

## Women, Religion, and Peacebuilding: Any role for Islamic Feminism?

**NORAN ATTEYA<sup>1</sup> & CHRISTOPHER ISIKE<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1,2</sup> *Department of Political Sciences, University of Pretoria, South Africa*

### **Abstract**

The fields of “women and peacebuilding” and “religious peacebuilding” have developed in parallel with the adoption of the UNSC Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security, and the international developments highlighting the important role of religion and religious actors in both conflict and peace. Scholarship in both fields has addressed the critical roles of both women and religion in peace processes, and the importance of their inclusion in the different stages of peacebuilding and conflict transformation. However, their convergence remains largely lacking. The “women and peacebuilding” literature has ignored religious dynamics in studying the impact and the roles of women in peace processes. Similarly, literature on “religious peacebuilding” has been blind to the various contributions women religious actors—or women inspired by their faith—make towards building sustainable peace in conflict-affected areas. In this light, the paper offers a review of literature on the intersection between the two fields of “women and peacebuilding” and “religious peacebuilding.” It makes a case for building on that intersection by further examining the potential role Islamic feminism—as a feminist movement that challenges patriarchal Islamic doctrines underlying discriminatory cultural attitudes, legislations, and policies—can play in fostering women's roles in peacebuilding in the Muslim world.

**Keywords:** *feminism, Islam, peacebuilding, religion, women.*

### **1. Introduction**

The unanimous adoption of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security in 2000 represented a landmark in the area of women and peacebuilding.<sup>60</sup>

---

<sup>60</sup> The paper adopts a relational understanding of peacebuilding, which encompasses all the processes and activities that aim at conflict transformation including advocacy, activism, development, mediation, reconciliation, trauma healing, relationship building, transitional justice, etc. Such an understanding acknowledges the importance of relational, personal, and cultural dimensions in peacebuilding and conflict transformation, and thus allows for examining the impact of such factors—including religion—in peace and conflict beyond formal peacebuilding structures and mechanisms.



Not only did it highlight the historical exclusion of women from peace processes despite the importance of their role within the context of conflict; it also stressed the importance of enhancing the inclusion of women in all aspects of peace and conflict resolution to achieve sustainable peace in conflict-ridden societies. Ever since the adoption of UNSC Resolution 1325 and the resolutions and reports that followed it,<sup>61</sup> much attention has been given to the role of women in peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction processes. An ample amount of literature has been devoted to analysing the different ways women are affected by conflict, their roles in mediation and peace-making, and finally the various roles they play in the processes and activities that bring about lasting peace within their communities. However, despite the increased attention, women remain to be inadequately included in these processes.

Parallel to the increasing attention directed to the field of women and peacebuilding, a relatively new field of study that aimed at exploring the role religion and religious institutions/leaders play in peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction processes emerged by the end of the 1990s under the title of “religious or faith-based peacebuilding.” The increased sensitivity to the role of religion in international politics, especially the increased attention on its relation to conflict and violence, has raised questions concerning the role of religion in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. This increased attention has translated since 2000 into an expanding body of literature analysing the potential role of religion in peacebuilding initiatives, and an increased visibility of local religious peacebuilding initiatives at the international level.

However, the intersection between the two fields remain quite limited. Both the fields of “women and peacebuilding” and “religion and peacebuilding” have been blind to the potential contributions they can offer one another. Both the roles of women religious actors—or women inspired by their faith—in peacebuilding<sup>62</sup>, and the impact of religious dynamics on women’s peacebuilding roles and agency, remain largely invisible in the scholarship of both fields. An intersectional analysis between the two fields is required to enhance our understanding of the drivers of conflict, as well as potential avenues for its resolution and transformation.

Building on the foregoing, this paper provides a thematic literature review of the intersection between the fields of “women and peacebuilding” and “religious peacebuilding,” with the aim of highlighting the gap in research between the two fields and the need for their convergence. It builds on this intersection between women, religion and peacebuilding by further examining the nexus between Islamic feminism—as a feminist movement that challenges patriarchal Islamic doctrines underlying discriminatory cultural attitudes, legislations, and policies—and peacebuilding, and exploring the potential role that Islamic feminism can play in fostering women's peacebuilding roles and agency in the Muslim world. In this sense, the paper contributes to bridging the gap in literature on the intersection between women, religion and peacebuilding. It makes the case for the positive role of religion in motivating women’s peacebuilding roles and agency, and the need for appropriating feminist

---

<sup>61</sup> In addition to UNSC 1325, there are about seven other UNSC resolutions—UNSCR 1820 (2008), UNSCR 1888 (2009), UNSCR 1889 (2009), UNSCR 1960 (2010), and UNSCR 2106 (2013)—collectively constituting what has come to be known as the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda.

<sup>62</sup> The paper refers to “religious women peacebuilders” or “women peacebuilders inspired by their faith” interchangeably. Building on its overarching relational conception of peacebuilding, the paper defines women religious peacebuilders as women religious actors and/or women inspired by their faith involved in processes and activities—whether secular or faith-based—that aim at peacebuilding and conflict transformation.

religious interpretations, with the aim of enhancing women’s participation and inclusion in peacebuilding processes in societies where religion plays a dominant role.

## **2. Women, religion, and peacebuilding: a review of the literature**

While the fields of study of “women and peacebuilding” and “religion and peacebuilding” witnessed a relative boost in the amount of research and literature directed to both their theoretical and operational aspects in recent years, a literature gap in combining the two fields persists. Despite significant progress in understanding the various roles of women and religious actors in peacebuilding processes, and their overall impact on sustainable peace in conflict-affected communities, adequate attention to the intersection of women, religion, and peacebuilding has remained largely lacking.

On the level of the “women and peacebuilding” field, scholarship on the roles of women in conflict and peace has focused little on religious dynamics hindering or facilitating women’s full participation and inclusion in peacebuilding processes. On the other hand, literature on “religious peacebuilding” and the role of religion and religious actors in supporting peace and reconciliation efforts has been primarily viewed from “a male prism,” failing to appropriately address the gender dynamics of religious peacebuilding and the role women play in this regard.<sup>63</sup> This failure to encompass religious and gender dynamics adequately in studying peacebuilding has limited our understanding of the nature of conflict, as well as the different potential avenues for building a sustainable peace.<sup>64</sup>

Scholarship on the convergence of women, religion, and peacebuilding—though very limited—can be categorized in three main themes: the role of religious patriarchy in hindering women’s roles in peacebuilding; religion as a motivation for women’s participation in peacebuilding; and the various roles religious women peacebuilders, or women inspired by their faith, play in peacebuilding processes.

### ***2.1 The role of religious patriarchy in hindering women’s participation in peacebuilding***

Literature addressing the intersection of women, religion, and peacebuilding has highlighted the role of religion as a hindering factor to women’s agency and participation in peacebuilding processes. Le Roux and Palm argue that the multiple and ambivalent roles of religion with regard to peace and conflict are also reflected in its impact on gender issues, particularly the exclusion of women from peace processes, as well as violence against women. They identify three primary ways in which religion can hinder women’s full inclusion in peacebuilding processes: the use of an “androcentric approach” that fails to see gendered harms; the patriarchal nature of religious institutions; and the entanglement of religion and culture.<sup>65</sup>

---

<sup>63</sup> Susan Hayward, “Women, religion and peacebuilding,” in *The Oxford handbook of religion, conflict, and peacebuilding*, ed. Atalia Omer, Scott Appleby, and David Little (Oxford University Press, 2015); Onsati Katherine Kwamboka, “*Religion, gender and peacebuilding in Africa: A case study of Kenya 2007/8*” (MA thesis, University of Nairobi, Kenya, 2014); Katherine Marshall et al., “Women in religious peacebuilding,” *US Institute of Peace* (2011).

<sup>64</sup> Kwamboka, “*Religion, gender and peacebuilding in Africa: A case study of Kenya 2007/8.*”

<sup>65</sup> Marshall et al., “Women in religious peacebuilding”; Elisabet Le Roux and Selina Palm, “Women, religion, violence and peace-building: The need for a gender-relational approach to conflict transformation,” 2018, 8–9, Accessed October 4, 2020, [http://blogs.sun.ac.za/urdr/files/2020/06/RouxPalm\\_2018.-Womenreligionviolencepeace\\_REPORT.pdf](http://blogs.sun.ac.za/urdr/files/2020/06/RouxPalm_2018.-Womenreligionviolencepeace_REPORT.pdf).

According to them, religious traditions in many instances contribute to the reinforcement of gender blindness and stereotyping through the selective recognition of violations, and the portrayal of women only as peacemakers. They can also contribute to the reinforcement of patriarchal practices through the marginalization of women from the leadership of religious institutions and the promotion of narrow, male-dominated agendas in their interpretations of sacred texts, as well as their practices and structures. Moreover, religion—through its interwoven relationship with culture—can contribute to the reinforcement of discriminatory cultural or social norms that could largely limit women’s roles in peacebuilding and reverse the gains they made over the conflict period.<sup>66</sup>

In the same vein, Ogega argues that religion has not always played a positive and undifferentiated role in women’s peacebuilding experiences. According to her, religion plays a significant role in gender identity and role(s) formation. It has “deep intergenerational gender-based structures—institutions, cultures, relations, resources, and practices—that affect the roles women and men can or cannot play in peacebuilding.”<sup>67</sup> In addition to this, she contends that religion can hinder women’s agency through its different roles in conflict, as an identity marker or as a driver of conflict, to the detriment of women and their interests.<sup>68</sup>

Hayward also refers to the role of religion in shaping norms of acceptable gender roles and behaviours, particularly in the aftermath of conflict. She argues that religion provides the ideological infrastructure for social, political and economic systems in which women are marginalized. Moreover, according to her, in many post-conflict settings, religious institutions and leaders have played an antagonistic role towards the public roles of women during conflict.<sup>69</sup>

Schnabel and Tabyshalieva and Steffansson expand on the hindering role of religion during conflict. According to them, ethnic and religious identities are strengthened during conflict, “evoking neo-traditional beliefs in a purported “golden age” of patriarchal social rule, which tend to enhance archaic forms of gender discrimination.”<sup>70</sup> In such contexts, religion is strongly connected to patriarchy, and religious identities have more leverage over gender identities, which weakens women’s leadership and potential to defend their agency.<sup>71</sup>

The marginalization of women from religious structures and the impact it has on women’s religious peacebuilding roles have also been highlighted by a number of scholars.<sup>72</sup> Hayward contends that while women have been marginalized from peacebuilding generally, the field of religious peacebuilding has been particularly challenging for women, with formal

<sup>66</sup> Le Roux and Palm, “Women, religion, violence and peace-building: The need for a gender-relational approach to conflict transformation,”<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>67</sup> Jacqueline Ogega, “Faith, gender and peacebuilding: The roles of women of faith in peacebuilding in the conflict between the Gusii and Maasai of south-western Kenya,” (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Bradford, UK, 2013), 65.

<sup>68</sup> Ogega, “Faith, gender and peacebuilding: The roles of women of faith in peacebuilding in the conflict between the Gusii and Maasai of south-western Kenya,”<sup>66</sup>.

<sup>69</sup> Hayward, “Women, religion and peacebuilding,” 320

<sup>70</sup> Albrecht Schnabel and Anara Tabyshalieva, “Forgone opportunities: The marginalization of women’s contributions to post-conflict peacebuilding,” in *Defying victimhood: Women and post-conflict peacebuilding*, ed. Albrecht Schnabel and Anara Tabyshalieva (United Nations University Press, 2012), 17.

<sup>71</sup> Mikaela Steffansson, “*Women and religion: Partners in peacebuilding?*” (Unpublished master’s thesis, University of Helsinki, Finland, 2018), 22–23.

<sup>72</sup> Hayward, “Women, religion and peacebuilding”; Susan Hayward and Katherine Marshall, eds., *Women, religion, and peacebuilding: Illuminating the unseen* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2015), Kindle Edition; Marshall et al., “Women in religious peacebuilding.”

religious leadership and authority largely confined to men in most major religious traditions.<sup>73</sup> Marshall et al. share Hayward's view, contending that the patriarchal nature of many religious traditions prevents women from acquiring leadership or authority within religious structures, thus preventing them from receiving the recognition accorded to male religious leaders.<sup>74</sup> This, according to Hayward and Marshall tends to reinforce patriarchy and gender injustices, inhibiting the inclusion of women in peacebuilding and peace-making.<sup>75</sup>

Another aspect of this marginalization is reflected in the patriarchal readings of religious texts and their impact on women's roles in peacebuilding. Examining the role of Muslim women peacebuilders, Kadayifce-Orellana argues that patriarchal readings of Islamic texts, which reflect male interests in social, political and legal issues, has legitimized the exclusion of women from public structures. This, according to her, has largely curtailed women's peacebuilding initiatives, and has confined them to the local and grassroots level. Moreover, women have been particularly excluded from formal or official peacebuilding mechanisms, and their needs have been largely neglected.<sup>76</sup>

## ***2.2 Religion as a motivation for women's participation in peacebuilding***

Beside its role as a factor hindering women's engagement and full inclusion in peacebuilding processes, scholars have addressed the role religion plays as a motivation for women's participation in peacebuilding. Kwamboka and Marshall et al. point to the significant role that religion plays in inspiring women to carry out peacebuilding activities. According to them, for many women, the motivation to be involved in peace processes despite challenges they face is closely linked to their religious faith.<sup>77</sup>

According to Ogega, women religious peacebuilders—or women peacebuilders inspired by their faith—find support in their religious traditions in two different ways: they can be motivated by their religious faith to act as agents of peace, even despite opposition; or they can be supported by religious structures and institutions in their peacebuilding efforts.<sup>78</sup> She argues that faith and spirituality may act as a “domain of power” for women in different religious contexts, although their roles vary under the influence of different religious traditions.<sup>79</sup> Nonetheless, she contends that women have drawn on religious values and traditions to achieve social and political change and promote their peacebuilding agency in their communities.<sup>80</sup>

Hayward and Marshall state that, particularly at the local or community level, women participate in peacebuilding in ways that are deeply connected to their religious beliefs and affiliations. They argue that even in the secular peacebuilding realm, many women's work is

<sup>73</sup> Hayward, “Women, religion and peacebuilding,” 312–313.

<sup>74</sup> Marshall et al., “Women in religious peacebuilding,” 3.

<sup>75</sup> Hayward and Marshall, *Women, religion, and peacebuilding: Illuminating the unseen*, Kindle Edition.

<sup>76</sup> Kadayifce-Orellana, “Muslim women's peacebuilding initiatives,” in *Women, religion, and peacebuilding: Illuminating the unseen*, ed. Susan Hayward and Katherine Marshall, (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2015), 77–78.

<sup>77</sup> Kwamboka, “*Religion, gender and peacebuilding in Africa: A case study of Kenya 2007/8*,” 75; Marshall et al., “Women in religious peacebuilding,” 11.

<sup>78</sup> Ogega, “Faith, gender and peacebuilding: The roles of women of faith in peacebuilding in the conflict between the Gusii and Maasai of south-western Kenya,” 64.

<sup>79</sup> Ogega, “Faith, gender and peacebuilding: The roles of women of faith in peacebuilding in the conflict between the Gusii and Maasai of south-western Kenya,” 68.

<sup>80</sup> Ogega, “Faith, gender and peacebuilding: The roles of women of faith in peacebuilding in the conflict between the Gusii and Maasai of south-western Kenya,” 81.

linked to their beliefs, traditions, and communities. According to these authors, religious beliefs provide an important resource for women peacebuilders in three critical dimensions of peacebuilding: resilience, forgiveness, and reconciliation.<sup>81</sup> In the same vein, Kadayifci-Orellana argues that many Muslim women are empowered by their religion in their struggle for justice, peace and equality in their communities. They draw upon Islamic teachings and principles of peace—*tawhid* (unity of being), *fitrah* (original constitution of human beings), *adl* (justice), *afu* (forgiveness), *rahmah* and *rahim* (mercy and compassion), *khilfah* (stewardship), *sabr* (patience), and *hubb* (love)—as a motivation for their involvement in peacebuilding, despite the cultural and structural challenges they face.<sup>82</sup>

In addition to this, literature on women, religion, and peacebuilding has also referred to the role religion plays in asserting women’s agency and legitimating their different roles in peacebuilding. According to Hayward, in addition to drawing on their religious traditions and teachings in their peacebuilding work, religious women peacebuilders also frequently refer to the theological and textual resources of their religions to legitimate their agency and empower them to assume active peacebuilding roles.<sup>83</sup> By doing so, Hayward argues, religious women peacebuilders challenge both the traditional/conservative structures within their religious traditions, as well as outside actors who regard religion as inherently limiting to women’s progress. Moreover, they contribute to transforming structural gender inequalities—both within and outside religious institutions—thus contributing to building sustainable peace in their societies.<sup>84</sup>

Similarly, Hayward and Marshall contend that through positioning their peacebuilding agency and roles in their religious traditions, women religious peacebuilders play more active roles in shaping religious attitudes and behaviours as well as redefining social norms in their societies, including those that are “violent or exclusionary.”<sup>85</sup>

### ***2.3 The roles of women religious actors in peacebuilding***

Scholars have also addressed the different roles religious women peacebuilders—or women peacebuilders inspired by their faith—play in peacebuilding processes, and the challenges they face in this regard. Hayward highlights five main fields in which religious women peacebuilders play an active role: cross-boundary work, advocacy, psychosocial and spiritual support to survivors, mediation, and community development. According to her, women of faith play significant roles in reaching beyond religious, political, and ethnic divides and building transformative interpersonal relationships between warring communities. They engage in influencing political decision-making to promote peace on behalf of their communities. They provide psychological and spiritual support to victims of conflict through trauma healing and spiritual guidance. They mediate between conflicting parties particularly at the local or grassroots level. Finally, they approach peacebuilding from a broad-based developmental perspective that takes education, health, humanitarian relief, as well as other aspects into account for a longer-term, sustainable peace in their communities.<sup>86</sup> In addition to this, Marshall et al. point to women’s roles in inter-faith and intra-faith dialogue and

<sup>81</sup> Hayward and Marshall, *Women, religion, and peacebuilding: Illuminating the unseen*, Kindle Edition

<sup>82</sup> Kadayifci-Orellana, “Muslim women’s peacebuilding initiatives,” 78–79.

<sup>83</sup> Hayward, “Women, religion and peacebuilding,” 318.

<sup>84</sup> Hayward, “Women, religion and peacebuilding,” 319.

<sup>85</sup> Hayward and Marshall, *Women, religion, and peacebuilding: Illuminating the unseen*, Kindle Edition.

<sup>86</sup> Hayward, “Women, religion and peacebuilding,” 314–317.

relationship building, reconciliation, as well as engagement with religious texts to assert women's roles and agency in peacebuilding, as among the various ways religious women peacebuilders contribute to sustaining peace in their communities.<sup>87</sup>

Similarly, Kadayifce-Orellana adopts Cynthia Sampson's categorization of the roles of faith-based actors<sup>88</sup> in examining the roles of Muslim women in peacebuilding. She contends that in addition to the aforementioned roles in inter-faith–intra-faith dialogue, advocacy and mediation, as well as in transitional justice, religious (Muslim) women peacebuilders also play important roles as observers and educators.<sup>89</sup>

Literature on the role of women in religious peacebuilding has also addressed the challenges religious women peacebuilders face in carrying out their work. According to Hayward and Marshall, as well as Marshall et al., despite the various roles played by these women in peacebuilding, their work has remained largely invisible. This oversight of the roles of women in religious peacebuilding has resulted in a lack of international support, including resources and training. Moreover, their exclusion from religious institutions has led to their being overlooked by policymakers from formal initiatives aiming to engage religious actors and leaders.<sup>90</sup> Finally, in addition to issues related to lack of funding, training and support, the lack of recognition of the roles of women in religious peacebuilding (or the roles of religious women in peacebuilding) translates to inadequate documentation of their work, as well as an exclusion of women's insights and concerns in formal religious peacebuilding practice.<sup>91</sup>

#### ***2.4 Women, religion, and peacebuilding: the need for an intersectional analysis***

As a result of this lack of attention to the convergence between women, religion, and peacebuilding, scholars have highlighted the importance of appropriately engaging both gender and religious dynamics in peacebuilding discourse and practice. Steffansson argues that both the fields of “women and peacebuilding” and “religious peacebuilding” could benefit from engaging an intersectional analysis, which would result in new possibilities for action in different contexts. According to her, through intersecting with the field of religious peacebuilding, the field of women's peacebuilding would benefit from a broadened view of agency, which would properly incorporate the different roles of religion in relation to women's participation in peacebuilding. On the other hand, the field of religious peacebuilding would benefit from a broadened view of women as agents of change whose roles need to be highlighted and recognized.<sup>92</sup> Hayward, on the other hand, contends that adopting gender-inclusive religious peacebuilding processes that include women's participation in their design and implementation would play a critical role in transforming social and cultural norms regarding violence, gender, and power, as well as providing a more comprehensive understanding of the drivers of conflicts and the avenues for their resolution.<sup>93</sup>

---

<sup>87</sup> Marshall et al., “Women in religious peacebuilding,” 3.

<sup>88</sup> These include advocacy, intermediary, observation, education, transnational justice, and interfaith or intrafaith dialogue.

<sup>89</sup> Kadayifci-Orellana, “Muslim women's peacebuilding initiatives,” 86–89.

<sup>90</sup> Hayward and Marshall, *Women, religion, and peacebuilding: Illuminating the unseen*, Kindle Edition; Marshall et al., “Women in religious peacebuilding,” 15.

<sup>91</sup> Hayward, “Women, religion and peacebuilding,” 320.

<sup>92</sup> Steffansson, “Women and religion: Partners in peacebuilding?,” 56.

<sup>93</sup> Hayward, “Women, religion and peacebuilding,” 322.

Similarly, Le Roux and Palm call for a gender-relational approach to conflict transformation in which religious groups and leaders play a prominent role in confronting their own norms and practices that reinforce discriminatory dynamics against women. According to them, adopting such an approach would provide support for women—especially within religious institutions—to play an active role in peace processes in their communities and have their gendered needs voiced at the different levels of conflict transformation and sustainable peacebuilding.<sup>94</sup>

Indeed, as was reflected in the literature review, the intersection between women, religion and peacebuilding needs to be taken into consideration in studying the roles of women in peacebuilding, and the impact of religious dynamics and cultural attitudes on their participation and inclusion. Religion plays ambivalent roles with regard to women peacebuilding roles and agency that need to be further examined and properly incorporated and accounted for in peacebuilding initiatives. Similarly, the roles women religious actors and/or women inspired by their faith play in peacebuilding need to be better documented in peacebuilding literature, and further highlighted in peacebuilding programs. In this sense, the paper argues for the need for an intersectional analysis between the two fields of “women and peacebuilding” and “religious peacebuilding” to enhance our understanding of conflict, and the factors contributing to its resolution and transformation, on both the theoretical and operational levels. It contributes to bridging the literature gap on the intersection between women, religion, and peacebuilding by building on the positive impact of religion in motivating women’s participation in peacebuilding, and examining the role Islamic feminism can play in this regard.

### **3. The potential of Islamic Feminism for fostering women’s participation in peacebuilding**

Departing from the foregoing discussion, the paper contributes to the intersectional analysis between the two fields. It builds on the intersection between the fields of women and peacebuilding, and religious peacebuilding, to examine the potential role Islamic feminism can play in fostering women’s participation in peacebuilding in Muslim communities. The paper, in this regard, builds on the existing literature supporting the positive role of religion in peacebuilding and conflict-transformation in conflict-affected communities, and its role in motivating women’s participation in peacebuilding. It examines the potential of appropriating feminist interpretations of Islamic texts, which highlight social justice and gender equality, to promote and legitimize women’s participation in peacebuilding initiatives in countries where Islam plays a constitutive role in its culture and identity.

#### ***3.1 Islamic feminism, the quest for gender equality and social justice***

Since its emergence in the 1990s, the Islamic feminist movement has grappled with questions of social justice and gender equality, challenging religious patriarchy and its gender-discriminatory impact on attitudes, legislation, and policies in the Muslim world. Islamic feminists have placed their movement within the Islamic paradigm, relying on a combination

---

<sup>94</sup> Le Roux and Palm, “Women, religion, violence and peace-building: The need for a gender-relational approach to conflict transformation,” 11.

of Islamic methodologies<sup>95</sup> and feminist tools to offer gender-sensitive readings and interpretations of religious texts that have been long monopolized by male-dominated religious authorities.<sup>96</sup>

Unlike other strands of Third World Feminism, which emerged in direct opposition to colonialism and Western hegemony, Islamic feminism first emerged as a reaction to the accelerated Islamism and the spread of political Islam movements in various parts of the Middle East, as well as the increasing portrayal of Muslim women as the “oppressed other” in Western discourses. It appeared in a moment of “late post-coloniality” and a deep dissatisfaction with Middle Eastern countries’ inability for achieving political stability and economic growth for their people.<sup>97</sup>

Islamic feminism bases its quest for gender equality and social justice within the Islamic paradigm. It relies on the re-interpretation of religious texts to call for the advancement of women’s status in society, and demands full and complete gender equality in both the public and private (family) domains.<sup>98</sup> It asserts that the practice of social justice cannot be achieved in the absence of full equality of men and women across the public-private spectrum, which means that women may be heads of state, leaders of congregational prayer, judges, and muftis.<sup>99</sup>

In this sense, Islamic feminist movements, in their reliance on the Islamic heritage to achieve gender equality, have proven to be more attuned to the realities of Muslim societies.<sup>100</sup> Their goals and perspectives distinguish them from Muslim secular feminist movements, which rely on liberal arguments and rationales from outside the Islamic tradition, and are regarded as ‘un-Islamic’ and incapable of identifying with the concerns that women have regarding their Muslim identity.<sup>101</sup>

Islamic feminists refute popular perceptions of Muslim women, which are often grounded in the assumption that Islam is oppressive of women. They argue that such reductionist generalizations obscure the diverse and complex experiences of Muslim women and their multiple roles as agents of change in their communities inspired by their religious traditions. They contend that the oppression and marginalization experienced by Muslim women in certain contexts is rather founded on patriarchal interpretations of Islamic texts, and not Islam.<sup>102</sup>

---

<sup>95</sup> These include *ijtihad* (independent investigation of religious sources) and *tafsir* (interpretation of the Quran).

<sup>96</sup> Margot Badran, “Islamic feminism: What’s in a name?,” *Al-Ahram Weekly Online* 569(2002); Margot Badran, “Between secular and Islamic feminism/s: Reflections on the Middle East and beyond,” *Journal of Middle East Women’s Studies* 1, no.1 (2005); Ziba Mir-Hosseini, “Islam and Feminism: Whose Islam? Whose Feminism?,” *Contestation: Dialogue on Women’s Empowerment Journal* 1 (2010); Sherin Saadallah, “Muslim feminism in the third wave: A reflective inquiry,” in *Third wave feminism*, ed. Stacy Gillis, Gillian Howie and Rebecca Munford (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

<sup>97</sup> Badran, “Between secular and Islamic feminism/s: Reflections on the Middle East and beyond,” 8; Liv Tønnessen, “Islamic Feminism, a public lecture,” *CMI Sudan Working Paper* (2014).

<sup>98</sup> Margot Badran, “Engaging Islamic feminism,” *Islamic Feminism: Current Perspectives* 96(2008): 32–33.

<sup>99</sup> Badran, “Islamic feminism: What’s in a name?”; Badran, “Between secular and Islamic feminism/s: Reflections on the Middle East and beyond,” 14; Badran, “Engaging Islamic feminism,” 32.

<sup>100</sup> Wadud, *Inside the gender jihad: Women’s reform in Islam* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2006).

<sup>101</sup> Wadud, *Inside the gender jihad: Women’s reform in Islam*, 116–117.

<sup>102</sup> Badran, “Islamic feminism: What’s in a name?”; Kadayifci-Orellana, “Muslim women’s peacebuilding initiatives”; Saadallah, “Muslim feminism in the third wave: A reflective inquiry”; Yasmin Saikia and Chad Haines, “Situating peace, Islam and women in the everyday,” in *Women and peace in the Islamic world: Gender, agency and influence*, ed. Yasmin Saikia and Chad Haines (I.B. Tauris, 2015).

Islamic feminists highlight the importance of historical and cultural contexts in understanding gender dynamics within given societies. They argue that, in addition to the Quran, whose interpretation has long been male-dominated, the Islamic Jurisprudence—that has informed the various contemporary formulations of ‘Shari’a’ and Shari’a laws in many Muslim societies—was itself heavily affected by prevalent patriarchal thinking and behaviors of the point of history when it was consolidated. Moreover, the Hadiths, the reported (but not always authentic) sayings and actions of the Prophet Mohamed, have also been subjected to instances of misinterpretation that aimed at asserting certain patriarchal ideas and power dynamics without relevance to the contexts in which they have originally originated.<sup>103</sup> Thus, the process of re-reading and re-interpreting Islamic texts by Islamic feminists is, in essence, an attempt at dismantling structural and hierarchal dynamics of religion, culture and power within Muslim societies, or, as Sherin Saadallah puts it, “dismantling the status quo of male-dominated Islamic interpretation and acculturation which serves to reinforce women’s subjugation.”<sup>104</sup>

According to Islamic feminists, the interplay of cultural, socioeconomic and political contexts, and their influence on how religious texts are understood, has led to a large degree of variance in religious interpretations across different Muslim societies, making the understanding of the contexts in which religious texts were interpreted of critical importance.<sup>105</sup> This interaction between religion and culture and its impact on the conceptualization of religion is paramount in shaping religious interpretations and practices, which could adopt certain notions of gender roles within Muslim societies and consequently reinforce patriarchal power dynamics and models.<sup>106</sup>

Within this context, Islamic feminists call for the re-reading of religious texts, mindful of the cultural and historical contexts in which they have emerged. They highlight the paramount importance of introducing alternative interpretations from a female-inclusive perspective for achieving gender reforms in modern Muslim societies.<sup>107</sup> In doing so, Islamic feminists can be divided into three main groups. One group focus their work and research exclusively on the re-interpretation of Quran, and the second apply their re-readings of the Quran to the analysis of the various formulations of the Shari’a. The third group focuses on examining the hadiths vis-à-vis their historical contexts, as well as re-tracing the lines of witnesses and transmitters to prove their authentication and meaning from a feminist perspective.<sup>108</sup>

Asma Barlas stresses the importance of questioning the contextual realities that influenced the understanding of the original Islamic texts and their interpretation. She argues that the Quran was revealed into an existing patriarchy and has been interpreted by adherents of patriarchies ever since, and calls on Muslim women to challenge its patriarchal exegesis.

---

<sup>103</sup> Badran, “Islamic feminism: What’s in a name?”

<sup>104</sup> Saadallah, “Muslim feminism in the third wave: A reflective inquiry,” 219.

<sup>105</sup> S. Gerami, *Women and fundamentalism: Islam and Christianity* (Ser. Garland Reference Library of the Humanities, vol. 15-16) (Garland Publishing, 1996); Kadayifci-Orellana, “Muslim women’s peacebuilding initiatives”; Saadallah, “Muslim feminism in the third wave: A reflective inquiry.”

<sup>106</sup> Gerami, *Women and fundamentalism: Islam and Christianity*; Saadallah, “Muslim feminism in the third wave: A reflective inquiry.”

<sup>107</sup> Omaira Abou-Bakr, *Feminist and Islamic perspectives: New horizons of knowledge and reform* (Cairo: The Women and Memory Forum, 2013); Wadud, *Inside the gender jihad: Women’s reform in Islam*.

<sup>108</sup> Badran, “Islamic feminism: What’s in a name?” ; Badran, “Between secular and Islamic feminism/s: Reflections on the Middle East and beyond.”

She asserts that “inequality and discrimination derive not from the teachings of the Quran but from the secondary religious texts, the *Tafsir* (Quranic exegesis) and the *hadith* (narratives purportedly detailing the life and praxis of the Prophet Muhammad).”<sup>109</sup> Similarly, Wadud contends that whatever sexism might be found in the words of the Quran is a reflection of the historical context of revelation, and unless these verses are examined vis-à-vis this particular context, the universal meanings intended by the Quran would be lost by their modes of articulation.<sup>110</sup> On the other hand, Mernissi examines the history of the early Islamic period and highlights the strong and different roles played by women in the society. She contends that the need to protect the political interests of men within the Muslim community gave precedence to certain exegesis (*tafsir*) over others, and contributed to marginalizing the roles of women within Muslim societies.<sup>111</sup> Within the same context, Mir-Hosseini asserts that men’s monopoly of the Quran and its implication on gender relations can only be broken when Muslim women actively participate in the process of knowledge production. This, according to her, that would ultimately lead to a ‘much-needed’ paradigm shift in Islamic law that would have important epistemological and political consequences in Muslim societies.<sup>112</sup>

Departing from the foregoing, Islamic feminists challenge patriarchal interpretations of religious texts, and its translation into Islamic jurisprudence and laws impacting the roles and status of women in Muslim societies, through introducing their own interpretations of Islamic texts, which assert gender equality and social justice. They situate their arguments and positions within their indigenous Islamic paradigm, with the aim of highlighting cultural patriarchal rulings and practices through a feminist understanding of original texts, ultimately bringing about structural change.<sup>113</sup>

### ***3.2 Islamic feminism, conflict and peace in the Muslim world***

While there has been ample Islamic feminist literature on social justice and gender equality in the private and public realms, little has been written on the convergence between Islamic feminism and peacebuilding. In this light, the paper attempts to build on the growing disciplinary conversation between the fields of “women and peacebuilding” and “religious peacebuilding,” through exploring the potential of Islamic feminist discourse—as a theoretical framework and a practical tool—to advance women’s participation in peacebuilding initiatives in communities where Islam plays a critical role in shaping gender roles and expectations.

As previously discussed in the literature review section, with the increasing attention given in peacebuilding literature over the last two decades to the role of religion and religious actors in peacebuilding, the impact of religion on inspiring women’s peacebuilding work has also increasingly come under question. In addition to its positive role in fostering peace in conflict-ridden societies, religion has also played a role as a motivating factor for Muslim women to participate and engage in peacebuilding. Moreover, it has provided these women with the legitimization for their participation and inclusion. Scholarship on the convergence

---

<sup>109</sup> Asma Barlas, “Believing women” in Islam: Unreading patriarchal interpretations of the Qur’an (University of Texas Press, 2001), 3.

<sup>110</sup> Wadud, *Inside the gender jihad: Women’s reform in Islam*, 194, 205.

<sup>111</sup> Fatima Mernissi, *Women and Islam: An historical and theological enquiry* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), 61.

<sup>112</sup> Ziba Mir-Hosseini, “The quest for gender justice: Emerging feminist voices in Islam,” *Islam* 21, no. 36 (2004), 4.

<sup>113</sup> Saadallah, “Muslim feminism in the third wave: A reflective inquiry,” 223–224.

between women, religion, and peacebuilding assert that many women, across the world and in various religious traditions, engage in peacebuilding efforts in their societies motivated by their religious faith and beliefs. Though largely unrecognized in formal peacebuilding initiatives and neglected in mainstream gender and peacebuilding literature, these women have grounded their work in their respective religious traditions and have used their invisibility as a catalyst for more creative means of peacebuilding that have eluded others.<sup>114</sup> In addition to this, it contends that women peacebuilders have also frequently drawn on religious texts to assert and legitimate their peacebuilding agency and roles—challenging conservative/patriarchal structures within their religious traditions and contributing to the achievement of gender equality both within and outside religious institutions. This ultimately contributes to building sustainable peace within their societies.<sup>115</sup>

Within this context, Islamic feminism, through challenging patriarchal religious structures and re-reading religious texts in a feminist light, can play a positive role in advancing women’s roles in peacebuilding in societies where Islam plays a constitutive role in its culture and identity.

Drawing on Islamic history, women have played different roles in peacebuilding since the early days of Islam, undeterred by long traditions of patriarchal interpretations that have consolidated women's marginalization and exclusion from public life. They have rooted their peacebuilding in an Islamic paradigm of peace<sup>116</sup> that has shown remarkable agency in different historical and sociopolitical contexts.<sup>117</sup> Mernissi gives examples of two of Prophet Mohamed’s wives (Aysha and Um Salama), as well as his granddaughter, to reflect the multiple roles women could play in peacebuilding in their communities. According to her, Muslim women could negotiate their status and position within the community and have their voices heard. They played important roles in both war and peace, as well as in the transmission and interpretation of religious texts.<sup>118</sup> Leila Ahmed also addresses the influential roles played by women in early Islamic societies through her examination of the male-female power dynamics and the prevalent gender systems in the Middle East before and after the rise of Islam. She discusses the various roles played by women in early Muslim communities, and the ways in which the interpretation of Islam both improved and curtailed the freedoms of women in its earliest days.<sup>119</sup>

Moving to more contemporary Muslim contexts, converging Islamic feminism with peacebuilding activism has provided a base for Muslim women to build on in their peacebuilding endeavors. Studies examining the impact of Islamic feminism on the roles of women in contemporary Muslim societies reflect that progressive interpretations of Islam from

---

<sup>114</sup> Hayward and Marshall, *Women, religion, and peacebuilding: Illuminating the unseen*, Kindle Edition.

<sup>115</sup> Hayward, “Women, religion and peacebuilding,” 319.

<sup>116</sup> As previously highlighted, the Islamic paradigm of peace is based on principles of tawhid (unity of being), fitrah (original constitution of human beings), adl (justice), afu (forgiveness), rahmah and rahim (mercy and compassion), khilfah (stewardship), sabr (patience), and hubb (love).

<sup>117</sup> Miriam Cooke, “Ungendering peace talk,” in *Women and peace in the Islamic world: Gender, agency and influence*, ed. Yasmin Saikia and Chad Haines (I. B. Tauris, 2015); Kadayifci-Orellana, “Muslim women’s peacebuilding initiatives”; Saikia and Haines, “Situating peace, Islam and women in the everyday.”

<sup>118</sup> Mernissi, *Women and Islam: An historical and theological enquiry*.

<sup>119</sup> Leila Ahmed, *Women and gender in Islam: Historical roots of a modern debate* (Yale University Press, 1992).

a feminist lens has contributed in increasing the roles of Muslim women in politics and peacebuilding.<sup>120</sup>

In *Bosnia and Herzegovina*, combining the languages of religion and feminism has proven to be a useful tool for promoting peacebuilding and dialogue within the community. Religion has played a critical role in inspiring women's involvement and activism in peacebuilding initiatives. Moreover, the large contribution of Islamic feminist discourse in increasing women's participation in peace processes has encouraged secular human rights organizations involved in peacebuilding efforts to engage with female theologians and employ religious discourse in their peacebuilding initiatives.<sup>121</sup> One of the useful tools used by Islamic feminists during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, was the issuance of a decree (Fatwa) stating that "raped women should be considered heroines," while urging family members and society "to accept these women and help them heal their traumas." This tool, though largely symbolic, played a critical role in reducing the shame and trauma of Muslim women who were subjected to sexual violence during the war, and in achieving peace and reconciliation in the society.<sup>122</sup>

Within the *African context*, one could highlight the role of the Somali 'sixth clan' movement (the pan-Somali women's movement) in the Somali peace process, as a successful example for the convergence between Islamic feminism and peacebuilding. The movement, which adopts an advocacy strategy built on an Islamic feminist conception of gender equality, succeeded in participating in the Somali peace negotiations on an equal footing with Somali men in 2002. The movement's religious background and alliances with moderate Muslim groups gave it credibility amongst opposition groups who could not criticize it for being un-Islamic or threatening to the prevalent Islamic identity. And as a result of its efforts, a number of gender-related provisions were adopted in the peace agreement and women's voices were heard in the negotiations process.<sup>123</sup>

In the *Arab world*, Muslim women—inspired by the intellectual evolution of Islam with regard to women—have played various roles in peace-making and peacebuilding. Through its assertion of the important roles women can play as agents of change during conflict and peacetime, Islamic feminism has provided Muslim women with a source of liberation within Islam, and encouraged them to assume leadership roles during this critical period. According to Ahmed and Rae:

Women not only led demonstrations and gave speeches, but they also adopted traditional caretaker and nurturing roles by feeding and housing protesters and treating the injured and wounded, especially those too fearful to seek professional medical attention. Women also organized resistance through collective prayer, and reconstituted

---

<sup>120</sup> Maryam Ahmad and James Deshaw Rae, "Women, Islam, and Peacemaking in the Arab Spring," *Peace Review* 27, no. 3 (2015); Kadayifci-Orellana, "Muslim women's peacebuilding initiatives"; Hayward and Marshall, *Women, religion, and peacebuilding: Illuminating the unseen*, Kindle Edition; Saikia and Haines, "Situating peace, Islam and women in the everyday"; Zilka Spahić-Šiljak, "Do it and name it: Feminist theology and peace building in Bosnia and Herzegovina," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 29, no. 2 (2013); Zilka Spahić-Šiljak, "The Confluence of Islamic Feminism and Peacebuilding: Lessons from Bosnia," *Samyukta: A Journal of Gender & Culture* 17 (2017).

<sup>121</sup> Spahić-Šiljak, "Do it and name it: Feminist theology and peace building in Bosnia and Herzegovina"; Spahić-Šiljak, "The Confluence of Islamic Feminism and Peacebuilding: Lessons from Bosnia."

<sup>122</sup> Spahić-Šiljak, "Do it and name it: Feminist theology and peace building in Bosnia and Herzegovina," 181.

<sup>123</sup> Kadayifci-Orellana, "Muslim women's peacebuilding initiatives," 89–90.

*jihad* to defend against coercive acts of the state and to bear witness through martyrdom (*shahada*).<sup>124</sup>

Building on the above, through its positive impact on the participation of women in the Arab Spring, Islamic feminism has proven to be of paramount importance in bringing about change to the roles and status of women in the Arab world. Embedded in an Islamic paradigm that embraces the role of women in positions of leadership, Islamic feminism has helped more women “to find a voice and be heard, as they speak about resistance, change, and peace.”<sup>125</sup>

The above-mentioned examples reflect the multiplicity of roles Muslim women play in peacebuilding motivated by their religious tradition. However, apart from the Somali example, Muslim women’s contributions to peacebuilding, largely challenged by patriarchal norms and structures that hinder women’s participation in public decision-making and formal peacebuilding mechanisms, have been largely confined to the grassroots level. This has limited their influence on formal peace processes, and has curtailed their ability to impact political agendas to be more reflective of their priorities and concerns.<sup>126</sup>

Given the constitutive role that Islam plays in the culture and identity of Muslim societies and its role as the primary source of legitimacy, an understanding of Islamic sources is critical to attempts aiming at transforming gender relations and increasing women’s roles in public life in general and in peacebuilding in particular. Through locating its ideas and activism in an Islamic paradigm, Islamic feminism can prove to be a powerful tool in legitimizing women’s roles in peacebuilding, as well as making their peace work more relevant and acceptable to different segments of Muslim communities.<sup>127</sup>

Through employing both traditional Islamic methodologies and feminist tools to analyze the Islamic texts, that are employed by conservative and patriarchal structures to justify the exclusion of Muslim women from political processes, including peace processes, Islamic feminism empowers women with arguments and examples that assert their roles and agency within their communities. Moreover, it provides them with the tools to found these roles on the bases of their religious tradition and Islamic aspirations.

Though not fully integrated in the official religious discourses in Muslim societies, Islamic feminism offers a great potential in playing a pivotal role in increasing the contributions of women in peacebuilding. Through its re-interpretation and appropriation of religious texts to assert the important role of women in the different political and peace processes, women in Muslim societies would be encouraged to fully participate in initiatives that stem from their specific cultural and historical contexts to bring about peace and social justice.

---

<sup>124</sup> Ahmad and Rae, "Women, Islam, and Peacemaking in the Arab Spring," 317–318.

<sup>125</sup> Ahmad and Rae, "Women, Islam, and Peacemaking in the Arab Spring," 319.

<sup>126</sup> Hayward and Marshall, *Women, religion, and peacebuilding: Illuminating the unseen*, Kindle Edition; Ayse Kadayifci-Orellana, “In pursuit of peace: Muslim women’s involvement in peace-building,” in *Women and peace in the Islamic world: Gender, agency and influence*, ed. Yasmin Saikia and Chad Haines (I.B. Tauris, 2015).

<sup>127</sup> Cooke, “Ungendering peace talk”; Kadayifci-Orellana, “Muslim women’s peacebuilding initiatives”; Kadayifci-Orellana, “In pursuit of peace: Muslim women’s involvement in peace-building.”

#### 4. Conclusion

The review of literature on the intersection of women, religion, and peacebuilding reveals a gap in research between the fields of “women and peacebuilding” and “religion and peacebuilding.” In the words of Hayward and Marshall:

Contemporary academic and policy work on war and peace has been largely blind to religion, if not antagonistic toward it. It has also tended to cast women primarily as subjects or victims of conflict or peace, rather than as agents. Where the two blind spots of religion and women’s agency come together, invisibility is most pronounced.<sup>128</sup>

Converging the two fields together enhances our understanding of conflict, and the role historical and cultural contexts play in both its instigation and resolution. Moreover, it builds on our understanding of the ambivalent roles of religion in conflict and peace, to examine the roles of new and different actors—including women religious actors or women peacebuilders inspired by their faith—in conflict transformation and peacebuilding.

The questions that the paper here is asking are: “Can Islamic feminism be a tool to promote women’s participation in peacebuilding? And can the Islamic religion be appropriated, not only to consolidate peace and conflict transformation in conflict-affected communities, but also to assert gender equality and social justice and legitimize women’s participation in peacebuilding initiatives in Muslim societies?” The paper, in this regard, builds on the quite recent and limited intersection in literature between the two fields of women and peacebuilding and religious peacebuilding. It expands on this intersection, which studies the different ways in which religion impacts women’s participation in peacebuilding, by examining the nexus between Islamic feminism and peacebuilding, and the ways feminist interpretations of Islam can be appropriated as a tool to legitimate and assert women’s agency and inclusion in societies where Islam plays a dominant role.

The persistent lack of participation of women in peacebuilding, in both formal and informal levels, raise a number of questions regarding the effectiveness of peacebuilding initiatives and the relevance of the theoretical frameworks on which they are developed. In Muslim communities, the issue of non-inclusion of women is compounded by a lack of understanding of the specific cultural context, which influences gender roles and expectations, and the role religion plays in it. There is a need for a theoretical framework that utilizes religion to encourage the engagement of women in peacebuilding in communities where religion plays a dominant constitutive role in their cultural and socio-political structures. In this regard, this paper proposes Islamic feminism as an ideological and theoretical anchor on which women in Muslim societies can base their peace agency. Indeed, Islamic feminism, through its re-interpretation of Islamic texts from a gender-inclusive perspective, and its quest for achieving full gender equality in all realms of Muslim societies, provides the necessary theoretical framework that would enhance Muslim women’s peacebuilding agency and increase their participation in peacebuilding and reconstruction efforts in their communities. It plays a critical role in changing prevalent Islamic discourses that limit women’s participation and confine their efforts to the local levels, and challenges dominant patriarchal structures that inhibit women’s ability to voice their priorities and concerns.

---

<sup>128</sup> Hayward and Marshall, *Women, religion, and peacebuilding: Illuminating the unseen*, Kindle Edition.

On the other hand, with the increasing attention to the important role religion in peacebuilding and conflict transformation, the role of Islamic feminism in promoting women's inclusion in peacebuilding need to be recognized both for its ideological and practical value. In this regard, local and international peacebuilding efforts need to be mindful of the specific cultural contexts of Muslim communities, they need to embrace actors who speak the language of their communities and locate their ideas and activism in their social, cultural and religious traditions.

The Islamic feminist discourse, in this sense, could be utilized to assert women's peacebuilding roles in communities where Islam plays a constitutive role in their culture and tradition. Feminist re-interpretations and re-reading of Islamic texts could be appropriated in such a way that would legitimate and advance women's participation in both formal and informal peacebuilding processes. Examples from Islamic history, which reflect the multiple roles of women in Muslim societies, could be incorporated in peacebuilding programs aiming at increasing women's participation in peacebuilding and conflict transformation. This would provide women in Muslim communities with the motivation and legitimacy to fully participate in peacebuilding initiatives that are more reflective of their cultural and historical contexts, and would ultimately contribute to achieving gender equality and bringing about structural change in their communities. In sum, Islamic feminism needs to be incorporated as part of an overall peacebuilding strategy aiming at achieving gender equality, and at empowering Muslim women to fulfill their peacebuilding agency and aspired roles in their communities.

## **Bibliography**

Abou-Bakr, Omaira, ed. *Feminist and Islamic perspectives: New horizons of knowledge and reform*. Cairo: The Women and Memory Forum, 2013.

Abu-Nimer, Mohammed and İhsan Yılmaz. "Islamic resources for peacebuilding: Achievements and challenges." *Islam and Peacebuilding* (2010): 39.

Ahmed, Leila. *Women and gender in Islam: Historical roots of a modern debate*. Yale University Press, 1992.

Ahmad, Maryam, and James Deshaw Rae. "Women, Islam, and Peacemaking in the Arab Spring." *Peace Review* 27, no. 3 (2015): 312-319.

Appleby, Scott. "Religious violence: The strong, the weak, and the pathological." In *The Oxford handbook of religion, conflict, and peacebuilding*, edited by Atalia Omer, Scott Appleby, and David Little, 33–57. Oxford University Press, 2015.

Badran, Margot. "Islamic feminism: What's in a name?" *Al-Ahram Weekly Online* 569(2002): 17–23.

Badran, Margot. "Between secular and Islamic feminism/s: Reflections on the Middle East and beyond." *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 1, no.1 (2005): 6–28.

Badran, Margot. "Engaging Islamic feminism." *Islamic Feminism: Current Perspectives* 96(2008): 25–36.

- Barlas, Asma. *“Believing women” in Islam: Unreading patriarchal interpretations of the Qur’an*. University of Texas Press, 2001.
- Cooke, Miriam. “Ungendering peace talk.” In *Women and peace in the Islamic world: Gender, agency and influence*, edited by Yasmin Saikia and Chad Haines, 24–42. I. B. Tauris, 2015.
- Gerami, S. *Women and fundamentalism: Islam and Christianity* (Ser. Garland Reference Library of the Humanities, vol. 15-16). Garland Publishing, 1996.
- Hayward, Susan. “Women, religion and peacebuilding.” In *The Oxford handbook of religion, conflict, and peacebuilding*, edited by Atalia Omer, Scott Appleby, and David Little, 307–332. Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Hayward, Susan, and Katherine Marshall, eds. *Women, religion, and peacebuilding: Illuminating the unseen* [Kindle Edition]. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2015.
- Kadayifci-Orellana, Ayse. “Muslim women’s peacebuilding initiatives.” In *Women, religion, and peacebuilding: Illuminating the unseen*, edited by Susan Hayward and Katherine Marshall, [Kindle Edition]. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2015.
- Kadayifci-Orellana, Ayse. “In pursuit of peace: Muslim women’s involvement in peacebuilding.” In *Women and peace in the Islamic world: Gender, agency and influence*, edited by Yasmin Saikia and Chad Haines, 192–223. I.B. Tauris, 2015.
- Kwamboka, Onsati Katherine. *“Religion, gender and peacebuilding in Africa: A case study of Kenya 2007/8.”* MA thesis, University of Nairobi, Kenya, 2014.
- Kynsilehto, Anitta. “Islamic feminism: current perspectives.” *Tampere Peace Research Institute Occasional Paper* 96 (2008): 9–13.
- Le Roux, Elisabet and Selina Palm. “Women, religion, violence and peace-building: The need for a gender-relational approach to conflict transformation.” 2018. Accessed October 4, 2020. [http://blogs.sun.ac.za/urdr/files/2020/06/RouxPalm\\_2018.-Womenreligionviolencepeace\\_REPORT.pdf](http://blogs.sun.ac.za/urdr/files/2020/06/RouxPalm_2018.-Womenreligionviolencepeace_REPORT.pdf)
- Mahmood, Saba. *Politics of piety: The Islamic revival and the feminist subject*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012.
- Marshall, Katherine, Susan Hayward, Claudia Zambra, Esther Breger, and Sarah Jackson. “Women in religious peacebuilding”. *US Institute of Peace*, (2011).
- Mernissi, Fatima. *The forgotten queens of Islam*. University of Minnesota Press, 1993.
- Mernissi, Fatima, and Lakeland M. *Women and Islam: An historical and theological enquiry*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991.
- Mir-Hosseini, Ziba. “Women and politics in post-Khomeini Iran: divorce, veiling and emerging feminist voices.” In *Women and politics in the Third World*, edited by Haleh Afshar, 157–185. Routledge, 1996.
- Mir-Hosseini, Ziba. “The quest for gender justice: Emerging feminist voices in Islam.” *Islam* 21, no. 36 (2004): 1–5.

- Mir-Hosseini, Ziba. "Islam and Feminism: Whose Islam? Whose Feminism?." *Contestation: Dialogue on Women's Empowerment Journal* 1 (2010).
- Ogega, Jacqueline. "Faith, gender and peacebuilding: The roles of women of faith in peacebuilding in the conflict between the Gusii and Maasai of south-western Kenya." Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Bradford, UK, 2013.
- Saadallah, Sherin. "Muslim feminism in the third wave: A reflective inquiry." In *Third wave feminism*, edited by Stacy Gillis, Gillian Howie and Rebecca Munford, 216–226. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.
- Saikia, Yasmin and Chad Haines. "Situating peace, Islam and women in the everyday." In *Women and peace in the Islamic world: Gender, agency and influence*, edited by Yasmin Saikia and Chad Haines, 1–22. I.B. Tauris, 2015.
- Sampson, Cynthia. "Religion and peace building." In *Peacemaking in international conflict: Methods and techniques*, edited by Cynthia Sampson, I. William Zartman and J. Lewis Rasmussen, 273–326. US Institute of Peace Press, 1997.
- Schnabel, Albrecht and Anara Tabyshalieva. "Forgone opportunities: The marginalization of women's contributions to post-conflict peacebuilding." In *Defying victimhood: Women and post-conflict peacebuilding*, edited by Albrecht Schnabel and Anara Tabyshalieva, pp. 3–47. United Nations University Press, 2012.
- Seedat, Fatima. "Islam, feminism, and Islamic feminism: Between inadequacy and inevitability." *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 29, no. 2 (2013): 25–45.
- Spahić-Šiljak, Zilka. "Do it and name it: Feminist theology and peace building in Bosnia and Herzegovina." *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 29, no. 2 (2013): 176–184.
- Spahić-Šiljak, Zilka. "The Confluence of Islamic Feminism and Peacebuilding: Lessons from Bosnia." *Samyukta: A Journal of Gender & Culture* 17 (2017).
- Steffansson, Mikaela. "Women and religion: Partners in peacebuilding?" Unpublished master's thesis, University of Helsinki, Finland, 2018.
- Tønnessen, Liv. "Islamic Feminism, a public lecture." *CMI Sudan Working Paper* (2014).
- Wadud, Amina. *Qur'an and woman: Rereading the sacred text from a woman's perspective* (2nd ed.). New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Wadud, Amina. *Inside the gender jihad: Women's reform in Islam* (Islam in the twenty-first century). Oxford: Oneworld, 2006.