

RICE UNIVERSITY'S  
BAKER INSTITUTE | 20 YEARS  
1993–2013

# THE ARAB AWAKENING AND GENDER: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN

**THURSDAY, FEB. 21, 2013**  
**9:30 AM-5:00 PM**

**DORÉ COMMONS  
BAKER HALL  
RICE UNIVERSITY**

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# THE ARAB AWAKENING AND GENDER: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN

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## *About the Event*

This conference seeks to inform the public of the challenges and opportunities that women in the Middle East and North Africa face today amid the events of the Arab Awakening. Participants will propose recommendations for empowering women in the region and developing leadership opportunities.

The conference also features panel discussions on women in social media and journalism, women in entrepreneurship, and women in politics and social activism.

## *About the Program*

### **Kelly Day Endowment on the Status of Women and Human Rights in the Middle East**

The Kelly Day Endowment on the Status of Women and Human Rights in the Middle East supports research on female empowerment in the Arab region at Rice University's Baker Institute and abroad. Female empowerment in the Middle East has recently attracted much attention, not only from academics, but also from policy- and decision-makers. The widening gender gap in the region at the political, economic and societal levels has urged many Arab countries to take significant steps toward increased gender equality and to improve policy outcomes for this marginalized group. However, very little is still known about the effectiveness of these policies. With this in mind, the endowment is primarily designed to help practitioners and policymakers better predict how broader participation of women in the public and private sectors might impact regional attitudes and promote societal progress.

To achieve this goal, the Kelly Day Endowment has produced numerous policy reports and working papers on three main areas of study: (1) women and economic development in the Middle East, (2) women and the Arab Awakening, and (3) women and political representation in the Middle East. The endowment has also built regional collaborations to broaden the scope of its work.

In addition, the Kelly Day Endowment has also featured a number of prominent speakers: Her Royal Highness Princess Haya Al Hussein, a United Nations messenger of peace and founder of the first food aid nongovernmental organization in the Arab world; Isobel Coleman, senior fellow for U.S. foreign policy at the Council on Foreign Relations; Jehan Sadat, former first lady of Egypt; Zainab Salbi, co-founder of Women for Women International; Muslim televangelist and social activist Amr Khaled, chairman of the Right Start Foundation International; and Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser of the State of Qatar.

The upcoming research activities will further investigate the roots of the gender disparity in the region, with topics ranging from economic participation to political representation. To this end, the Kelly Day Endowment will initiate an annual international conference on female empowerment in the Middle East in collaboration with pioneering institutions in that region. The program will also initiate a multi-country project to study the impact of female descriptive representation in Arab legislatures on women's political engagement in the region. The findings of this project will inform policy debates regarding the relationship between gender quota provisions, the function of women in parliaments as role models and future leaders, and women's political empowerment in the Arab world.

The Kelly Day Endowment on the Status of Women and Human Rights in the Middle East has established an advisory board to help implement the vision of this program. The members of the board are Mrs. Susan Baker, Mrs. Kelly Day, Mrs. Paula Douglass and Mrs. Ghada Irani.

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## **Founders' Circle:**

Mr. and Mrs. Eli Broad  
The Honorable James A. Baker, III, and Mrs. Baker  
Mr. and Mrs. Robert A. Day  
Mr. and Mrs. Sam P. Douglass  
Mr. Bradford M. Freeman  
Mr. and Mrs. Marc Stern  
Mr. and Mrs. John Hotchkis  
Mr. Robert Maguire III  
Wilson-Thornhill Foundation

## **Ghada Irani Discretionary Fund**

The Ghada Irani Discretionary Fund was established in honor of Mrs. Ghada Irani and in recognition of her important involvement in the establishment of the Kelly Day Endowment on the Status of Women and Human Rights in the Middle East. This fund complements the broader goals of the Kelly Day Endowment by supporting research and activities that promote new and innovative ways to better understand and improve upon the policies and practices that impact women and human rights in the Middle East. In addition, the fund also sponsors special projects in the form of micro-grants that the Kelly Day Endowment's advisory board has identified as meaningful to the advancement of women's issues in the Middle East.

For more information on the Kelly Day Endowment and how to become involved, please contact senior director of development Vince McElligott at 713.348.2923 or [vmcelligott@rice.edu](mailto:vmcelligott@rice.edu), or director of development Christene Kimmel at 713.348.2136 or [ckimmel@rice.edu](mailto:ckimmel@rice.edu).

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*Thursday, February 21, 2012*

9:30 am Registration and Breakfast

10:05 am Welcoming Remarks and Introduction  
**The Honorable Edward P. Djerejian**  
Founding Director, Rice University's Baker Institute

## **Panel I — Arab Women and Societal Transformations Post-Arab Awakening**

Moderator: Dina Alsowayel, Ph.D., Associate Director of Women's Studies, University of Houston

10:30 am The Arab Awakening: What has Changed for Women?

**Nabila Ramdani**

Columnist, The Guardian

Addressing Gender Issues in the Arab World's Transitional Agendas

**Nabila Hamza**

President, Foundation for the Future

Saudi Women Amid the Arab Awakening

**Hatoon Ajwad al-Fassi, Ph.D.**

Saudi Women's Historian, King Saud University, Riyadh

Noon Lunch

## **Panel II — Leadership, Opportunities and Challenges for Women in the Arab World**

Moderator: Daisy Khan, Executive Director, American Society for Muslim Advancement

1:15 pm Is the Arab Awakening a Spring?

**Neveen El Tahri**

Founder and Chairperson, Delta Shield for Investments

A Woman's Faith and Persistence

**Judge Kholoud Mohammad Ahmad al-Faqeeh**

Sharia Law Judge, Ramallah, Palestine

Women's Rights in the Arab World: What are the Ramifications of the Arab Spring?

**Malika Benradi**

International Attorney and Professor, Faculty of Law in Rabat, Agdal

3:40 pm Closing Remarks

3:45 pm Reception

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## *Participant Biographies*

**Kholoud Mohammad Ahmad al-Faqeeh** was appointed a judge in the Sharia Court of Ramallah in 2009, making her the first female sharia judge in Palestine, as well as in the Arab world, with the exception of Sudan. From 2003 to 2008, al-Faqeeh represented and defended battered and abused women in civil, sharia and criminal courts, during which time she gained extensive litigation experience. She received her license to practice law in 2001, and has worked as a lawyer in private office as well as the Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counseling, an organization dedicated to assisting battered women. In 2009, al-Faqeeh was selected as one of the 300 most influential Muslims in the world. Arabian Business magazine named her number 10 on its "100 Most Powerful Arab Women" list in 2012, and she was also included on its "500 Most Powerful Arabs" list that same year. Al-Faqeeh received a law degree with honors from Al-Quds University in 1999, as well as a master's degree in international private law from the same university in 2007.

**Hatoon Ajwad al-Fassi, Ph.D.**, is a historian specializing in Saudi women's history at King Saud University, Riyadh. Her work focuses on ancient and Islamic women's history, Saudi women's issues and Islamic rights, gender studies, women's religious rights, women writers, history of the Arabian Peninsula and human rights. She currently writes a column for Al-Riyadh Newspaper and is a frequent commentator on Saudi women's issues for the national and international media. Al-Fassi has published numerous books and peer-reviewed articles in Arabic and English. Most recently, she contributed a chapter on "Women of Eastern Arabia: Myth and Representation" for the book "Gulf Women," edited by Amira Sonbol (Bloomsbury/Syracuse University, 2013). In 2012, she was decorated a knight in the National Order of Merit by the president of the French Republic. Al-Fassi graduated with a Ph.D. in women's history from the University of Manchester, U.K.

**Dina Alsowayel, Ph.D.**, is the associate director of women's studies at the University of Houston. She joined the university in 1998 as a postdoctoral fellow in religious studies. Alsowayel teaches a variety of courses in the History Department on topics including the history of the modern Middle East, state and society in the Middle East, women and Islam, history of Islam, war in the Middle East, and history of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. She also takes students on educational trips to the Arab and Muslim world each year. Alsowayel received her M.A and Ph.D. from Rice University in political science and her J.D. from the University of Houston Law Center. She received her B.A. from Wellesley College.

**Malika Benradi** is an international attorney and a professor at the Faculty of Law in Rabat, Agdal. She also serves as an associate professor at the Sorbonne in Paris and a consultant on gender and law. Benradi's research focuses on the role of women in the Arab world, gender and law, international immigration, and child labor. She has also directed a course on family law in North Africa and was a missionary professor at l'Universite Paris Diderot-Paris 7 in France. She has served as a consultant for BIT and UNICEF on the question of child labor and social dialogue for the countries in the Mediterranean Rim, for the European Union on women's rights in Morocco, and for PNUD and FNUAP on gender and law. She is a member of the National Commission for the revision of Penal Code and also directed the 5th Congress of Francophone Feminist Researchers. Benradi is president of the Association of African Women for Research and Development, vice president of the Forum of Arab Palestinian Women and former president of the Moroccan Association of Studies and Research on Immigration. She is also a member of the International Association of Women Lawyers; Association for Women's Rights in Development of Montreal, Canada; Network of Women Living Under Muslim Laws in London, U.K.; and the Moroccan Organization of Human Rights. Benradi received her doctorate in private law in 1981.



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**The Honorable Edward P. Djerejian** served in the U.S. Foreign Service for eight presidents, from John F. Kennedy to William J. Clinton (1962–1994). Prior to his nomination by President Clinton as U.S. ambassador to Israel (1993–1994), he was assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs in both the George H.W. Bush and Clinton administrations (1991–1993). He was the U.S. ambassador to the Syrian Arab Republic (1988–1991). He also served as special assistant to President Ronald Reagan and deputy press secretary for foreign affairs in the White House (1985–1986). After his retirement from government service in 1994, Djerejian became the founding director of Rice University's Baker Institute. His book "Danger and Opportunity: An American Ambassador's Journey Through the Middle East" was published by Simon & Schuster Threshold Editions in September 2008. He has been awarded the Presidential Distinguished Service Award, the Department of State's Distinguished Honor Award and numerous other honors, including the Ellis Island Medal of Honor and the Anti-Defamation League's Moral Statesman Award. He is also a recipient of the Association of Rice Alumni's Gold Medal, the group's most prestigious award, for his service to Rice University. In 2011, Djerejian was elected a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and named to the board of trustees of the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

**Neveen El Tahri** is founder and chairperson of Delta Shield for Investments, an organization she founded after the Egyptian 2011 revolution focusing on youth and entrepreneurship. El Tahri has 33 years of financial and business experience. She is the country's representative to the Royal Bank of Scotland and sits on their Middle East Advisory Board. She has also sat on several private- and public-sector boards, including Banque Misr, General Authority for Investment (GAFI), Telecom Egypt and Egyptian American Enterprise Fund. El Tahri began her career in 1980 as corporate banker with Chase Manhattan Bank's joint venture. After the revival of the Egyptian Capital Market, she helped establish Delta EAB Brokerage, ABN AMRO Delta Asset Management, Delta Financial Investments, Nuun Fund Services and Upper Egypt Leasing, all of which were either fully or partially divested by 2011. El Tahri was the first woman to sit on the board of the Egyptian Stock Exchange. She was twice named by the Financial Times as one of the leading businesswomen in the Arab world. She has won awards locally for her contribution to Egypt's investment environment, and internationally for her economic empowerment of women. She is also involved with numerous nonprofit and professional associations. El Tahri graduated from the faculty of economics and political science at Cairo University and is an alumna of both the London Business School and Harvard Business School.

**Nabila Hamza** is the president of the Foundation for the Future (FFF), an independent, international nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting civil society initiatives in their efforts to promote democracy and human rights in the Middle East and North Africa region. Prior to FFF, Hamza served as the executive director of the Center of Arab Women for Training and Research. She has also worked as an expert in the Arab League for 10 years. Hamza has held prominent positions in the Tunisian public sector and has worked as a consultant for the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, the European Commission, and the Economic and Social Commission for Eastern Asia. She has coordinated many regional programs such as the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation's initiative for combating violence against women, and currently sits on the CIVICUS board of directors. In 2009, Hamza received an award from the Arab Pioneer and Innovators Forum for her role in FFF's continuing efforts to support civil society initiatives. In November 2011, the Arab-European Center of Human Rights and International Law recognized her with its 2011 Arab Human Rights Award. Hamza is a well-known and respected researcher in social and political science and is an expert on gender issues. She has published and contributed to a wide range of books and articles on public policy, social development, good governance, gender issues, poverty alleviation and employment in the Arab region. She holds an M.A. in international relations and political science from the Sorbonne in Paris.

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**Daisy Khan** is executive director of the American Society for Muslim Advancement (ASMA), a New York-based nonprofit dedicated to strengthening an expression of Islam based on cultural and religious harmony. At ASMA, Khan has launched two groundbreaking flagship programs: Muslim Leaders of Tomorrow, a global network of young civic leaders, and Women's Islamic Initiative in Spirituality and Equality, a global movements to empower Muslim women. She lectures around the globe and has participated in panels with Christians, Jews and Buddhists, as well as produced cutting edge interfaith events like the theater production "Same Difference" and the Cordoba Bread Fest. Khan has lectured at prestigious forums such as Council of Foreign Relations, Aspen Institute and Chautauqua Institution. She has appeared on numerous media outlets, including CNN, Al Jazeera, BBC, Fox, NPR and Doha Debates, and she often contributes to documentaries on Islam and Muslims. She is a weekly columnist for the Washington Post's "On Faith" and is frequently quoted in print publications such as Time Magazine, Newsweek, Chicago Tribune and The New York Times. Born in Kashmir, Khan spent 25 years as an interior architect for various Fortune 500 companies before committing to full-time community service. She is the recipient of numerous awards, including the Interfaith Center's Award for Promoting Peace and Interfaith Understanding, Auburn Seminary's Lives of Commitment Award, the Annual Faith Leaders Award, Shalom Center's Prophetic Voices and New York Open Center's Award for Interfaith Understanding. Additionally, she has been named to Women's eNews' "21 Leaders for the 21st Century" and the Arab American Family Support Center's "Women Who Inspire."

**Nabila Ramdani** is an award-winning French-Algerian freelance journalist who specializes in French politics, Islamic affairs and the Arab world. She covers Arab/Muslim issues in France and rose to prominence during her coverage of the Arab Spring as both an on-the-ground reporter and a commentator on international TV and radio networks. In the U.K., Ramdani writes regular columns for The Guardian, The Observer, The Independent, London Evening Standard and New Statesman. She also produces features and news stories for a wide range of other Fleet Street publications. Ramdani contributes to Middle Eastern outlets including The National, The Majalla and Gulf News. Her work also appears in French publications, and her articles are syndicated worldwide. Ramdani is also a political commentator for international outlets such as NPR, BBC, Sky News, ITV, Channel 4, Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya, as well as a regular contributor to flagship program including the BBC's "Today," "Woman's Hour" and "Newsnight." She is completing her doctoral thesis in international history at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), where she has already received an M.Phil. She has an agrégation (France's highest teaching qualification) in English and has held lecturing positions at Oxford University, the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor and Paris 7 University.