

## Report on the London conference to remember Du'a Khalil



Representative Abroad of the Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq and the International Campaign Against Killings and Stoning of Women in Kurdistan held their first conference as part of a Week of Action initiative denouncing honor killings globally. The conference was dedicated to the memory of Du'a Khalil Aswad, a 17 year-old girl from a Yazidi faith in Kurdistan of Iraq, stoned to death on April 7, 2007



The conference was held in central London at the union of London University on April 12<sup>th</sup>. Many people attended in order to condemn 'honor killings' as well as to commemorate Du'a and other victims of such practices. The panel of speakers contained many women's rights activists. These were:





**Dr. Sandra Phelps**, Head of Sociology at Kurdistan University in Erbil, Iraq  
**Heather Harvey**, Campaign Manager for Violence against Women, Amnesty International

**Houzan Mahmoud**, Abroad Representative of the Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq

**Maryam Namazie**, Equal Rights Now, a women's organization in Iran

**Maria Hagberg**, Network against Honor Killings in Sweden

**Azar Majedi**, Head of the Women's Liberation Organization in Iran

**Maria Exall**, Executive Committee Member of the Communication Workers' Union



Maria Exall chaired the conference and each speaker's talk analyzed the issues of gender apartheid, suppression of women's rights, honor killing and other horrific crimes. There was also discussion of political Islam and its hand in the religious oppression of women. Everyone on the panel mentioned that governments, in the form of patriarchy, tribal custom or religious law, are responsible. There was a question and answer session in which the attendees actively participated.

At the end, the organizer, Houzan Mahmoud, thanked all the people who attended. She discussed the many letters of solidarity and support she has received from Kurdistan, Iraq, and worldwide, commemorating Du'a and expressing dismay at the brutal practice of honor killing. She added that this was the bright side of Kurdish society and showed that people—men and women—want to end this barbarity and have become active to end these crimes. She proposed that every April 7<sup>th</sup> be a day to remember Du'a Khalil, and an International Day against Honor Killing.

It is also worth mentioning that the Week of Action against 'honor killings' gained much media attention. As a result, Houzan Mahmoud held interviews with the following media outlets: BBC World Radio Outlook, which included an interview with Du'a's father about her death, BBC Scotland at Ten, interviewed Houzan and

two members of Parliament and a representative from Amnesty International in Scotland. KPFA FM (an American radio station), REM FM (a Spanish radio station) and a Turkish paper, present at the conference (see the link below):

<http://www.yeniozgurpolitika.org/?bolum=haber&hid=30407>

Questions centered on the reasons for and practice of 'honor killing' in general, the situation faced by women in Iraq and the rise of killings both there and in Kurdistan and the anniversary of Du'a's death.

**Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq-Abroad  
representative**

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