to kill her. Seventy-four percent of these killings “occur after the woman has left the relationship, filed for divorce or sought a restraining order against her partner” (Seager 1997: 26). In Sweden, according to 1989 data, 39 women were battered daily and one was killed every 10 days by a man known to her (Elman and Eduards 1991: 411).

The culture of patriarchal violence is, thus, universal. Dividing cultures into violent and violence-free is itself a patriarchal myth. It turns into an ethnocentric or racist myth when this divide is drawn along the lines of the West and the East. Moreover, while the existence of patriarchy as a culture cannot be denied, a cultural reductionist approach alone does not take us a long way in the struggle against male violence.

Honour Killing as the Exercise of Gender Power

Two centuries of feminist intellectual and political struggles in the West have imposed on the nation-states a regime of legal equality between the genders. However, legal equality has

failed to eliminate violence against women. Patriarchy in both Kurdish and Western societies is reproduced on an hourly and daily basis. It is reproduced by the family, the educational system, the state, religion, media, music, arts, language, folklore and all other social and cultural institutions. Thus, male violence against women cannot be reduced to a cultural trait, a cultural norm, or a dormant cultural value that accidentally props up with the wrath of a violent man. Neither can it be reduced to the psychology of the individual killer or group killers, although this dimension may play a role.

Honour killing is a tragedy in which fathers and brothers kill their most beloved, their daughters and sisters. Sometimes mothers and sisters participate in the crime or consent to it. Killing occurs in a family system where members are closely tied to each other in bonds of affection, compassion and love. Here, affection and brutality coexist in conflict and unity. What does this contradiction tell us about honour killing as a form of the exercise of male power? How can this contradiction be resolved?

Given the universality and ubiquity of male violence – ranging from killing, to battering to rape – it would be more appropriate to look at honour killing and other forms of violence as means for the exercise of gender power, in this case male power. The exercise of gender power is intertwined with the exercise of class and political powers. A learned Kurdish mullah in the mid-19th century had a good grasp of honour killing as the exercise of gender power. Writing an essay on *Kurdish Manners and Customs* in 1860, Mela Mehmud Bayezidi argued that tribal and rural Kurdish women were as free as the women of Europe; they could freely associate with men. He noted, however, that women could never engage in pre-marital or extra-marital relationships with a stranger. If they did they would be killed without hesitation and with impunity. No one would question the killers. It was a shame on the family that could be cleaned only through murder; it was also a shame on the community, the village, the tribe, the neighbours and the neighbourhood. The community participated in the killing by expecting it to happen, by endorsing it, and by casting out the family in case it failed to kill the woman. Mela Mehmud noted that the purpose of the killing was to instil fear in women so that they guard their modesty and chastity (see Mojab, forthcoming). Unfamiliar with feminist theory or any theory, Mela Mahmud's understanding of the exercise of gender power was more advanced than contemporary "feminist" reductions of honour killing to "practice" (see below). The learned mullah felt free to discuss honour killing, as Kurdish "custom and manner," in all its brutality.

If honour killing is a form of the exercise of gender power, what can be done to eliminate it under the existing regimes of gendered political power? What are the dynamics of the production and reproduction of honour killing in our times? In Kurdistan and in Europe?

The Production and Reproduction of Honour Killing

The killing of Fadime is not an isolated case or an abnormality. To see the murder as an anomaly is a convenient excuse for non-action. It only relieves us of the responsibility to act. In terms of understanding, it leaves us only at the surface.

We realize that it is not easy to dislodge let alone eliminate honour killing and other forms of violence in the short run or in the absence of a radical transformation of the male-centred social and economic order. We argue, however, that (1) all of us are involved in one way

or another in allowing this regime of male brutality reproduce itself, and (2) much can be done in order to put an end to honour killing. We will first look at the factors that contribute to the reproduction of the crime.

(1) Kurdish Nationalism. Kurdish nationalists have promoted the myth of the uniqueness of Kurdish women: like some Western observers of Kurdish society, they claim that Kurdish women enjoy more freedom compared with their Arab, Persian and Turkish sisters. Whatever the status of women in Kurdish society, Kurdish nationalism, like other nationalist movements, has been patriarchal, although it also has paid lip service to the idea of gender equality. For Kurdish nationalisms, nation building requires the unity of genders, classes, regions, dialects, and alphabets. They consistently relegate the emancipation of women to the future, i.e., after the emancipation of the nation. And when Kurdish nationalism achieved state power in Iraq after the 1991 Gulf War, its record in matters of gender equality has been bleak. Let's briefly look at this experience.

The Kurdish people have lived since the late 1870s in what Mark Levene (1998) has characterized as a "zone of genocide." In this zone (Eastern Anatolia comprising Kurdistan), the Ottoman state conducted a genocide of the Armenian people in 1915 and, together with its successor, the Republic of Turkey, subjected the Assyrian and Kurdish peoples to numerous campaigns of genocide and ethnic cleansing. The Ba'th regime of Iraq ensured that this zone would continue to operate in spite of its division between Iraq and Turkey in 1918. No less than ten thousand Kurdish villages were destroyed in Iraqi Kurdistan between 1975 and 1991, and in Turkey between 1984 and 2000.

The zone of genocide continues to be an active zone of war. These wars have destroyed the social, economic and cultural fabric of Kurdish society. They have unleashed waves of male violence against women. This explains, at least in part, why there are more incidents of honour killing among the Kurds of Iraq and Turkey compared with the Kurds of Iran, whose experience of war has been less devastating.

In the aftermath of the U.S.-led Gulf War of 1991, when the Iraqi army attacked Kurdistan, millions of Iraqi Kurds escaped into the mountains in March and April. The U.S., U.K. and France created a no-fly zone, a "safe haven", for returning the refugees. Two major parties, the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iraq (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), which had been fighting the Iraqi government for decades, created the Regional Government of Kurdistan in 1992. This was a de facto Kurdish state with its parliament and administrative structure. However, the two parties engaged in an internal war in 1994 which continued intermittently until 1996. Failing to resolve their conflict, they formed, by 1999, their own separate administrations. In dealing with the increasing incidence of honour killing, they adopted Iraqi law which did not criminalize honour killing, and was lenient on the punishment of killers. Faced with opposition from women, the two parties, especially KDP, have tried to justify honour killing as a Kurdish and Islamic tradition. In 2000, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan issued two resolutions aimed at revoking Iraqi law, and criminalizing honour killing. The resolutions, which have the status of law in the absence of a legislative organ, have remained on paper in so far as the government has neither the will nor the power to enforce them.

If the KDP government has persistently ignored the demand for gender equality and for

the criminalization of honour killing and the PUK government paid only lip service to them, they have both bowed to the demands of a handful of mullahs and their Iranian overlords. Kurdish clerics (mullahs and shaikhs), who never aspired to push for theocratic governance, now demand the Islamization of gender relations, and the subordination of Kurdish women according to the dictates of Islam. Financed and organized by the Islamic theocracy, some Kurdish Islamic groups aim at establishing a theocracy. Not surprising at all, Kurdish leaders who were secular before 1979, entertain Islam and Islamists. The two Kurdish governments have opened more mosques than women's shelters. In fact, they have not initiated any women's shelters. Even worse, the PUK government launched an armed attack on a women's shelter operated by an opposition political party (the shelter operated by the Independent Women's Organization in Sulemani).

Kurdish nationalism, in or out of power, has generally entertained patriarchy and legitimized its violence; it has little respect for the Kurdish tradition of struggle for gender equality. After ten years of self-rule in the no-fly zone of Iraqi Kurdistan, the women's press, consisting of only a few publications, is dwarfed by the bulky nationalist periodicals produced in the two major cities of Sulemani and Hewlêr. Not a single work of feminist theory has been translated into Kurdish. The text of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1979) has not yet appeared in Kurdish. The priority of Kurdish intellectuals, males and females, is not gender inequality.

(2) The Nation-States in the Middle East. The states that rule over the Kurds do not criminalize honour killing (Iran, Iraq and Syria), or are lenient on punishing killers (Turkey). Iranian law provides for the execution of lesbians and gays, and stoning to death of adulterers.

These states deny citizens the right to life in so far as they practice capital punishment as a normal, unproblematic, indispensable means of governance. Turkey, which aspires to become a full member of the European Union, has refused to abolish capital punishment for all crimes (a requirement for membership). Not only it engages in extrajudicial killing, Turkey reserves the right to kill citizens on charges of secessionism. The legal framework should allow more genocides and ethnic cleansing. Thus, Turkey wants to become an EU member by reserving what Leo Kurper (1981: 161-85) calls the sovereign state's "right to genocide."

The coming to power of the theocratic Islamic regime in Iran unleashed waves of state-sponsored male terrorism against women. All Muslim states, from Algeria and Morocco in the West to Pakistan in the East, Islamized gender relations by introducing more Islamic *shari'a* into their legal system. A century of struggle for the separation of state and religion came under attack. The idea of separation of the powers of state and religion was branded by Iranian theocracy as a Western conspiracy against Islam. Women were the first targets of theocratic terrorism in Iran and, later, Afghanistan. Many Kurdish nationalist leaders, like the states in the region, embraced Islam. If theocrats have promoted stoning to death and honour killing as Islamic institutions, some Kurdish leaders have endorsed male violence as a national tradition.

(3) European States. There are now sizeable Kurdish communities in Europe, especially in Germany, Britain, France, Sweden and a number of other countries. While these states readily declared the Kurdistan Workers Party, PKK, a terrorist or criminal organization, they have not criminalized male terrorism against women. The policy of respect for cultural differences is often

paved with good intentions. However, we have learned from two centuries of democratic development that group “identity” and culture should not be the basis for the exercise of state power. How can one have any respect for any culture that endorses violence against women? In fact, such respect subverts its goal -- it ends up in racism rather than anti-racism. This policy of respect for male brutality has no respect for the anti-patriarchal culture of the Kurds. Is it a matter of accident that there is always enough financial resources for the army and for war, but there is little investment in promoting feminist knowledge, the culture and politics of gender equality, the provision of shelters and other resources for terrorized women, Kurdish and non-Kurdish? Devoting the costs of a single Chieftain tank or a single Mirage aircraft to women’s shelters, support for battered women, and promotion of feminist knowledge will produce tangible results. Is it an accident that governments began the new century with \$798 billion on military spending (2000 figure)? Why is this machinery of man-made violence so well funded?

Public policy in Europe and in North America has responded to some extent to academic debates on culture, identity, and difference. We are referring to academic research and theorization on the merits of diversity, difference and cultural relativism. While Western governments have taken some steps forward (e.g., admitting gender violence as a criterion for refugee status) it is not difficult to see the steps backward. We will deal with this briefly.

(4) The Academic Environment. Our knowledge about violence against women, especially in the West, has improved visibly in the last two decades. The monthly academic journal *Violence Against Women* has made an important contribution to the understanding of the problem. In dealing with honour killing, however, recent Western social theory has played a rather negative role. We are talking about theories of cultural relativism, politics of identity, post-structuralism, postmodernism and other post-positions.

Since the late 1980s, this brand of thinking, now dominant in academe and fashionable in media and popular culture, treats *difference* as the main constituent of the social world. Human beings, in this construction of the world, are all different, with their diverse and particular “identities.” Their politics and everyday life are shaped by identities which separates them from all other human beings. In this world of particularized individuals, cultures, peoples, or nations, there is little, if any, common bonds. Patriarchy is not universal, and gender oppression is too particular to be the target of struggle of women and men even within a single country. The concept *difference* replaces the concept of *domination*. The world, in this view, is not divided into powerless and powerful blocs. Every individual, every woman, wields power. Power is not hierarchically organized; there may be a “centre” and a “margin” of power but there are no relationships of domination and subordination.

This brand of theorization emphasizes respect for cultural difference. Although its advocates oppose violence, they prefer to remain silent about it, especially when it is perpetrated by “others” whom they cannot judge due to cultural differences. There is, thus, an attempt to isolate honour killing from the patriarchal culture of the society that generates it. This is done by, among other things, reducing honour killing to a “practice,” as if practices, in any meaning of the word, are non-cultural. Labelling the crime as a “practice” relieves the academic specialist from the burden of criticizing the culture, its religion and its values. You do not have to critique or indict Islam or Kurdish patriarchal culture. It is the problem of the individual who commits the crime.

Some of these academics are feminists, who teach about gender relations in the Middle East. They try to avoid the neocolonialist or Orientalist trap of treating Middle Eastern women as backward, ignorant, illiterate, over-oppressed, and passive. This is surely, a noble commitment, and a very honourable undertaking. However, in trying to distance themselves from “neocolonialist representations of Middle Eastern women,” they tend to keep silent on the atrocities committed against women by “their own” men, “their own” religion, and “their own” culture. Let us provide an example. In a workshop on “Teaching about Honor Killings and other Sensitive Topics in Middle East Studies: ‘Honor Killing,’ ‘Female Genital Mutilation or Circumcision,’ ‘Veiling,’ and ‘Women and Shari’ah,’” held at the University of California at Santa Barbara in March 2000, a number of academic feminists discussed their dilemma: how to speak about such “sensitive topics” without falling into the neocolonialist trap? One participant noted that she had pursued a policy of silence on female circumcision. A reviewer of the workshop reported:

She explained that her strategy for responding to questions about [female] circumcision had changed over time. First, her policy was silence. She would say, “I don’t have anything to say about this issue,” or “I would rather talk about other issues, like poverty, neocolonialism, and so on... and their impact on women, rather than becoming part of the problem.” But she said she realized that while she was choosing silence, others, who might not be well informed on the issue of circumcision, were taking over the discourse. She realized then that she had to respond. She added that often she encourages students not to write about circumcision until they know more about it, or until they talk at least to one woman who has been circumcised. But she expressed concern that this strategy might involve silencing her students. (Naber 2000: 20)

Reviewing two documentaries on honour killing, Mary Elaine Hegland wrote:

The topic of honor killing, like clitoridectomy, spousal abuse, infanticide, elder neglect, rape, war, capital punishment, and pre-marital sex among other practices condoned by some groups but condemned by others, presents dilemmas to anthropologists, feminist scholars and others. Should anthropologists be apologists or advocates for their research group or social analysts? Should one’s role be researcher or activist? (Hegland 2000:15)

One approach to the dilemma was to talk about the “sensitive topics” but to contextualize them by informing the students that these problems are not a Middle Eastern phenomenon; they are also found in the West, now and in the past. This pedagogical “strategy,” according to some, will distance the instructor from neocolonialist representations or “discourses.” We argue, however, that this strategy is not adequate. It does not allow a serious departure from neocolonialism. It is indeed crucial to relate Middle Eastern male violence to its Western counter parts. This is necessary but not adequate. The participants in the workshop decided to talk about “sensitive topics” as a “strategy” to handle a dilemma. This is a pedagogical device to protect the instructor from a perceived threat or a real (ideological and political) fear. We argue that one needs to overcome the cultural relativist fear of the universality of patriarchal violence. Taking this step, however, demands an appreciation of the dialectics of universals and particulars (Mojab 1998). It requires the abandoning of the epistemological and theoretical dictates of agnosticism and

cultural relativism.

In the (neo)colonialist world view, the women of the Middle East constitute an anomaly, an exception, or abnormality: unlike Western women, they are devoted to Islamic patriarchy. They are women without history; they do not make their own history by struggling for equality or liberation. Academic feminists of the cultural relativist persuasion, too, fail to appreciate a century of women's struggle against patriarchy. And when they talk about this struggle, they have more concerns. Women's struggle against patriarchy, too, is a "sensitive topic." It is sensitive not because Middle Eastern women have a century of women's press; a century of advocacy of women's rights; a century of writing; a century of poetry; and a century of organizing. Talking about this history is "sensitive" because cultural relativists, like Islamic fundamentalists, that it is inspired by Western women's struggles. Appreciating this history is difficult for these academic feminists because, in their opposition to neocolonialist "discourses," they often side with nationalists, Islamists and nativists. They privilege the nativist position, which rejects feminism as a "derivative discourse." They treat it as a "Western discourse" that is not compatible with Islam and the native culture. They do not want to contaminate Middle Eastern women's movements with the struggles of the women of the West, with modernity, with Enlightenment. Some secular academic "feminists" have indeed contributed to the creation of a "Muslim woman identity."

It is understandable, then, why the cultural relativist position prefers silence about "sensitive topics," and when it has to talk about honour killing, it reduces the institutionalized crime to a "practice" that has little to do with culture, Islam or the exercise of male power. This position does not start from the reality of male brutality against women. It appreciates the violent gender politics of a tiny minority of the population, the self-appointed clergy. It imposes the politics of this tiny group into the politics of the entire nation; it authenticates this violent gender politics but delegitimizes a century of secular feminist movements in the Middle East. As a result it fails to condemn, without *any* reservation or condition, honour killing or stoning to death. The starting point is, rather, one's own interest – the fear of being labelled "racist," "Orientalist," or "neocolonialist."

What to do?

We have tried to look at some of the systemic elements that allow for the production and reproduction of male violence, especially honour killing among the Kurds. We have argued that honour killing cannot be reduced to the psychological problems of individual killers. Honour-based violence is a social, patriarchal, institution, which reproduces the supremacy of the male gender. In our times, a host of factors, ranging from religion to public policy to media to academic theories, play a role in the perpetuation of honour killing.

We emphasize that education, and conscious, organized, intervention in this oppressive gender relations will in the long run constrain the perpetration of this crime. We are talking about feminist intervention. However, feminist consciousness, feminist knowledge, and feminist culture themselves are under attack. In part because feminist knowledge has effectively challenged all previous knowledge systems as androcentric undertakings, it has been subjected to vilifications in Western media and popular culture and even within its own realm in academia (Hammer 2002). If non-Western nativists, Islamists and nationalists reject feminism as a

“derivative discourse,” conservatives in the West also refuse to include feminism in their “canon” of Western civilization and culture. This is where the Western colonialist, new and old, and the non-Western nationalist, nativist, Islamist, and cultural relativist inadvertently join forces. That also explains why the Holy See, Saudi Arabia and Iran joined forces in the Beijing Conference of 1995. Indeed, anti-feminism is probably stronger in the West than in the East. There is a hunger for feminist consciousness in non-Western societies. This is the case in spite of the fact that a host of theories ranging from post-modernism to identity politics to cultural relativism encourages the women of the world to go under the banner of their tribes, ethnic groups, nations, religions, and communities.

As for Kurdish women, they are a potentially powerful force in international women’s movements. They constitute the hub of all contradictions in this globalizing world. Subjected to the brutal violence of the nation-states of the Middle East and their genocides and ethnic cleansing projects, suffering from the violence of “their own” national patriarchy, and dispersed throughout the world, Kurdish women are in a unique position to distance themselves from male-centred ethnic, nationalist, and religious politics, and to join forces with feminist movements which do not compromise with patriarchy. Women and feminist movements are international in character; they are present all over the world and resist a world-wide regime of patriarchal oppression. However, they are not *organized* as an international movement. Kurdish women and Kurdish women’s studies are at the margins of this international movement (Mojab 2001; Mojab and Hassanpour, forthcoming). There is considerable solidarity, although it is not readily available due to the organizational fragmentation of the movement.

The institution of the state in the countries that rule over the Kurds in the Middle East is neither civil nor civilized. One cannot expect an end to honour killing in a state which has no respect for the citizens’ right to life, and freely exercises the “right to genocide.” We believe that the struggle against honour killing is inseparable from the struggle for democratic rule. It is also a struggle for separation of state and religion; a struggle to deny the two Kurdish governments the right to impose a theocratic regime on the people in Kurdistan. It is a struggle to push the two Kurdish governments to adopt and implement the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women without any reservations. CEDAW is an important document that Kurdish feminists can use to promote a democratic gender culture. Are these demands rooted in European Enlightenment? Our answer is, without hesitation, in the affirmative. Are these demands Western in origin? Definitely, yes. Peoples in the East have struggled for these demands for no less than a century. They are, thus, universal demands. We emphasize again that in the West, too, there was extensive opposition to these demands. Today, too, the extreme right and Christian fundamentalists, like Islamic fundamentalists, continue to oppose feminism and the separation of state and religion. The lines are, thus, not drawn on ethnic grounds but rather on political principles.

Western feminism has been critiqued for its ethnocentrism and racism. However, contrary to the claims of nationalists, there is a rich tradition of anti-racism in the West, especially in its feminist movements. Indeed, nowhere in the non-Western world can one find a tradition of anti-racism that is as rich as that of the West. Kurdish women in the West are in an ideal position to draw on and contribute to these traditions of anti-racism and internationalism. In Kurdistan, women are subjected to the harshest forms of national and gender oppression. In its brutality, national oppression overshadows gender violence. However, Kurdish women have already made their own history by resisting their national patriarchy.

Tragically, Fadime will not be the last one in the long list of victims of male violence. More lives will be lost, often in obscurity, in Kurdistan and elsewhere. However, her life will not be lost in vain if we turn our anger and frustration into a struggle to challenge this brutality in all its forms.

References

Bayezidi, Mela Mahmud

1963 *'Adat û Risûmatnameyî Ekradîye/Nravy I Obychani Kurdov* (Kurdish Customs and Manners), Kurdish text and Russian translation by M. B. Rudenko, Moscow, Akademiia Nauk SSSR, Izdatel'stvo Vostochnoi Literatury.

Elman, R. Amy and Eduards, Maud L.

1991 "Unprotected by the Swedish welfare state: A survey of battered women and the assistance they received," *Women's Studies International Forum*, Vol. 14, No. 5, pp. 413-21.

Hammer, Rhonda

2002 *Antifeminism and Family Terrorism: A Critical Feminist Perspective*. Lanham, Maryland, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers.

Hegland, Mary Elaine

2001 Review of "*Crimes of Honour and Our Honour and His Glory*" in *Middle East Women's Study Review*, Vol. XV, No. 1-2 Spring/Summer, pp. 15-19.

Klein, Janet

2001 "En-gendering nationalism: The 'woman question' in the Kurdish nationalist discourse of the late Ottoman period," in Mojab, Shahrzad (ed.), *Women of a Non-State Nation: The Kurds*. Costa Masta, Mazda Publishers, pp. 25-51.

Kuper, Leo

1981 *Genocide: Its Political Use in the Twentieth Century*. New Haven, Yale University Press.

Levene, Mark

1998 "Creating a modern 'zone of genocide': The impact of nation- and state-formation on Eastern Anatolia, 1878-1923," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 3, pp. 393-433.

Mojab, Shahrzad

Forthcoming "No 'safe haven' for women: Violence against women in Iraqi Kurdistan," in Giles, Wenona and Hyndman, Jennifer (eds.), *Sites of Violence Gender and Identity in Conflict Zones*, Berkeley, University of California Press.

2001 "The solitude of the stateless: Kurdish women at the margins of feminist knowledge," in Mojab, Shahrzad (ed.), *Women of a Non-State Nation: The Kurds*. Costa Masta, Mazda Publishers, pp. 1-21.

1998 "Muslim women and Western feminists: The debate on particulars and universals," *Monthly Review*, Vol. 50, No. 7, pp. 19-30.

Mojab, Shahrzad and Hassanpour, Amir

Forthcoming *In Search of Kurdish Women: A Multilingual Bibliography*.
Westport, CT, Greenwood.

Naber, Nadine

2001 "Teaching about Honor Killings and other Sensitive Topics in Middle East Studies" *Middle East Women's Study Review*, Vol. XV, No. 1-2 Spring/Summer, pp. 20-21.

Seager, Joni

1997 *The State of Women in the World Atlas*. New Edition. London, Penguin Books Ltd.

Amir Hassanpour
Dept. of Near & Middle Eastern Civilizations
University of Toronto
Toronto, Canada
amirhp@chass.utoronto.ca

Shahrzad Mojab
Dept of Adult Education
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto, Canada
smojab@oise.utoronto.ca