

## Muslim women raise voices worldwide

Sunday, 26 March 2006

By RAHEEL RAZA

Toronto Star - During the height of the Danish cartoon controversy, Canadian media interviewed male Muslim leaders exclusively, without bothering to seek out leaders among Muslim women. It's a given that Muslim leaders are men, preferably with beards.

Haideh Moghissi, a sociology professor at York University, says that rigid, unforgiving and sexist voices are considered valid voices by Western media. When a Muslim woman speaks out or assumes a leadership role, she's called militant.

...The conference, titled "Women's leadership: Indispensable to the struggle against fundamentalism," was supported by 15 European organizations.

...In her opening remarks, Dame Elizabeth Sydney, chair of the International Federation Against Fundamentalism and for Equality, said, "Gender equality brings great many benefits ... it introduces an enormous amount of talent and energy into society. Under the fundamentalist regime, women are violently prevented from using their abilities. But the release of 50 per cent of human talent will raise standards for all of us."

In a video message, Maryam Rajavi of the Iranian Resistance said that Islamic fundamentalism is the biggest threat to the equality movement and therefore finding a way to confront the imminent danger of religious fascism ruling Iran is an urgent imperative.

Asked how to defeat Islamic fundamentalism and misogyny, Rajavi responded: "You have to eliminate the male-dominated culture as an inhumane culture, through women leadership. Accordingly, the establishment of democracy without the active role of women in society's leadership is impossible or at best retractable."

more