

# Māking ōur Vōices Heārd

The stories of Muslim  
women in Ireland



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9 Marlborough Court  
Marlborough Street  
Dublin 1

May 2010

Graphic Design  
Form

Photographs  
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Funded and supported by;



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## Foreword - Roja Fazaeli

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I believe *Making Our Voices be Heard* is an important new work. Relatively few studies have been done on Islam in Ireland to date. Therefore, there are knowledge gaps to be filled, not only in scholarly, critical material, but also in how communities are organised by grassroots practitioners. This book succeeds in helping to fill in some of these gaps.

This book is accessible and clear. It aims to dispel myths and stereotypes about Islam and the Muslim women who narrate these stories. They give us their own words and self-understanding in these pages, and the pages are in turn a good platform from which they can tell their stories. Storytelling is a powerful act, and one that has deep roots and resonance in the Irish tradition. It's nice to read the following chapters in that light and then to wonder what these women's conversations might have been

like with figures such as Jim Larkin, Flann O'Brien and Countess Markiewicz. And then to wonder further: Where are the Irish voices today who will pick up this conversation and be a part of this story?

Ireland is a country that has become increasingly multicultural in the last decade, but real integration has been slow to follow. This book is of particular value because it presents a diverse spectrum of Muslim women and the specific challenges and hopes they carry with them on a daily basis.

I hope that you enjoy this book and use it towards promoting equality in your own communities.

**Roja Fazaeli**

*School of Religions and Theology  
Trinity College Dublin*





## Foreword - Anastasia Crickley



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The expression of the needs, interests and aspirations of Muslim women and of their experiences and reality in this publication, is both insightful and timely. It depicts the lives of 16 Muslim women of different ages, nationalities, cultural backgrounds and occupations living in Ireland. What emerges is a story of differences and diversity both between the women and between them and the majority of women as well as some parallels and similarities. Quite clearly their social and economic circumstances affect women's experiences of their own diverse realities and engagement of integration in Ireland; one size solutions and policies are clearly not adequate.

Social and economic circumstances also affect the nature and extent of discrimination and racism and the ways in which it is experienced. As the women point out, the right to express one's identity

with or without the veil is very important. Women's human rights cannot be denied because they are inconvenient. I am reminded also of the double burdens in the struggle for these rights. The right to work outside the home as long as their full time job within the home is also done remains the situation for many women globally and assures the maintenance of patriarchal power through confusion of custom and culture.

These are complex issues not helped by the ways in which promotion of women's human rights in minority communities can be confused with assimilation into the majority population. As chairperson of the European Union's Fundamental Rights Agency and over many years of work with migrants and minority women, I have never seen such strategies lead to realisation of women's human rights. Women's rights can and

should be supported by all women. Progress towards rights can also be informed by the successes and failures of the past in different cultures and contexts – for example, the need to make visible and address the gendered burdens of poverty and exclusion as well as the legitimate personal aspirations of the better off women; the realities of violence towards women across all cultures and the horrific circumstances faced by women in conflict situations globally.

Muslim, migrant and minority women's rights struggles can however only be led and formulated towards successful outcomes by Muslim, minority and migrant women themselves on their own terms and in their own time. The question of freedom of religion and belief is an added complexity; given that all religions globally have being defined and led by men but frequently maintained and passed on through women's participation and commitment.

As chairperson of the National Consultative committee on Racism and Interculturalism<sup>1</sup> until its abolition in November 2008 budget, I am very glad to welcome the publication and associated project as a good example of the sort of initiative which an organisation like the NCCRI was able

to take in collaboration on this occasion with the National Women's Council of Ireland. Initiatives and publications like this are critical if the many women who have contributed so much to our development and diversity are to become a fully integrated part of Ireland now. I commend all who have contributed to it and salute the courage which is evident in their stories and experiences. I particularly commend the National Women's Council of Ireland for seeing the project to fruition and encourage and support their full time engagement with and integration of migrants and minority women in their work.

The absence of the NCCRI does not mean that racism has gone away or diverted elsewhere. These women and their sisters in other migrant and minority communities deserve strong national focus on their rights and contribution so that a more just and equal society for all, minority and majority, where women's rights are recognised, respected and realised can become a reality.

**Anastasia Crickley**  
*Centre for Applied Social Studies NUI  
Maynooth and Member of the United  
Nations Committee for the Elimination  
of Racial Discrimination*

<sup>1</sup> The NCCRI was closed in December 2008, following the October 2008 budget which saw the cessation of funding to the agency.

## Acknowledgements

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The National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCI) would like to thank the many people who made this publication possible. In particular, we would like to express our gratitude to the women who feature in this publication. We recognise and appreciate the generosity and strength of the women in sharing their stories with us.

The NWCI would also like to thank Catherine Lynch who edited the publication, Carina Fitzgerald and Rachel Doyle, who compiled the individual stories and Fionuala Cregan

for administrative support. Thanks go to the Windsor Womens Centre for assisting with the interviews in Belfast and to the editorial group Salma Shaarawy, Lorraine O'Connor, Rachel Doyle and Orla O'Connor for their time and contribution.

We very much appreciate the financial support of the Office of the Minister for Integration and the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland in the development of the project and the production of the publication.

*Disclaimer: The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily the views of the National Women's Council of Ireland.*

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# Background and Introduction



## Background

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In December 2008, the National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCi) and the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI) brought together a group of Muslim women from different backgrounds to discuss their issues and concerns, engage in training and to work on projects together. The idea for this publication came as a response to discussions in this Muslim Women's Group about the perceived invisibility of Muslim women from many aspects of Irish society, negative media coverage, on-going prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination against them, and the view that "all Muslim women are the same". These Muslim women expressed a desire to build public awareness of who Muslim women in Ireland are, their needs, their interests and their aspirations. This is what women told us; let their voices be heard.

This publication provides Muslim women from a range of backgrounds and perspectives with a space to reflect on their experiences and a voice to tell their stories. The publication depicts the lives of 16 Muslim women living in Ireland, of different ages, nationalities, cultural backgrounds and

occupations. The stories are from women coming from Cairo to Coolock, women of sixteen and women of sixty. The publication features Muslim women who have immigrated to Ireland as well as Irish women who have embraced Islam. It highlights their contributions to Irish society, positive aspects of their lives, their concerns and difficulties as well as their hopes and aspirations as they attempt to be fully included, active members of Irish society.

What all the contributors share is a common religion, Islam. The voices of women offer their lived experiences and perspectives on Islam. There are many misconceptions of what Islam is in the world today. Throughout the publication, glimpses of Islam and different women's descriptions and understandings are evident. Choice is an aspect for example, that is highlighted by young women including Sarah and Aya, both of whom reflect on their choice to wear or not to wear the hijab. Aya describes Islam as a friendly religion. Doaa explains that Islam tells us that God created people of different colours, cultures, languages, customs etc., with the divine aim of getting to know each other, exchange experiences and help each other. Zeenat tells us that Islam teaches us a peaceful life; after every struggle there is

ease. Lorraine highlights the family values that underpin Islam and how these have guided her decisions. She tells us that Muslims are taught, "paradise lies under the feet of the mother".

### Overview of Publication

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The publication tells the stories of the lives of 16 Muslim women in Ireland. The publication was written on an all island basis and introduces women living both in the Republic and women living in the North of Ireland. A number of the women interviewed wished to remain anonymous and so their names have been changed. Others while happy to be identified, have chosen not to have their photo included .

We meet Amel, a youth worker in Dublin. She has also lived in Algiers and in France. She reflects on her experiences working with young people. She argues for the freedom to question while challenging the notion of the west as liberator.

Lorraine is from Coolock. She tells the story of her conversion to Islam, the reasons, the reactions and the struggles. Doaa is Egyptian and has been living in Ireland for nine years. She is a full time mother in Dublin

and her husband is working in a hospital in Sligo at the moment. She is active in the community and part of a women's group. Bashirat is originally from Nigeria and living in Ireland now with her sons. Her husband is working in the UK. She explains some of the differences in how Islam is practiced in different countries.

We meet a student, Nur, who is studying medicine in UCD since 2005 and is from Malaysia. She reflects on the benefits of studying overseas and what she likes about Ireland. She also identifies some of the adaptations she makes to ensure she is able to practice her religion.

Samar is from Morocco and volunteers with the New Communities Partnership. She has experienced quite a few difficulties accessing employment which she outlines as well as experiences other women have shared with her.

Asmaa considers that her lifestyle challenges the stereotypical notion of the disempowered Muslim woman who has her decisions made for her. Asmaa came to Ireland to study medicine and has continued to work in the area of paediatrics in Dublin, where she lives with her children. Her



husband travels with work and is currently based in Sudan, where she hopes to return at some point into the future. Janaan is originally from Somalia. She and her family left Somalia after her child was killed as it was not safe for them. She became separated from her family in the journey. Seeking asylum now in Ireland, her thoughts are always with her family.

Sarah is a young Muslim woman from Iraq, living the past three years in Dublin. She and her family came to Ireland after her father went missing in Iraq. She negotiates living in two cultures on a daily basis and offers insights and humour into the reality of adapting to life at home, life at school and trying to be ready at all times to move back to life in Iraq. Aya is another young woman from Egypt who describes her life as "typical, nothing extraordinary". She explains some of the key decisions she has made including choosing to wear the veil. She also reflects on her value of education, her future and what she calls home.

Zainab had difficulty finding a job when she came to Ireland. In time, she started to work as an intern in the Migrants Rights Centre Ireland (MRCI) where she saw quite a different experience and has worked to empower and challenge exploitation. Maraam is currently seeking asylum and living in a hostel with her family.

These stories are then followed by those of women living in the North of Ireland, Zeenat Manjoo, Khadija and Fatemah Jeetun. Zeenat describes the racism she has experienced in Belfast. Both she and her son have been attacked and she worries about her young son. Khadija has also found life difficult in Belfast where she has had fireworks put through her letterbox and she tries to understand. Fatemah has had some good experiences accessing services in Belfast and she tells of her interaction with a women's centre and the health services. On the other hand, she has faced many problems in trying to integrate with her community.

Finally, we meet Fardus who has been in the Republic of Ireland since the early 1990s. She was invited to Ireland under a UN programme as a 'programme refugee'.

Terminology and abbreviations used in the document are explained in an appendix. At the end of the publication, there is a useful list of organisations and other resources for those who want to find out more about the issues discussed in the stories or learn more about Islam.





# Voices of Muslim Women



Amel  
Yac f



# Amel Yacéf

originally from Algeria

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"They're coming! They are here! They are coming, I can hear them..." I never knew what real fear was until that night. We heard the screams, the sirens and the lights went off... Packs of them would raid streets armed with their extremism, their certainty that "if you're not with us you're an enemy of Allah" and their deeply ingrained hate that ultimately had nothing to do with Allah or Islam. My legs were like jelly, I could hear my heart thumping in my ears - is that what we're reduced to? Stripped of my identity, my beliefs, the music I listened to, the boys I fancied, my political convictions, being a woman, wearing the veil or not. I was but a naked human being; with a trembling core at the smell of death. We heard gun shots, more screams, an explosion and they never reached my house. "Go back to bed, stop being silly, be proud women" said my mum. Back to bed, necks glistening with olive oil - heard that rusty knives slide better with olive oil.

I was born Muslim, in a Muslim country where there is no room for questioning the state's decisions, a country that was sucked in a vortex of violence. They told us in school that salvation was wearing the veil - to that I shaved my head and whatever hair I still had my mum helped me dye it bright red. I didn't do it because I am against the veil, I did it because they imposed their madness on me and I was raised as an independent individual. I wasn't ready for anyone to impose anything on teenage me. As a matter of fact, I never wondered why women had or chose to wear the veil. I just remember my grandmother's large white silk Hayek, we hid under it pretending to be ghosts. I remember my aunties having to lift their Aadjar to eat their ice cream and it made us laugh.

For the last 11 years that I have been in Europe, I have always dreaded the famous question: "What's your opinion on the veil"?

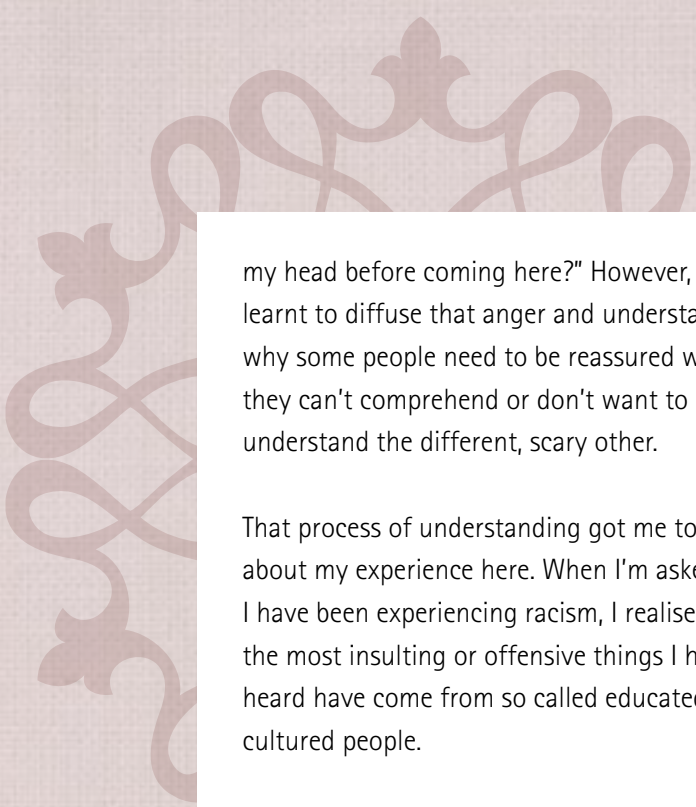


*“There are no magic formulas for integration, the veil or identity crisis and all that because we are human, we’re all different, we all carry our histories, our stories, our fears, our doubts, our hopes.”*

Well, yes, what is my opinion on the veil? I'm not sure. I was born with women wearing the Hijab, Hayek or the veil around me so I couldn't possibly view the veil the way it is regarded in Europe. I don't think it's a prison for women. I don't think it's a sign of abuse and in saying that I probably disappoint the people who see me as this moderate, liberated, non veil wearing Muslim woman. The veil was always there as a way of hiding ones social condition, or to be able to go to school as it was a reassurance for the parents and they are just two reasons from a multitude of reasons in a very intricate society. These reasons might not be relevant in a European context given Europe has an intricate story of its own with Islam.

I have to admit my life in Ireland as a Muslim woman has been much easier than in France where I lived for three years before coming to Ireland. In any case, I was never asked if I ate pork, or if I drank alcohol whereas in France it would have been a recurring question, sometimes to avoid a cultural, religious faux pas and sometimes to be reassured about how "integrated" I was. The notion that once you are in the west, you are a liberated woman has angered me for a very long time. I often wanted to shout, "Don't you think I existed as a proud woman before coming here? I am grateful that I am alive and can enjoy freedom but that shouldn't be a luxury. Don't you think I danced of joy because no one was able to put a veil on





my head before coming here?" However, I learnt to diffuse that anger and understand why some people need to be reassured when they can't comprehend or don't want to understand the different, scary other.

That process of understanding got me to think about my experience here. When I'm asked if I have been experiencing racism, I realise that the most insulting or offensive things I have heard have come from so called educated and cultured people.

It is amusing how the general perception is that working class people are the most racist people in the country...I have been working in the community development sector in Ireland for the past eight years and these years have been the most enriching and rewarding years of my life. These young people will still make comments, comments that could be considered racist, but I don't get offended, I know it's ignorance, I know it's frustration and anger. I know that these young people and their families are the ones that the system wipes under the carpet, penalises as soon as budgets have to be cut back and are in very vulnerable positions. They will look for a scapegoat, they will look for the one responsible and very often it's the stranger,

the one who just arrived and the one who got a job.

Nevertheless I witnessed parents living in the flats in the inner city of Dublin warming up to the others when they realised that these others have to face the same difficulties as themselves and that maybe it's even harder because they are away from home, because they have no family to support them and because sometimes they can't even speak English.

When I go home I do some thinking and every year my questioning gets harder to answer. These questions slip through the net of the blaring music - do I still have that right to call myself fully Algerian, am I still only in exile? Am I gone for good? Am I more Irish now? If I am Irish am I leaving my Algerian identity behind, if I'm only Algerian why am I not there fighting the battles I am fighting here? It is complex and can get scary. There are no easy answers or easy remedies.

There are no magic formulas for integration, the veil or identity crisis and all that because we are human, we're all different, we all carry our histories, our stories, our fears, our doubts, our hopes.





# Lòrràine O'Connòr

from Ireland

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Do you ever sit for a moment and wonder where are you going? And what direction are you taking in life? I guess I must have asked myself that question so many times I have lost track. I used to compare my life to a giant causeway with many roads leading to many different directions, but they seemed to be ending nowhere. My life, it seemed as if it was forever, had plunged into echelons of darkness full of pain, suffering and confusion. I had been in search of a solution, something that would provide some, if not all of the answers I was looking for.

Ireland was becoming more and more multicultural. People from so many different places were becoming part of the social fabric around me, bringing new ideas, new ways of looking at life and even newer ways of deciphering life's varied and unending mysteries. I had the opportunity of interacting with many different people, Muslims in particular as I was married to

a Muslim. For almost 15 years, I interacted with Muslims, slowly studying a different way of life. The simplicity and clarity of Islam interested me and eventually, I chose to become a Muslim. Thus I embarked upon a journey that was to be full of excitement, achievements and bountiful fruition.

I was born in Coolock in a one hundred percent Irish family. When I embraced Islam as a faith and a way of life, it obviously changed the way I lived. It was a big step. It was like breaking a branch of a tree and grafting it to a completely different stalk. It was a complete turnaround in many ways – different languages, different culture, a different way of dressing and eating. In addition to my own family, I became part of a larger family; the Islamic Ummah. Yes, my family at home was in shock. Not knowing how to react, some shunned me while others embraced me.

Slowly and steadily, ups and downs, I went through some difficult times. Islam teaches us to value family ties and that breaking family ties is equal to breaking ties with God. Islam teaches us to show compassion and mercy with our kith and kin. After obedience to God and the Prophet Muhammed, peace be upon him, we are required to obey our parents. Paradise lies under the feet of the mother, we are taught as Muslims. So the teachings of Islam indeed encouraged me to go back to my family, despite our differences. I still had to fulfil my role as a daughter, as a sister, as a niece or as an aunt and catch up with family friends. It was a challenge. When I walked into my mother's house wearing the hijab for the first time, my family were shocked. I remember my mother saying, "Now you have really gone crazy!" I was lucky in a sense that my family were still willing to speak to me. Here was my opportunity to take the chance to talk to them about my new adopted faith and my new lifestyle. It was difficult but worth it.

I came to realize that being an Irish Muslim, it was my duty to make use of many opportunities to explain to the Irish people about Islam. I became aware of a lot of negativity towards Islam and Muslims,

especially when I began to wear the hijab. I was told on several occasions by strangers on buses, in shopping malls and coffee shops to "go back to your own country". I sometimes said to them "to where, to Coolock?" in my Dublin accent. On another occasion, I was egged and endured verbal abuse on a busy street of Dublin in broad daylight. It also dawned on me that even though I was Irish, as soon as I put on the hijab, I became a foreigner in my own country. I began to think on how hard it must be for my immigrant Muslim sisters and their families coming to Ireland.

There is a need in the Irish society for understanding Islam. Integration is a must, if I want my rights to be respected along with the vast majority. This is completely in line with what Islam encourages us to do. We are required to be a positive force in our communities, helping, supporting and being part of the habitat. I began to get involved in local community organisations in and around the Dublin 12 area. This was easy enough as there are a few of us Irish Muslim women and I was not alone. I got involved with the Dublin 12 Women's Action Group (WAG), of which I am now the chairperson. I was the first Muslim woman elected onto



the management committee of WAG and have since been elected as chairperson.

Through my work with WAG, I began to be actively involved in local projects while having the opportunity to explain about Islam and Muslims. I realised that this was very useful, as the audiences could easily understand and connect with an Irish mother of four daughters. I've spoken at many other seminars and conferences and on RTE Radio One's intercultural programme Spectrum about my journey to Islam. I am also involved with a local ethnic minority group.

One of the most importance needs for me is to study and I got the opportunity to go back to college and develop my skills, not only for my own benefit but for the benefit of my

children and society. One of my challenges was to study feminism in UCD. So many times I hear that I am oppressed and depressed so I had to try counteracting that. Through all my lectures and modules I keep hearing the one sentence 'freedom to choose and freedom of expression'; and is that not what I am doing?

Being a proud Irish mother, I encourage my children to learn the Irish language, history and heritage. I hope to bring them up as proud Irish citizens and confident Muslims. One ongoing need is the need to integrate. I have tried to pass this on to my children and have been lucky through many of my community links. I have made them proud to be Irish but remembering they are Muslim too. We show that, yes, we are Muslims but we are also proud to be Irish.

*“Islam tells us that God created people of different colours, cultures, languages, customs etc., with the divine aim of getting to know each other, exchange experiences, and help each other.”*





# Ḍoāā Mörşy

## originally from Egypt

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When my husband got a job as an ophthalmologist in Ireland, we decided that the family should not be separated and we left Cairo and came here. That was eleven years ago and my life has changed so much since.

After graduating from the Faculty of Law at Cairo University, I got a job as a Deputy Administrative Prosecutor just after finishing the first part of a master degree in Commerce Law and International Investments. My studies were all in Islamic and French laws which meant working here as a lawyer was not an option for me.

Although Egypt is in some ways closer to the style of life in Ireland than other Muslim countries, living in the quiet Irish countryside in Waterford was so different from living in Cairo the very busy and densely populated city. I discovered that Irish people are very

kind and friendly; they always have time to smile and greet you in the morning. I made new friends who really helped me to know my way around Waterford as my English was not that good at first.

At first I felt homesick as I missed my family, my friends, and my neighbourhood. Living my whole life in Cairo which is nicknamed "The City of a Thousand Minarets" because of its many mosques, the thing I missed the most was the call for prayer "Athan".

In Ireland I have a timetable to know when to pray, but back home there was always a mosque nearby and it gave me a good feeling to hear the "Athan" five times a day.

After four years my family moved to Dublin and again I made many new friends from different countries, and step by step I've grown to enjoy living here.

Although being a housewife and a mother of three sons can well be a full time job, I wanted to get involved in community work to know Irish society better. I believe that some similarities are shared between Muslims and the Irish people like the importance of family, and some religious traditions such as giving to the poor.

From here the idea of forming a Muslim women's group emerged, and to get the group started I contacted all of my friends for a meeting at my house. I explained to them that our aim would be to find ways to co-exist within Irish society but without losing our Islamic identity. Everyone was inspired by the idea and we named the group "Muslim Women Together".

Islam tells us that God created people of different colours, cultures, languages, customs...etc., with the divine aim of getting to know each other, exchange experiences, and help each other. In an atmosphere of mutual friendship and respect, we started meeting weekly at our local community centre to study Qur'an and share ideas for voluntary work towards positive integration in the Irish community.

Most of the ladies in the group are well educated and they come from Egypt, Sudan, Libya, Iraq, Somalia, Palestine, Nigeria, Bosnia, and Malaysia. The women's occupations range from physician and computer teacher to stay-at-home mother to engineer.

Interestingly enough, the first idea for the community work was by chance. I read an advertisement about an appeal from Connolly Hospital, Blanchardstown regarding a shortage of beds in the Oncology Department. Such charitable work was an ideal move for us that was met by the hospital administration with a welcoming and at the same time surprised attitude.

We accepted the challenge, gathered power from our beliefs, and decided to make a fundraising party of a very distinctive character; all homemade oriental and Arabic food, Arabic music, and Islamic decorations. It was a very fun event – we laughed a lot, but more important was the relationships formed with the Irish people that have extended far beyond the party.



*“...open and warm communication is really needed to remove the walls that develop through the stereotypes of Muslims enforced by the media.”*

After the success of that party we began to organise other fundraising events for other charities; one or two per year.

We were invited several times as guest speakers to talk about Islam, wearing hijab, or multiculturalism in schools, universities, and conferences. We are also involved in the steering committee of the Yellow Flag Program; which is a pilot programme being run in some schools around Ireland to promote diversity and multiculturalism. In addition to that some of us have completed a first-aid course and are working as volunteers in the Dublin 15 area.

My hope for the group is to get more Irish women involved in our activities because open and warm communication is really needed to remove the walls that develop through the stereotypes of Muslims enforced by the media.

To prove Muslim women can participate in sports while still wearing the hijab, we are planning to walk the women's mini marathon this year. I love walking and riding my bicycle but I always get stared at because of the hijab I'm wearing. I think a group of us Muslim girls should get together and go out on our bicycles for a ride in Phoenix Park, so Watch Out!





Bashirāt  
Mòpèolá  
Oláogún



# Bāshirāt Mōpèolà Olāögün

originally from Nigeria

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I came to live in Ireland in 2001. I was born a Muslim and have been practicing Islam since my youth. I learnt the Koran when I was young even before I started receiving western education.

When I first came to Ireland I was all alone. My two sons joined me here later and three of my children - also sons - were born here. I have five sons ranging in age from 19 years down to three years old. When I came first, I wanted to go back home as I was homesick. There is no place like home. Communication was no problem as English is our official language in Nigeria. Despite being homesick at first, I loved Ireland as it is so peaceful. I met and made friends with neighbours and people in the mosque. I met many Nigerians and now I have many friends from Ireland and other countries. If there is anything I dislike about Ireland it's the weather. It is very cold.

My first son is now in college. My second son is doing his Leaving Certificate this year, my next two are in primary school and my youngest who is only three, is in crèche. My husband has lived in the UK for many years and has a legal practice in London; he visits us in Ireland every fortnight.

I wear hijab, but it's a slightly different style to the hijab that women from the middle east wear. Nigerian women only cover our hair. As Muslims we eat halal food and there are some shops near where I live, selling halal meat. My sons mix and make friends with other people from different religious and cultural backgrounds. I believe it is part of their education and will make them better and complete people. They play football. When my younger sons attend social functions like birthday parties, I try to stress to the organisers that they must not be fed with pork meat. They know for example that they can't eat some food.

*“ Our specific objectives include encouraging and promoting good family relationships and a stable home amongst Muslim families, youth development and empowerment.”*

Since coming to Ireland, I have been performing regularly at Muslim occasions and social functions across Ireland and the UK. In March 2008 I launched a CD/DVD of my own entitled "Inspiration". I was invited to the UK to sing and perform at various mosques. After I finished secondary school in Nigeria, I did a Diploma in Hotel Management and Catering. I work part-time from home on my own business, Mobonic Enterprises, distributing international calling cards, cosmetics and beauty products. The cosmetics are those suitable for black people and the phone cards are for people to call home.

When I first came to Ireland I started attending the South Circular Road Mosque but later in 2002/2003, we set up the Nigerian Community Mosque because the way we practise Islam in Nigeria is slightly different to the way it is practiced in the middle-east and Asia. The principles and tenets of Islam are the same all over the world but practice is often influenced by cultural values and customs, for instance dress code and how we celebrate Islamic festivals. We decided to set up the Nigerian Mosque so we could practice the way we practice at home. It is called the Islamic Progressive Association of Ireland. Our Mosque is now located on Sherrif Street and it is very successful.



In addition I am also a co-founder and a trustee of the Muslim Families Welfare Group (MUFAWEG), a charity organisation set up to cater for the needs of Muslim families in Ireland. Our specific objectives include encouraging and promoting good family relationships and a stable home amongst Muslim families, youth development and empowerment. We campaign against domestic violence, we also have counselling and dispute resolution within families and we assist lone parents, widows and victims of domestic violence. I do all this on a voluntary basis. I have received several awards for my contribution to the propagation and development of Islam in Ireland. In 2005 I received the Street Journal Award for Outstanding Achievement and last August I received another award from the Jamatul Islamiya Association of Ireland for my contribution to Islam and

helping Muslim communities. I also received an International Music Ambassador award by the African Society for Advancement of Islam and the Islamic Platform International.

I did Hajj in 2007, that is our pilgrimage to Mecca. At Hajj, there is a big praying ground called the Ka'ba. In Ka'ba everyone prays together, men and women. You focus your mind to almighty Allah. It was a wonderful experience. My advice to my Muslim brothers and sisters is to show love and kindness not only to fellow Muslims but all fellow human beings. Being a Muslim is not just about praying five times a day but also to observe all the other teachings of Prophet Mohammed. If we all do things in accordance with his teachings the world will be a better and more peaceful place for all of us to live in.





# Nūr Ṣāḥādā Rāmlī

originally from Malaysia

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I came here to pursue my studies in medicine at UCD in 2005. There are a lot of Malaysian students studying medicine in Ireland. In UCD for instance, there are approximately 60 Malaysian students in the first and second year classes. After that many would go back to Penang to complete the clinical years there. We are encouraged to study overseas as it gives us benefits and added value such as better communication skills and fluent English, higher self-confidence and we are able to live more independently. I studied English in Malaysia but it is improving as I speak English daily here at college and hospital placements. Overall, studying overseas gives us richer life experiences and broader horizons on medicine from other countries around the world.

My Dad is a technician and my Mum is a full time house wife. I am the second in the family. My brother works with the petroleum industry, my other brother studies electronic

engineering and my sister is in secondary school. It costs a lot to study here as non-EU students, as much as €31,000 per annum. However, there is a Malaysian Government scholarship programme which covers fees and living expenses. Struggle and hard work in my studies were what brought me to securing my placement in medicine abroad in this country and the scholarship privilege. Hence, I take this as an obligation and feel accountable to become a future asset to my country and community.

When I first arrived, I lived in UCD student accommodation with a mix of nationalities in the residence. In the following year, I moved to a private house with other Malaysian students as it is more convenient in terms of preparing halal food and meeting my needs. However, I enjoyed staying with Irish students because it gave me chances to get more intercultural.



*“...the absence of prayer rooms in shopping centres and airports is quite a problem.”*

Ireland was strange to me when I first arrived. Despite the cold weather, the people are very warm. The Irish smile, talk and treat you as if you are in your homeland. They are quite like Malaysians in that way. Whenever I go to Europe for holidays, I realise how I miss Ireland and want to get back home to Ireland. As time passes by, I feel that this land is like my second home. Indeed, I love Ireland.

Apart from the weather, religion is another big difference here. I was surprised when I first came to Ireland that there were two big mosques here, in Clonskeagh and in South Circular Road. It was very good to discover this. Nevertheless, the absence of prayer rooms in shopping centres and airports is quite a problem. Sometimes, when I am out with my friends shopping, and when we need to pray, we go into one of the changing rooms and perform our prayers there.

I am glad to say I have never experienced any kind of racism in Ireland. In terms of food, I just need to ensure that they are halal and alcohol-free. That makes me a lot more aware of my religion. Muslims need to pray five times daily and in Malaysia it is easy because of the constant equator sun, but in Ireland because of the four seasons it makes us alert and observant in time-keeping of the prayer time.

Student societies make my life more colourful here. I joined the Islamic Medical Association of Malaysia which is based in Dublin. I was the Vice President last year. I am also a committee member of the Muslim Malaysian Students of Ireland. In UCD campus, I enjoyed fencing with the Fencing Club and it kept my campus life vibrant. One of my most memorable experiences was being a member of the International Student Association in

UCD and we visited an Irish farm which was very interesting. I also do local community service through the Medical Student Volunteering system and I work with adults with Down Syndrome in Blackrock.

Malaysia is always my destination for every summer holiday. With few other friends, we would plan for a mission to the neighbouring countries. In 2006, I raised funds in Ireland to help in Cambodia. We carried out circumcision and educated the locals about good hygiene. In summer 2007, I worked on an English camp for Malaysian students in a rural elementary school to prepare them for upcoming national examination. Last summer of 2008, I went to Indonesia as part of the Islamic Medical Association, carrying out health surveys in local villages and I also organised a foster family programme and motivational student camp in a rural area in Malaysia.

I will be here for three more years to complete the study. I would like to do my medical internship in Ireland because it will be good experience for me. If I were to get married and bring up kids I would like to stay here for a while as I think it would be good exposure for the kids, especially in mastering English as kids pick up languages easily. Sooner or later, I would want to and will finally go back to serve my homeland.





Samar  
Bennis

# Şamâr Bënniṣ

originally from Morocco

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I came to Ireland in 2006. I came to Dublin because I got married. My husband is originally from Ghana but had been living in Ireland for a long time and is an Irish citizen. We met in Morocco and after we got married, I joined him in Ireland.

I didn't have any problems with English when I arrived because I was studying English for my BA in Business and Tourism back home, so my level of English was good enough to communicate. There are so many differences between my country and Ireland but the biggest difference is the weather. It is cold in Ireland all the time whereas in my home country we have the four seasons throughout the year and it is very warm in summer in Morocco. The first friends I made when I came to Ireland were not Muslims and I still have a lot of non-Muslim friends as well as Muslim friends.

So far my time in Ireland has been good but I encountered a lot of problems when I was looking for a job. I couldn't find a job with my qualification because it is not recognised here in Ireland. I tried to continue my studies but the fees for third level education are very expensive in Ireland for non EU citizens. Then I tried to work on a Community Employment (CE) scheme which would allow me work part time to earn some money so I could pay for my studies but again I was not eligible to work as a CE worker because I am not on social welfare. I tried to register with the social welfare office just to be eligible but they said that my husband's salary was too high and therefore I am not eligible. So at the moment I am working as a volunteer just to get some Irish experience because without experience, it is very difficult to get a job.



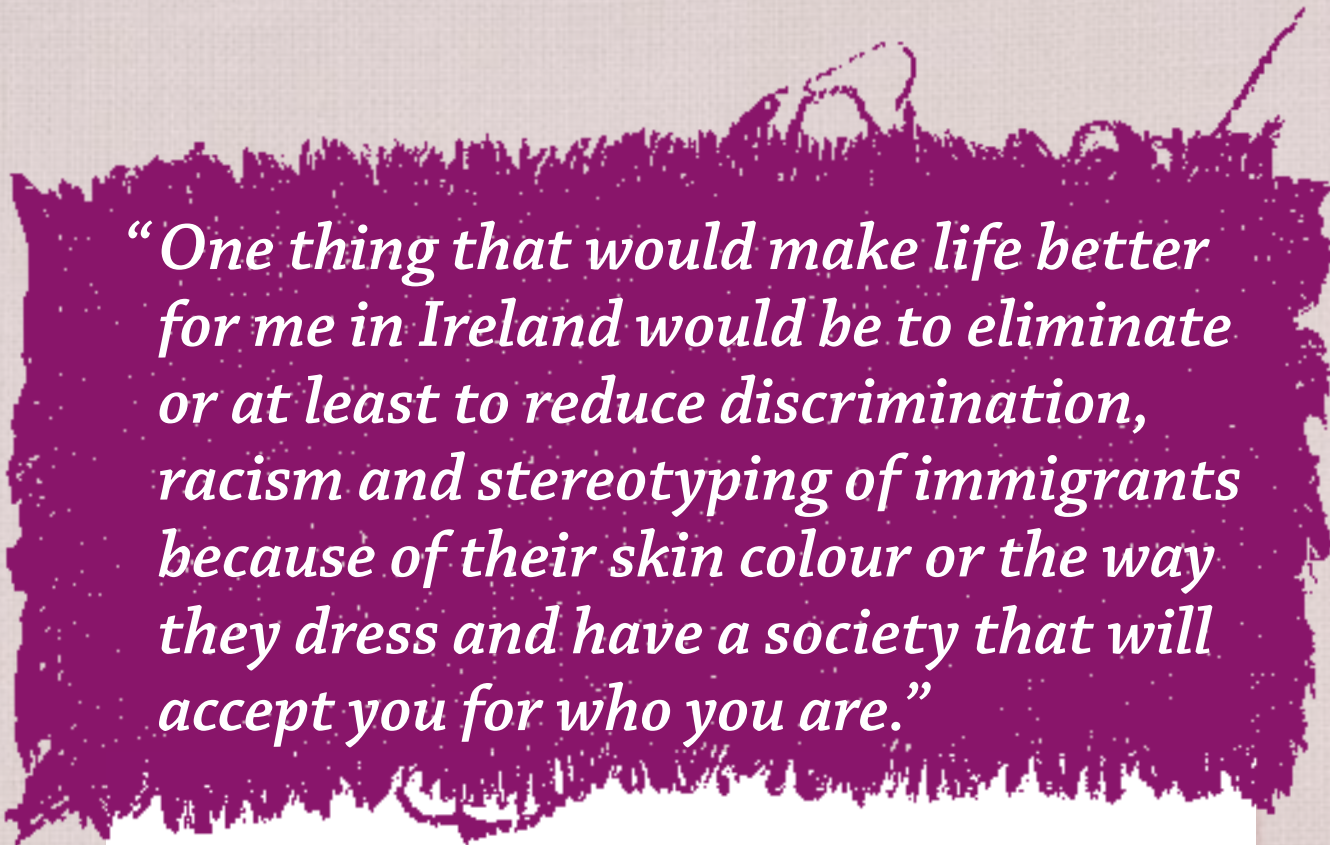
I work in the community development sector in the New Communities Partnership (NCP) as a volunteer. The NCP is a national network of over 64 ethnic minority groups who have come together to support their communities through a strategic alliance with other ethnic groups. One of the NCP aims is to provide a mechanism for dialogue through which ethnic minority civil society can engage directly with policy and planning structures. At NCP we believe in "nothing about us is without us" and we want to engage ethnic minority groups in participating in a meaningful policy debate. I help a lot of people which is part of my work but my main focus is to help disadvantaged women because I believe that if we help the new communities to develop and be included in Irish society, then we help create an inclusive and integrated Ireland. The NCP have run a voter campaign to encourage immigrants to register and vote and be active citizens.

I just had my first child and I am aware of the difficulties I will face when I decide to start a job because I know from my friends and the women I help that childcare expense is the greatest barrier they face and that stops them from continuing their studies or doing any courses to better their level

of knowledge or even working. I also worry about finding a trustworthy person who will raise my child the way I want.

My favourite thing about living in Ireland is that it is easier to get a well-paid, good job if you have the required experience and qualifications that are recognised and my least favourite thing about Ireland is the weather. I plan to stay in Ireland long term but I go back to visit my family in Morocco at least once a year. I feel part of Irish society but the way some people look at me on the street because I am wearing a scarf is a little bit annoying. Many Muslim women have a lot of difficulties in finding jobs because of the hijab. We are more exposed to racism and discrimination because we are among what we call the "visible minority" so you can be just walking on the street and people start staring at you in a rude way. I have heard so many stories about friends who applied for jobs but they feel sometimes that just because their name is not Irish, they don't even get called for an interview. Sometimes when I go to some hospitals I am treated differently because they think that as long as I wear a scarf that I am not educated and don't speak English. Also many Muslim women want to be seen by female doctors





*“One thing that would make life better for me in Ireland would be to eliminate or at least to reduce discrimination, racism and stereotyping of immigrants because of their skin colour or the way they dress and have a society that will accept you for who you are.”*

when accessing the health service but in most cases we don't deal with people who understand us and respect our request.

One thing that would make life better for me in Ireland would be to eliminate or at least to reduce discrimination, racism and stereotyping of immigrants because of their skin colour or the way they dress and have a society that will accept you for who you are. Notwithstanding all the difficulties mentioned above, I am confident that we can achieve integration, community cohesion, prosperity and a sense of belonging for Muslim women in Irish

society. My experience in the community development sector has allowed me to gain a lot of confidence so despite the way people look or feel about me, I know that I am a part of this society and that I have rights and duties to fulfil.

I understand that immigration is a new phenomenon for Ireland so I hope that in the near future, native Irish people and immigrants will be able to learn more about each others' cultures and beliefs, which will enable us to respect each other and achieve the much desired interculturalism that we dream about for Ireland.





Aṣmāʾ  
Awadallāh



# Aṣmāʾ Awādallā

originally from Sudan

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I am from Sudan and I studied in the Faculty of Medicine in Khartoum. I got married after graduation and I joined my husband in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) where we lived for 10 years. With the help of Allah (SWT), I was able to manage rearing my three children while continuing with my work as a doctor.

I came to Ireland in March 2002 to sit for the Irish Medical Council exam. My initial plan was to get a few months of clinical experience before sitting the second part of the Paediatric Membership Exam. I have been working in various paediatric hospitals since July 2002 which has expanded my knowledge in different paediatric sub-specialties.

We have been living in Dublin since 2004 for several reasons. First of all I wanted to avoid moving my children to different schools with each new job as it is easier to get jobs in the three main paediatric hospitals in Dublin.

Apart from that, I wanted my children to benefit from the Islamic Cultural Centre in Dublin. Here, they were able to study in the Muslim National School and they got the opportunity to study the Arabic language and religion which, for me, is essential. We also attend Quran classes during the week end.

My husband has been very supportive and I don't think that I would have been able to achieve as much without his ongoing encouragement. Our plan is to go back to Sudan eventually, however that will have to tie in with my children's education. I found it difficult to find a suitable child-minder. I would have preferred to have a Muslim child-minder, not just for their religion but culture-wise as well.

When I first came to Ireland, I was worried about my children not having enough exposure to Muslim culture and the Arabic



*“It is very important to communicate and share our culture with others.”*

language but praise be to Allah, there were Muslim communities in all the cities I've lived in. My children are enjoying Ireland. They are well adapted and mix well with the Irish and the other different nationalities. Allah (SWT) mentioned in the holy Quran that mankind was created into different nations and tribes so as to know each other. It is very important to communicate and share our culture with others.

Ireland is a beautiful country – I like the green landscape. The weather in the summer is nice. Coming from a hot country like Sudan, I didn't find it that hard to adapt to the cold weather here.

I have lived in Ireland for eight years now and I feel part of the Irish society, especially at work where there are people from different cultures and nobody feels discriminated against. Occasionally, I see an unpleasant look from a couple of people but I have never experienced racism in my work or anything like that. I never had a problem wearing the hijab at work. My daughter has been wearing the hijab since she was 11 years old. She has never faced problems in school concerning

her hijab. There are a few Muslim girls in her school but most of her friends are non-Muslim. Some people think that the Muslim woman isn't allowed to work and that the husband makes all the decisions in the house, however that is not true. I am an example of that and my husband has been very supportive always.

I do miss the Azan – that is the call to prayer. When you are in Sudan or the Gulf, you hear it all the time. Fortunately, I now have a great system in my house that is connected to the Mosque. It broadcasts the Azan to my house five times a day so we are reminded when to pray.

What is difficult for me here is not having my extended family around, not just for me but for the children as well. Sometimes it is not easy for me to get a visa for them to come and visit.

It is my dream to go back soon and live and work in Sudan. I would like to make use of my skills and experiences back in Sudan so I can help to improve the health services there.



# Jānān

originally from Somalia

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"My child was killed, we had to leave our home. It wasn't safe for us because of the war". Janaan (not her real name) begins her story with an account of life in Somalia and the Yemen before she was trafficked to Ireland. "I was a housewife there", she says. "I lived on an island off Somalia with my husband and four children. Then the war started in 1992. It was a war between tribes. They came and beat us and told us to leave the island. There was no policing, no hospital – they raped and beat the women. One of my children was killed. They were so cruel" she says. "If the women were raped....if I was raped, we would not say we were raped because of the shame. But women were raped and beaten". "My husband became ill and died. My eldest son ran away. I do not know where he is now. He said he would write a letter to say he was safe".

Janaan moved with her two other children to Yemen. "We went to the Mosque and they let us stay there. We had to stay in

hiding because there were other tribes from Somalia there and it was very dangerous" she says. My son went fishing at night. I was very sick. We stayed there for two years. It was very hard for me".

Janaan's children heard about a man who, for a fee, transferred people who were in danger to "safe" countries. Her children insisted that she go with him. "I didn't want to leave them – I said 'if we die, we die together'. But they insisted and said, 'we know what we are doing, we are coming'. That was 2008, I left them there, my son, my daughter. But now I don't know, I'm just thinking and praying. I can't sleep thinking of my family. At my age it is hard, I don't know where they are".

Janaan talks of her journey to Ireland. "From Yemen we went to another country I can't remember where" she says. "Then we took another plane. I didn't know where I was when I got here. They sent me to



immigration. I was so afraid. They sent me to a hostel in Kilmacud. At first it was so hard for me. I was sharing a room with people from a different religion. I found it so hard". Janaan asked if she could share a room with another Muslim woman who would understand when she was praying, her dress code and Muslim tradition. The manager allowed it. "A woman from Sudan came", she says. "Sometimes we would pray together. After that a woman from Pakistan came. Then I was transferred here".

Janaan describes the direct provision accommodation where she now lives. "It is fine here" she says. "We live as a family. I am the oldest. I have to share a room. At my age I would prefer to have my privacy. I am over 60 years of age. The food here is not halal and they cook pork which is against my religion. Sometimes we can cook for ourselves but if I eat food that is not halal, I just pray to God and say thank you for a safe place. We have no access to a Mosque which is also difficult for me". Janaan receives the same €19.10 per week as all asylum seekers. "We cope with it, what can we do"? she asks. Janaan highlights the importance of being involved and staying busy. "I volunteer in a centre here for disabled people". "I like to

do that. It's much better than sitting doing nothing. I have done courses in health, sewing and flower making and am waiting to do a computer course". Over seventy people live in Janaan's hostel. "Some are there for over six years", she says. "Some of the children were born there. I sometimes mind the kids for them. I like kids. They call me Grandmother. I like that. Muslim, Christian, it's all the same, they are all my friends. In the other hostel two of the girls were having their babies in hospital at the same time. I went with them. One had no husband, the other had so I just stayed with one and checked on the other. They send me pictures of the babies and call me all the time, every week. One is in Sligo and one is in Limerick. I have so many kids now! I would like to get leave to remain here. I just pray to God to be healthy. I'm waiting for a second<sup>2</sup> interview".

Janaan's thoughts are always with her family. "In my mind I don't think they are still there (Yemen). I think they went someplace else. I don't know if they know where I am. The man who brought me here would not tell us where we were going. Maybe they asked him when he went back. It is better here. I'm fine here. I know one day I will see my family again".

2 The second interview should determine whether Janaan will be allowed to stay in Ireland.







# Ṣārāh

originally from Iraq

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Sarah is a 17 year old girl living in Dublin and originally from Iraq. She came to Ireland three years ago with her mother, two brothers and two sisters. She lives in Dublin with her family and her uncle. Her father disappeared before they left Iraq. Sarah's family does not know where her father is; Sarah last spoke to her father three years ago.

Adapting to her surroundings in her home, outside on Dublin streets and Dublin schools and always knowing that she also needs to be able to go home, Sarah is aware of and negotiates identity on a daily basis. Sarah shared her story and deep understanding of what it is to live in and negotiate two different cultures on a daily basis and, in a humorous way, the accidents when she forgets where she is for a moment.

Sarah left her home with her family three years ago. She tells us that she did not want to go. It was very difficult to leave. She didn't know where her dad was. She said goodbye

to other family members and came to Ireland where her uncle has been working for many years now. She is thankful to her mother and to her uncle Khaleed for all the support they have given her.

Sarah and her family arrived in Ireland in February. When she arrived in Ireland, she tells us she could not go to school as she did not have any English. She spent months out of school. By September and the start of a new school year, her English was better and she got a place in a school.

Sarah explains the culture shock that she experienced when she arrived. She had little English. It rained so much. She tells the story of a day when she arrived at the bus stop at half past seven in the morning. It was a particularly wet day and her usual bus did not arrive. She stood in the lashing rain just wanting to go home. It was so hard, she says. She stayed at the bus stop standing in the rain. She got a later bus and got into school

late. It was very hard to adapt she tells us; the school day here is longer and the days are different. One of the things she found difficult was getting used to going out in the dark to school and getting home in the dark.

There were other little things in the school that were new to her. Once when she had been out, the teacher told her that a parent needed to explain why to the school. Sarah went home and the next day she came into school with her mother – both of them travelling all the way in. The school was surprised; they did not know why her mother had come in. The penny dropped after a time and the teacher explained that all the mother needed to do was to write a note to the school to say why Sarah was absent, she did not need to come in person. However, such a 'note' system was not used in Sarah's school at home in Iraq. When asked how long it took to get used to the school system; she thought for a brief moment and said, "two years".

Sarah's younger siblings on the other hand, may have to adapt to life in Iraq. Her twin brother and sister who are only four, have seen negative images only of Iraq on the television. They want to stay in Ireland. Sarah is conscious that her family may need to return to Iraq and she has mixed feelings about this. This is a difficult decision that faces her family.

People ask Sarah why she does not wear the veil, the hijab. She explains that for her, wearing the veil is a question of choice. She has chosen not to wear it here in Ireland.

She explains that Irish girls are different from Arabic girls; she feels it is important for her to have Irish friends and in fact she has friends of many nationalities. She also explains however, that Arabic girls are also different from each other. She reflects that some of the differences depend on the reason why someone might have come to Ireland. For some, migration was a question of choice. For others, they do not have a choice and their options are different. Depending on your options, you have to make different choices.

Sarah wants to be a lawyer. She wants to help people; to help people in a similar position to herself. She feels that there was not really help for her and so she wants to make sure that she can help other people. Sarah misses her dad and worries about him. Yet she manages to meet you with a smile. She feels however, the people do not want to see pain, they want to see joy. She understands this and so for herself and for others, she puts her brave fun face forward.





# Aya Hıgazy

originally from Egypt

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My life is normal, it's typical. I live with my family and I have many friends. I practise my religion in front of my friends. Some people don't because they are afraid that others will judge them. My friends ask questions and I explain. They understand why I wear the scarf and why I pray. I tell them if I believe in my religion I have to. They usually ask me, "If it's a choice, then why do I?". My answer is that I picked my religion, I like Islam and I believe in it.

I started to think about the Hijab when I was eleven or twelve. I chose to wear it when I was fourteen. I said I was not going to wear it until I felt old enough and so I decided at fourteen to start.

I am in third year at school. I change my mind about what I want to do when I leave school every single day. I want to finish school, go to college, and get married. I would like to get married around 25, but not before that.

I have two sisters and two brothers. I am the fourth in the family. My parents are really nice. They treat us all the same. We can do anything we want. The only thing is I have to be safe. I think about the things I do. My older sister is in Egypt. She did her leaving cert there and she wanted to stay there. I just came to Ireland six years ago because my dad is working here.

Ireland is different from Egypt. Life in Ireland is really quiet. Maybe it's just for me; but in Egypt my family is there, my friends are there. I only go there for the summer holidays so it's really busy when I go. I do everything I want to do for the whole year in a month. I would like to go back to Egypt after college. I am thinking about going to college in America. I am still thinking about college and my studies. I am not really sure what is better for me. I listen to other people talk, the advice they give and I go back and think about it. Education is important. If I have good education I can get a good job,

*“Women are really special in Islam. Islam says you should be really friendly with children and not harm each other.”*

and have a good life. I can't just think about fun all the time. That is how I am going to have fun, if I have a good job.

I would say people in Ireland are really nice and friendly. The weather though is unstable, and it rains a lot. My memories of Egypt are that I left it when I was ten. I was excited, my dad had been living here and I really wanted to be with him. I was really sad because I was leaving all my friends. I always remember Eid, the Muslim festival. It was so much fun with friends and family. We all get together and it is just like Christmas, you just want to be with your friends and family and celebrate.

There are a lot of differences between Ireland and Egypt. It is the same religion wise, except in Egypt people have more knowledge of different religions. I found out that in Ireland teenagers don't actually know about other religions, in Egypt kids grow up knowing what other religions are. I think kids should know more about different religions here.

Islam is a really friendly religion. Women are really special in Islam. Islam says you should be really friendly with children and not harm each other. When you read about Islam and understand what it tells you to do and why it tells you to do that, it's really good. It makes your life easier. You feel you should pray five times a day. I have Christian friends as well who pray a lot; that's up to them.

There is some sexism in Ireland. I think in every society there are men who think that women are less. It has nothing to do with their religion. They might think they are stronger. I know my rights, I won't let anyone else tell me to do something that I don't want to do or force their point of view on me. I talk to my friends at home over the internet. I spend most of my time on the internet. I connect with friends in Egypt. It's easier to keep in contact via the internet. For me, home is where there are people who care about you. People you like, people you trust, people you are not scared of, and people who respect you.









# Zāināb Alāmgīr

originally from Pakistan

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Zainab came to Ireland a year and a half ago from her home country of Pakistan. She is from Islamabad and qualified as a barrister in England. She returned to work in the district courts in Islamabad for 2-3 years before coming to live here with her husband

"I was happy to move here to a new country and try out something new" says Zainab.

"Since I came here I have to say that my experience has been mostly a positive one, people have been supportive of me, friendly and I have had no problem wearing a headscarf." Zainab did not always wear a veil and discusses the views of her family on her decision to cover her head. "I was not brought up wearing the veil" says Zainab.

"My parents are Muslim but my mother does not cover her head. When I was studying in England I decided to start taking my religion more seriously. I phoned my mother and

told her I had started covering. She wasn't too happy and thought I had become an extremist. I tried not to make a big deal of it and told my parents very casually. It was still a big shock for them when they saw me at the airport. But since then, my mother has always given me my space, though if she had a choice I wouldn't be covering", she says.

A big problem for Zainab has been trying to move forward with her career in Ireland. "Trying to get my career on track has been a huge challenge for me", she says. "I've had a very hard time with the law society. It's not easy to convert qualifications here even though I qualified in England. I haven't given up yet. I really enjoy public law and employment law. I'm very interested in the area of human rights. I absolutely love going to court, love being a lawyer and don't want to compromise on that. I am interested in representing those whose rights have been





*“Muslim women need to have access to community organisations and NGOs and to have information about them.”*

violated who live on the margins. A new focus is that I am now expecting a baby but I do want to work again a few months after the baby is born”.

When Zainab first arrived in Ireland the recession was beginning and she was looking for work. She didn't get any interviews and it found it very disheartening. She received a position as legal intern with the Migrant Rights Centre Ireland . “I loved my work there” she says. “Being there made me feel I was integrating much more quickly into Irish society. There are a lot of injustices I was not aware of. The system isn't geared towards making migrants feel comfortable or adjusting to them in any way”. A lot of Zainab's worked involved supporting Asian restaurant workers. “It's a whole new

world for me”, she says. “They have faced trafficking and working under severely adverse conditions. They do not know they have rights or that they have been wronged. Bonded labour is a reality in rural Pakistan (it is not limited to Pakistan). Someone who has moved out of that setting to Ireland will think that his treatment is normal for here too. They assume that this is the way the whole world works. It's an eye opening experience for them to realise a few years down the line that they do have rights. The people I worked with have not gone back to Pakistan or seen their families for at least 5 years. Most would be married with families and sending money home if they can”.

Although Zainab says she has not experienced racism or religious





discrimination since she came here, she does mention one incident which comes to mind. "One time somewhere near O' Connell Street I was just walking down the road and two very young white Irish girls said, "take your rag off" or something like that. They started laughing. I didn't stop or make a big deal of it because I didn't take it as a racist thing. I'm sure they didn't mean anything, they were just having a laugh and acting like children".

Zainab feels that the degree to which Muslim women can integrate into Irish society often depends on the attitude of their husband. "The Muslim women I know are from a non-Irish background" she says. "If they do have problems integrating, it is often related to how much their husbands are happy for them to integrate into Irish society. I think it's that Muslim men from traditional societies would probably expect to be the bread winners". As is the case in many Irish households, Zainab feels that Muslim women are expected to meet all of the needs of the family even where they are working outside the home. "I think while they'd be happy to have another earning parent, a lot of Muslim men would say as long as the house and the children are not affected they can do whatever they want. That's not being

supportive, effectively this is saying - no you cannot work" she says. "Muslim women need to have access to community organisations and NGOs and to have information about them. Many of those who are not internet literate do not know about such things".

Zainab has many hopes for her future. "When I think of the future I would like to be working in a job as a lawyer doing the work that I love" she says. "A good family life is important for me too. I like to do lots of outdoor things, hiking, swimming, and trying new things. I'd give anything a shot and that's how I want to raise my children as well, whether they are boys or girls. I don't want social activities to be limited to the Pakistani Community, the Muslim Community or the Mosque. Integration is so important especially as we are in such a minority here".

"I also want my children to do voluntary work" says Zainab. I want them to be exposed to the whole ethos of working for free. Volunteering would go along way in making Muslims more visible in Irish society. I think this is very important for integration but would have that view even if we were living in Pakistan.





# Māraām

originally from Nigera

Maraam (not her real name) came to Ireland from Nigeria in 2003. "I came because I feared for my life and that of my family" she says. "My husband was involved in politics and because he was in the opposition party, we were subjected to loads of threats and he was kidnapped in 2003. I fled Nigeria for Ireland".

Maraam had hoped that she would be given the opportunity to stay in Ireland and move on with her life. "I was living in a hostel, in Direct Provision" she says, I was safe, but there was no word on my case." Maraam then went to the UK in 2004 for fear of deportation as a lot of people were being deported at the time. "I heard that my husband managed to escape and he managed to flee Nigeria in 2007 to seek asylum here in Ireland.

"The last thing you think about is applying for a visa when your life is in danger, so within me, I weep when I'm asked why I didn't apply for a visa to come to Ireland. I returned to Ireland in 2007 and was allowed to apply for subsidiary protection."<sup>3</sup>

Maraam now lives in a Direct Provision<sup>3</sup> Centre in the West of Ireland with her husband and children. She explains the effect that living in Direct Provision has had on her life. "When you live in Direct Provision, your life is on hold, she says. "Although they do offer courses here there is nothing that will help you move on with your life. In a way the courses help you keep your mind off things".

3 *Subsidiary Protection is a form of protection granted to those who are not granted refugee status but are still in need of protection and cannot be returned to their country of origin because of the risk of serious harm being done to them (Irish Refugee Council [www.irishrefugeecouncil.ie](http://www.irishrefugeecouncil.ie))*

4 *The Reception and Integration Agency (RIA), a body within the Department of Justice provides asylum seekers with full board accommodation. This consists of a bed and three meals a day*

*in a Direct Provision Centre. Asylum seekers may initially be accommodated in a Reception Centre in Dublin for a temporary period before being transferred to a more permanent arrangement in another part of the country. The centre may be based anywhere in Ireland and asylum seekers cannot chose where they based (ibid)*



Maraam speaks of the way in which people become institutionalised living in Direct Provision. "Meals are served at a certain time every day". "Can you imagine a family of 4, 5, or even 6, cramped in a poorly ventilated room for years?" .Maraam points to the disempowering and at times humiliating effect of Direct Provision. Frequently asylum seekers are not allowed to cook their own meals or have an input into what they eat. "The hostel management and staff do not treat us with respect and dignity. The kitchen staff shout and yell at us", she says.

"So many issues come up in the hostel and they don't get resolved until we report to the Department of Justice" says Maraam. "Sometimes we go on hunger strike to let the authority know our plight". Maraam feels that the complaint procedure in place lacks any credibility as there is no independent body that deals with residents' complaints.

Maraam also feels that the NGOs that claim to represent asylum seekers collude with management and force their decision on residents,. "They should know that it is wrong to make decisions for people without involving them", she says.

Poverty is a huge issue for Maraam and her family. "We get €19.10 per week per adult and €9.60 per week per child. It is very difficult to survive", she says. As part of the cost cutting process last year, the book grant was cut leaving families like Maraam's in a very difficult position. "One of my children's books cost €108 and the others €120 and when you add the cost of school uniform and footwear, you can imagine how difficult things are for us. No wonder some women are forced into prostitution", she says.

As an asylum seeker Maraam is not allowed to work. "My husband and I are both professionals" she says. "I am afraid that I will lose the skills I have if I do not work. I have volunteered locally before too, but I have just lost interest in doing anything now. I think I am depressed, already I've been diagnosed with migraine".

"People are in this system for nine years and then deported. How will they start again?" asks Maraam. "Many of the children don't know anything else except Ireland, but the Government do not see us as real people. All they see is a group of people with Reference numbers".

*“There is a lot of resentment against women wearing the veil and this is unfair. Is it a crime? Women make these choices themselves and should have the right to practice their religion as they see fit.”*

For women like Maraam, racism remains a huge reality which must be addressed. “Racism is everywhere” says Maraam. “When people make Racist comments, I just think they are naïve.”

As a practicing Muslim woman, Maraam does not wear the veil and feels that as a result she may experience less resentment. “I don’t see covering my head as what defines me as a Muslim, but for those who do, it is their choice which should be respected.”

“There is a lot of resentment against women wearing the veil and this is unfair. Is it a crime? Women make these choices themselves and should have the right to practice their religion as they see fit” she says.

Maraam remains uncertain as to what the future holds. “We have no idea when we will know about our future or what the decision will be. Basically, our lives are in their hands”. She says. “I hope and pray that things will be better in Nigeria and we can go back home”.







# Zèenāt Mānjōō

originally from Mauritius

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Zeenat came to Ireland with her husband 18 months ago. "We moved from Mauritius to London where we lived in an all Muslim area and then came to Ireland to look for work. We thought it would be cheaper here but found Dublin was as expensive as London", she says.

Her husband got a job as a chef in a hotel in Doolin in Co. Clare. "We were the only Muslims in the village" she says. "It was lonely and so different to East London. We were different but we were welcomed. We featured in the TV programme 'Baby on Board' to show how we lived".

The family moved to Birmingham and then to Belfast. "We didn't know about the troubles", she says. "The taxi driver wouldn't come here from the airport. We didn't know why. The rent was cheap here, we didn't have any choice".

Zeenat describes the racism which she has experienced in Belfast. "We lived here in the Village for a year" she says. "Once, my son and I were attacked on the street. We were stoned by nine year old boys. Some one from the women's centre said we should report it to the police and that she would be our witness. They got off with a warning". Zeenat is worried for her son. "My son is four and bringing him to the Park is always an issue" she says. "We are always told to go back home. When my son sees white boys on the street he says 'these are bad boys Mommy', he's afraid of them but gets on fine with the boys in his school. It is very difficult to explain to him. The moment you leave the house you know you will meet someone who will have a problem with you".

Studying Politics and Law at the Belfast Metropolitan University Zeenat feels that the North's troubled history is having an impact



*“The fear and the reality of racism and prejudice have made integration into society in Belfast a difficult process.”*

on levels of racism. “I realise people here are still fighting each other” she says. “They are not ready for anyone different. Things will get better maybe in 10 years or more. Before I started Law I didn’t realise that I had been assaulted. I came home from college and told my husband ‘I have been assaulted so many times here’. Are the police waiting for something really dangerous to happen before they do something to stop this? Why should people report if nothing is being done? To me, we are all brothers and sisters. We are all connected in some way”.

The fear and the reality of racism and prejudice have made integration into society in Belfast a difficult process. “When we lived in this area, things would be going on but we wouldn’t know anything about it. We wouldn’t put our nose out the door. The only place I went was to the Women’s Centre or the park and at the park I usually had to call my husband to come and get me. When I

went to college my husband said ‘don’t wear your Hijab’. After a while I decided to start wearing it and my Law teacher said ‘why didn’t you wear it before – you will always be accepted with us’”.

“I was Hindu and converted about 10 years ago”, she says. “When I first went to college all my friends were Muslim and they talked about Islam all the time. I met my husband and he told me more about it. My sister in law gave me books. Islam just made sense”. Zeenat’s family find it hard to accept her decision. “My parents were so mad when I converted. When I first got married my parents wouldn’t accept me. It would hurt my mum to see me dressed in a Hijab so when I went to see her I took it off, just for my Mum. She is the most important person in the world. Islam teaches us that paradise is at the feet of your mother” she says. “But now that I have matured up I know I have to help my parents see Islam thorough my



eyes because I cannot bear to think about them in the Hell fire." Her husband's family too had difficulty with the marriage. "Mixed marriages are very taboo in my country" says Zeenat. "We didn't have a big wedding just the 2 of us and the witnesses. It's every girls dream to have a big wedding, a white dress. This was not the case for us. Little by little we are being accepted when we go home."

Women at the Windsor Women's Centre are interested in learning more about Islam. "My sister in law and I offered to do a class on Islam at the centre" says Zeenat. "There's a lot of interest. I thought it would just be other Muslim women coming together to remind ourselves who we are and what we do. Now it seems lots of women want to participate. People associate Islam with all

the bad stuff, especially after 9/11 so it's engraved in them. Their sons and daughters will hate us too. Islam is not the religion of the swords but the religion of peace. 22,000 people have converted to Islam in Europe since 9/11. 85% of them are women. If Islam is so bad why would people convert? It just doesn't make sense" she says.

Zeenat does not see a future for herself or her family in Belfast. In the future we will move back to London, she says. My children will go to an Islamic school. They will learn the broad curriculum but will also learn about Islam and so will have what I believe to be better manners. Islam teaches a peaceful life. After every difficulty there's ease. We'll make it work as a family. I know we'll get there The Almighty will help us."









# Khādījā

## originally from Egypt

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"I came from Egypt with my family in 2007. I came to Dublin seeking asylum because my husband was involved in politics. I was crying. I didn't want to leave my home, I was afraid for my children" says Khadija (not her real name). Her husband's friend who was also involved politically was badly beaten and her husband felt they should leave with their 4 children. "We asked our friends where we should go and they advised us to go to Europe. I was happy when I came to Dublin. We got a temporary flat in a nice area, I was crying but I felt safer and better", she says.

Like all asylum seekers Khadija was not allowed to work, which was difficult for her. "When we came we didn't have any idea about social welfare. We wanted to work, be safe and live normally. But they said we could not work until they accepted or rejected our case." The family decided to use that period to learn English. "With 4 children between the ages of 1 and 5, I was busy anyway!" says Khadija.

In 2001 the family got refugee status. "We moved to a bigger house that was much better. I chose the school. We felt better. I was happy. I could go and see my family again. Before it was like being a prisoner for 4 years" says Khadija. "In general Irish people were very good to us" she says "except the older people. They are more religious. The older people look at me, stare at me and sometimes say things I can't understand". Khadija has had trouble with the younger generations too. "Once, in Dublin, a group of teenagers were standing on a corner. I was bringing groceries to my house. They said something to each other, looked at me and laughed. The girl came behind me and went to pull my scarf off but when I turned around she ran away. I just smiled and laughed. In a group they try to make fun but now they say hello to me".

"Once some boys put fireworks in the letter box", she adds. "I called the police. One of the boys fathers came and the boy and said



sorry. Maybe it's normal – strange people, different religion. In Egypt, we are happy to see different people, maybe because they are tourists. Maybe people here are afraid we'll take their money. I don't know" she says.

As the years went by Khadija became more and more worried about how to bring her children up with Islamic values in a very different society. "People outside the family can have a bigger affect on your children than you do" she says. "My children's behaviour became bad, especially the boys. They are lovely children but they began doing things they shouldn't do. Suddenly they became teenagers! We decided to move to Belfast to try to make a new life for ourselves".

Khadija feels her children's identity is now in some ways confused. "If I had stayed in my own country my children would have done better. They are not Muslim, Arab or Irish now", she says. "This is not anyone's fault, it's natural if you change your culture and your people. In my community all the people know and look out for each-other, but here my daughter thinks she is free to do as she pleases. She wears Hijab but she likes Hannah Montana and she thinks like an Irish person. She wants to be cool. She brings her

school friends here and then I let her wear makeup and high heels in the house. I don't want to cause her stress".

A family trip to Egypt reinforced some of Khadija's concerns. "I went to Egypt for one month with the kids. They were teenagers at that stage and didn't want to live there. They are totally Irish. They had the same experience going to Egypt as I had coming here. I can't make my children as I want them to be".

Khadija is continuing to study English and also computers. "My kids laugh at my accent!" she says. Her daughter wants to be a pharmacist. "I want her to do well and to marry well" She says.

Khadija looks to the future with some uncertainty. "Before coming here I studied business at college. I dream about being a teacher" she says. "Maybe I'm too old I don't know. Sometimes I feel I haven't succeeded in anything. I don't think I'll go back to Egypt. I have dreamed about going back thinking it would be the same but I am a foreigner here and a foreigner there. Some of my family think I am lucky to live in Europe. I say they are the lucky ones because they settled down at home with their kids."

# Fatimah Jeetun

originally from Mauritius



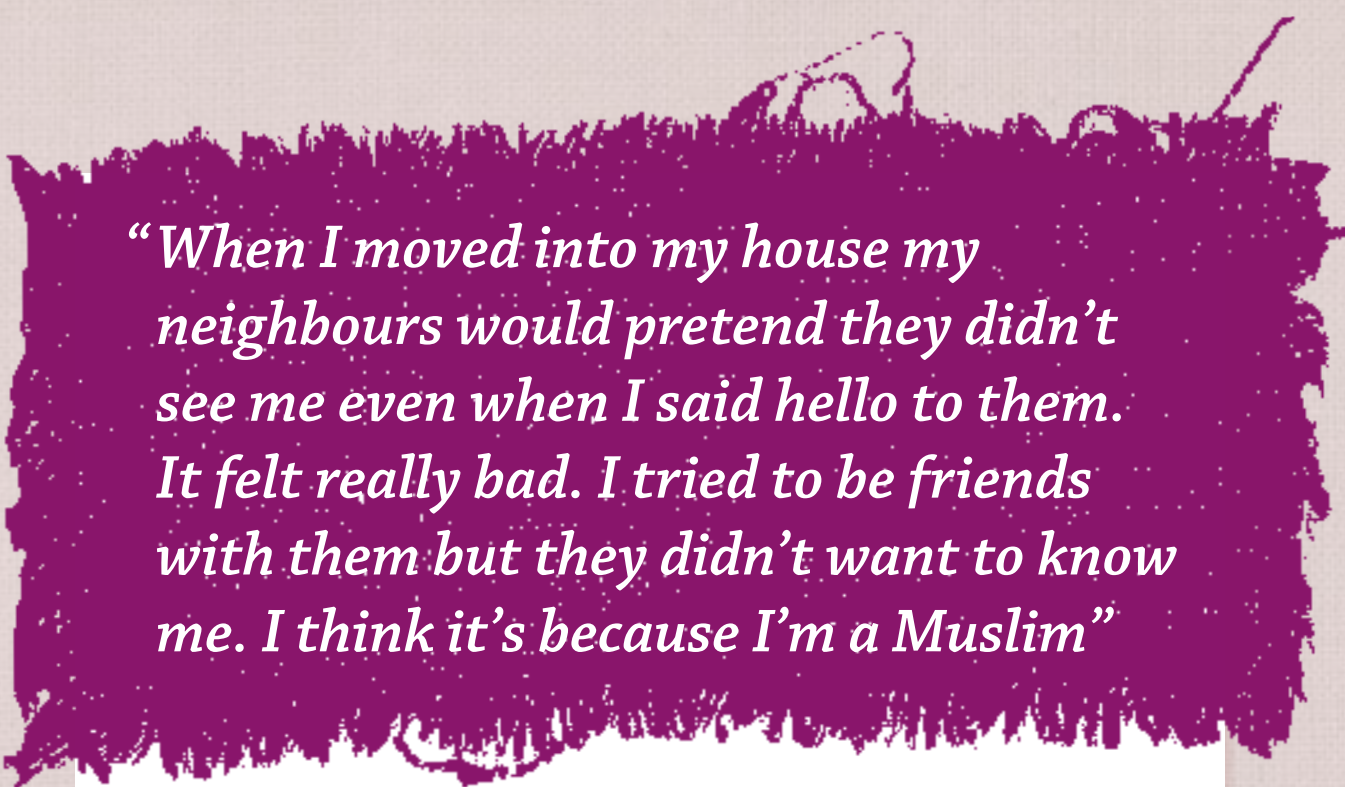
Fatemah came to Belfast from Mauritius a year ago with her husband and two small children looking for work and a better future. "I came here because my brother was working here" she says. "I wanted to make a decent future for my children, to make sure they have good health and a good education". Fatemah has three children, two boys who were born in Mauritius and a girl born in Belfast.

Fatemah's mother is a French citizen so for herself and her husband, coming to Europe was an opportunity that she could not afford to miss. She recalls her life in Mauritius with fondness but knows that she must work here to make enough money to secure a future for her children. "I liked my life in Mauritius, going to the seaside, the good weather and meeting my family on Sundays. But I wanted my children to have a better future and a better education and in Mauritius the

standard of living is rising more than ever before therefore we choose to come here and give it the best we can."

When she moved here, Fatemah was told about the services available to her in Belfast "I was told about a crèche. I could bring my children to and a play group. When I had my baby it was such a good experience at the hospital. "The nurses were so nice to me," she says. "There is such a good system here. Child Benefit is so important for families, we do not have that in my country". Fatemah attends the Windsor Women's Centre. "We do courses here in Grief Trauma and Helping Relationships and also Compassion Fatigue, that's a good course" she says. "You get to know yourself better – am I too sensitive? Do I worry too much? I want to do more courses too, to become someone" she says. Fatemah loves to have the opportunity to meet people and to talk to them. "I get to know people





*“When I moved into my house my neighbours would pretend they didn’t see me even when I said hello to them. It felt really bad. I tried to be friends with them but they didn’t want to know me. I think it’s because I’m a Muslim”*

here, to talk to them and make friends”, she says. “It’s good to talk sometimes and when people hear I’m from Mauritius they like to know more. Here it’s all about the women everywhere else it’s all about the men!” she says.

“When I was 11 I went to South Africa for 4 years to study and stay at a Madrassah (the Islamic school). My Aunty taught there and I learnt a lot about Islam and Arabic” she says. At home Fatemah ran a small Arabic tuition school but it wasn’t possible for her to continue with her teaching work in Ireland. “When I came to Ireland I got work making

beds in hotels. The work was so difficult and I was pregnant. In one hotel I worked really hard for nine hours – the supervisor told me I was no use and a waste of time, she really mistreated me. I didn’t wear the Hijab at work but it was hard to integrate because other groups of foreign workers, Polish people, wouldn’t talk to me – they wanted to talk to people of their own nationality. My baby is just 2 months old and when she is older I will look for other work again.” she says.

Fatemah has had serious problems within her community. “At the start it wasn’t easy at

all here", she says. "When I moved into my house my neighbours would pretend they didn't see me even when I said hello to them. It felt really bad. I tried to be friends with them but they didn't want to know me. I think it's because I'm a Muslim. Sometimes they pull back the blinds to look at me when I go out and once when I was pregnant I had to call the Police on my neighbour who would not leave me alone and kept telling me my children were making too much noise".

She has suffered attacks and abuse and is concerned for her children. "A few weeks ago I was just walking on the street and 3 boys, teenagers, passed me" she says. "One of them tried to pull my veil off. I couldn't do anything, I was alone so I just went quickly to pick up my child. At the park the local children make fun of my children. I have had to call my brother to come and get me from there" she says. "What do they think of us, just because we are Muslim and a different colour".

Her eldest child will start school In September 2010. "I applied to two schools for a place for him" she says. "In one school there are no Asian children and I am afraid he will get a place there. I am scared for him. In the other school there are Asians and he can get Halal food".

Fatemah feels that if she moves to a different area things will be better for her and her children. "In this area there is a lot of racism", she says. "Not every one is the same but some are racist. I want to move to the Lisburn Road. There are more Asians there".

Fatemah's main concern for the future is to make sure her children are safe, well educated and can have a good life. "Experience makes you stronger" she says. "Life goes on. In many ways I would like to stay here for my children but I worry about how they will be treated when they are bigger. They are small now at home and protected by me. Every mother wants the best for her children. I don't intend to stay here forever. Maybe we will go to London, it is better for Asian people there. I just have to work hard so I can move or go home quickly".







# Fârdûş Şultân

originally from Bosnia

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I was born in Sarajevo, Bosnia but I have been living in Ireland for over 17 years, which is the majority of my adult life. I arrived at the age of 18 and I feel as if I have grown up and matured here and so, I feel that my home is here. My acquired 'Irish' roots were strengthened when in 1998 I became an Irish citizen.

I arrived in Ireland during the war in Bosnia in order to join my family who came here as Programme Refugees. When the war broke out in April 1992 my family were on holidays in the neighbouring Serbia, while I remained in Sarajevo. That is how we ended up being split up from the beginning of the war and we were apart for almost a year. My family remained initially in Serbia, and after spending a few months there and in Macedonia, they eventually ended up in a refugee camp in Austria. It is there, that they met a representative of

the Irish Government, who invited them to Ireland. My mother's only question when she considered coming here was would I be given a visa to join them, which thankfully, was the case. And so, after leaving Sarajevo in April 1992, my family arrived to Ireland in September of that year. I arrived here on 3 March 1993. I will never forget that day. As you can imagine, there was a big reunion at the airport – the story even appeared on the front page of the Irish Times. I got loads of cards from the general public wishing me good luck, which I have kept to this day.

Before the war broke out, I had the usual hopes and dreams of a teenager. My main worry was what to wear to my debs as I was graduating that year. Then, the war broke out and after spending one of the most difficult years of my life, I was saved. But then, I suddenly lost all other identity and became a refugee in a foreign country. What I learned



was how fragile life is. All you have is your faith as your strength to rely upon. That's all, everything else is so easily perishable.

I was very fortunate that shortly after arriving to Ireland I was able to continue my education and three years latter I graduated with Honors Degree in Politics and Arabic from the UCD. I later supplemented that with a Diploma in Management Studies. During my studies, I also travelled around Ireland giving many talks about the situation in Bosnia. I felt guilty for being in a safe place while the rest of my people still had to depend on each other and so I felt it was my obligation to give those talks. Later, I was employed with the "Zena Project" where I worked as a Co-ordinator. The purpose of the Project was to support Bosnian women in Ireland in accessing educational and employment opportunities available to them and to learn what are the barriers preventing them from doing so.

When the project concluded in 2000, I decided to look for work in the commercial sector. I realised that in the seven years I had been in Ireland I had dedicated all my time to very public work and that my personal life had started to suffer. I needed normality in

my life. So I got a job in the Bank of Scotland where I remained for over seven years. In December 2007 I left the Bank to start a business with my husband: [www.Farend.net](http://www.Farend.net) - an IT Support Services company.

I am happy to be a Muslim woman in Ireland as I have freedom to express myself. I used not to wear the hijab as I now do - I started wearing it a year ago after learning that it is obligatory and what are the reasons behind it and I am very proud of it. I believe that Muslims in Ireland need to be more forward about giving information on what our faith is really about. So many people misrepresent our religion, like terrorists who actually go against core Islamic values. There is a lot of misinformation out there. When I see Muslim women working, studying and interacting socially with people of other beliefs, it gives me hope that people will learn and understand more about our religion. There are certain issues as well that Irish society should be aware of - for example, I would have an issue if a man hugged me as a way of greeting me. Then again, I also know that this is a two way street and that it takes time. In general, I believe that how you decide to view the country, that is how you are going to experience it; so if you chose to



dislike it here, then you will only see negative things, but if you chose to enjoy it and see good, then good things will happen. That is the attitude I have adopted here.

My primary focus at the moment is on the future of my 17-month old son and thinking about how he will integrate into the society as an Irish Muslim. My husband and I wish to raise him in a Muslim Irish environment. It will be challenging but I want my son

to be an active member of society as well, which is why I feel that when there is more understanding and awareness of our religion, then it will be easier to take part. When people are given an opportunity to participate in a society, then they can engage positively and contribute successfully. I want Muslims to take an active role in a society, which in turn accepts and harvests its diversity to the benefit of all of its members.

*“When I see Muslim women working, studying and interacting socially with people of other beliefs, it gives me hope that people will learn and understand more about our religion.”*



# Terminology, Abbreviations & Resources



## Terminology<sup>5</sup>

**Eid al-Fitr** (Arabic: عيد الفطر *Īdu l-Fiṭr*) often abbreviated to **Eid**, is a Muslim holiday that marks the end of Ramadan, the Islamic holy month of fasting. Eid is an Arabic word meaning "festivity", while *Fi r* means "to break fast"; and so the holiday symbolizes the breaking of the fasting period. Eid ul-Fitr lasts for three days of celebration and is sometimes also known as the "Smaller Eid" (Arabic: عيد صغير *al-Īdu ṣ-Ṣaghīr*) as compared to the Eid ul-Adha that lasts three days following the Hajj Pilgrimage and is casually referred to as the "Greater Eid" (Arabic: عيد كبير *al-Īdu l-kabīr*).

**Halal** (Arabic: حلال, *ḥalāl*, *Halaal*; means *lawful* or *legal*) is a term designating any object or an action which is permissible to use or engage in, according to Islamic law. It is the opposite of **haraam** ("forbidden". The term is used to designate food seen as permissible according to Islamic law).

The use of the term varies between Arabic-speaking communities and non-Arabic-speaking ones. In Arabic-speaking countries, the term is used to describe anything permissible under Islamic law and includes

human behaviour, speech communication, conduct, manner and dietary laws. In non Arabic-speaking countries, the term is most commonly used in the narrower context of just Muslim dietary laws, especially where meat and poultry are concerned, though it can be used for the more general meaning, as well. Islam has laws regarding which foods can and cannot be eaten and also on the proper method of slaughtering an animal for consumption, known as *dhabihah*. However if there is no other food available then a Muslim is allowed to eat non-halal food.

**Hijab** or **ḥijāb** (Arabic: حجاب, pronounced [hiˤdʒæːb]/[hiˤgæːb]) is both the head covering traditionally worn by Muslim women and modest Muslim styles of dress in general. The Arabic word literally means cover or conceal from view (noun), based on the root حجب meaning "to cover, to veil, to shelter". Most Islamic legal systems define this type of modest dressing as covering everything except the face and hands in public. The clothes should not be form fitting, or so eye-catching as to attract undue attention or reveal the exact shape of the body.)<sup>[1][2]</sup> According to Islamic scholarship, hijab is given the wider meaning

<sup>5</sup> Explanations sourced and adapted from Wikipedia, [www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com)

of modesty in clothing, behaviour, manner, and speech. Islam merely prescribes modesty rather than actually forcing the wearing of a particular garment. Hijab varies in styles and colours according to the country, culture, and the woman's preference.

**Minarets** (Turkish: *minare*,<sup>118</sup> from Arabic *manāra* (lighthouse) مَنَارَة, usually مِئذنة) are distinctive architectural features of [Islamic mosques](#)- generally tall spires with [onion-shaped](#) or conical crowns, usually either free standing or taller than any associated support structure; the basic form includes a base, shaft, and gallery. Styles vary regionally and by period. They provide a visual focal point and are used for the call to prayer ([adhan](#)). The call to prayer is issued five times each day: dawn, noon, mid-afternoon, sunset, and night. Minarets also function as air conditioning mechanisms: as the sun heats the dome, air is drawn in through open windows then up and out of the minaret, thereby providing natural ventilation.

**Qur'an** (pronounced [qur'ʔɑːn]; Arabic: الْقُرْآن *al-qur'ān*, literally "the recitation") is the Holy Book of Islam which was revealed to the Islamic Prophet Mohamed over twenty-three years, also sometimes

transliterated as Quran, Qur' n, Koran, Al-Coran or Al-Qur' n. Muslims believe the Qur'an to be the verbal book of divine guidance and direction for mankind, and consider the original Arabic verbal text to be the final revelation of God. It contains all the basic principles of the religion of Islam, and a code of conduct for Muslims to follow to gain. It contains all the basic principles of the religion of Islam, and a code of conduct for Muslims to follow to gain satisfaction in life and in the hereafter.

**Ramadan** (Arabic: رَمَضَان *Ramaḍān*, Arabic pronunciation: [rɑmɑd̪ɑːn])

*Ramazan, Ramzan, Ramadhan, Ramdan, Ramadaan*) is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. It is the Islamic month of fasting, in which participating Muslims refrain from eating, drinking, the sexual relationship between married couples, and indulging in anything that displeases God; from dawn until sunset. Fasting is meant to teach the Muslim patience, modesty and spirituality by acting in a disciplined behaviour and not saying bad things or quarreling with anyone. Ramadan is a time for Muslims to fast for the sake of God (Arabic: لِلَّهِ) and to offer more prayer than usual. During Ramadan, Muslims ask forgiveness for past sins, pray



for guidance and help in refraining from everyday evils, and try to purify themselves through self-restraint, and good deeds. As compared to the solar calendar, the dates of Ramadan vary, moving forward about ten days each year as it is a moving month depending on the moon. Ramadan was the month in which the first verses of the Qur'an were said to be revealed to the Islamic Prophet Muhammad.

## Abbreviations

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|             |   |
|-------------|---|
| <b>UCD</b>  | University College Dublin   |
| <b>TCD</b>  | Trinity College Dublin  |
| <b>COSC</b> | National Office for the Prevention of Domestic,<br>Sexual and Gender-based Violence |
| <b>MRCI</b> | Migrants Rights Centre Ireland  |
| <b>NASC</b> | Irish Immigrant Support Centre, Cork  |
| <b>UAE</b>  | United Arab Emirates  |
| <b>WAG</b>  | Women's Action Group  |
| <b>WOW</b>  | Women of the World  |



# Resources

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## 1 Useful Organisations

### National Women's Council Ireland (NWCi)

Address: 9, Marlborough Court,  
Marlborough St., Dublin 1.  
Telephone: 01 8787248  
E-mail: [info@nwcii.ie](mailto:info@nwcii.ie)  
Website: [www.nwcii.ie](http://www.nwcii.ie)

### European Network Against Racism (ENAR)

Address: 55, Parnell Square West,  
Dublin 1.  
Telephone: 01 8897110  
E-mail: [EnarIreland@gmail.com](mailto:EnarIreland@gmail.com)  
Website: [www.enarireland.org](http://www.enarireland.org)

### AkiDwa (national network of African and migrant women)

Address: 98, Lower Abbey Street,  
Dublin 1.  
Telephone: 01 8148582  
E-mail: [info@akidwa.ie](mailto:info@akidwa.ie)  
Website: [www.akidwa.ie](http://www.akidwa.ie)

### New Communities Partnership

Address: 10, Cornmarket, Dublin 8.  
Telephone: 01 6713639  
E-mail: [info@newcommunities.ie](mailto:info@newcommunities.ie)  
Website: [www.newcommunities.ie](http://www.newcommunities.ie)

### Integration and Social Inclusion Centre

Address: 18, Dame Street, Dublin 2.  
Telephone: 01 6453070  
E-mail: [info@integratingireland.ie](mailto:info@integratingireland.ie)  
Website: [www.integratingireland.ie](http://www.integratingireland.ie)

### Immigrant Council of Ireland

Address: 2, St. Andrew's Street, Dublin 2.  
Telephone: 01 6740202  
E-mail: [admin@immigrantcouncil.ie](mailto:admin@immigrantcouncil.ie)  
Website: [www.immigrantcouncil.ie](http://www.immigrantcouncil.ie)

### Irish Refugee Council

Address: Second Floor, Ballast House,  
Aston Quay, Dublin 2.  
Telephone: 01 7645854  
E-mail: [info@irishrefugeecouncil.ie](mailto:info@irishrefugeecouncil.ie)  
Website: [www.irishrefugeecouncil.ie](http://www.irishrefugeecouncil.ie)

### Migrant Rights Centre Ireland

Address: 55, Parnell Square West,  
Dublin 1.  
Telephone: 01 8897570  
E-mail: [info@mrci.ie](mailto:info@mrci.ie)  
Website: [www.mrci.ie](http://www.mrci.ie)

### Islamic Cultural Centre

Address: 19, Roebuck Road,  
Clonskeagh, Dublin 14.  
Telephone: 01 2080000  
E-mail: [info@islamireland.ie](mailto:info@islamireland.ie)  
Website: [www.islamireland.ie](http://www.islamireland.ie)

For information on useful publications, visit the websites of these organisations. You will find information on your local women's group oanti-racism intercultural group from national organisations including NWCI, Akidwa, ISIC and NCP. Visit their websites for further details.

## **2 About Islam – Useful websites**

To find out more about Islam, there are a number of organisations that can tell you more. You can also visit interesting websites, a few of which are shown below.

[www.alazhr.com](http://www.alazhr.com)

[www.islamicity.com](http://www.islamicity.com)

[www.islamicity.com/Mosque/Intro\\_Islam.htm](http://www.islamicity.com/Mosque/Intro_Islam.htm)

[www.islamireland.ie](http://www.islamireland.ie)

[www.islamfortoday.com](http://www.islamfortoday.com)

[www.islam-guide.com](http://www.islam-guide.com)

[www.islamreligion.com](http://www.islamreligion.com)

## **3 Other resources/resource lists**

For information on useful publications, visit the websites of the national organisations, details above. Useful information and links to publications can also be found on the website of the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI)<sup>6</sup>, [www.nccri.ie](http://www.nccri.ie)

<sup>6</sup> The NCCRI was closed in December 2008. However, its website remains active and hosts a useful archive of publications.



# Parādise lies under the feet of the Mōther

◆ Muslim Teaching ◆





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**01 8787 248  
info@nwci.ie  
www.nwci.ie**