

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**MUSLIM WOMEN LEADERS  
LAUNCH GLOBAL MOVEMENT  
TO EMPOWER MUSLIM WOMEN**

Manhattan, New York - Over one hundred Muslim women religious leaders, human rights activists, scholars and artists from around the world will meet in New York City on November 17th to 19th to launch **WISE: The Women's Islamic Initiative in Spirituality and Equity** to empower Muslim women to play a greater role in their societies worldwide.

Top leaders will attend, including **Baroness Uddin**, the first Muslim woman to enter the British House of Lords, Special Adviser to the United Nations Secretary-General Dr. **Nafis Sadik**, Saudi municipal candidate **Fatin Bundagji**, Malaysian Islamic Feminist **Zainah Anwar**, author of *Standing Alone in Mecca* **Asra Nomani**, Afghan Presidential candidate **Dr. Massouda Jalal**, Nigerian advocate in the Amina Lawal stoning case **Nogi Imoukhuede**, President of Islamic Society of North America **Ingrid Mattson**, Dubai' Comic Writer **Rima Khoreibi** who introduced the Muslim World to their first female heroin and Pakistan's **Mukhtaran Mai**, author of the much anticipated *In the Name of Honor: A Memoir*.

"This is a historical and critical event in the history of Islam," said Daisy Khan, Executive Director of The American Society for Muslim Advancement (ASMA), the chief organizer of the event. "WISE will provide a much needed platform for diverse Muslim women to discuss global Muslim women's issues, assert our rights through the use of and in accordance with Islamic law, and build a coherent movement that empowers and connects Muslim women everywhere."

On the agenda is the formation of an **International Shura Council of Muslim Women**. A Shura Council is an advisory council that interprets Islamic law for the political and religious leaders in its region of authority. Also under discussion will be the creation of a global fund to provide scholarships for Muslim women to be educated in Islamic jurisprudence thereby qualifying them to serve on the Shura Council of Women.

The leaders will discuss the major obstacles facing Muslim women and create strategies to address them. They will discuss how to increase women's religious & political

leadership via faith fueled activism, challenging local customs that impinge on women's rights and develop effective methods to change negative perceptions about muslim women.

A selection of non-Muslim women faith leaders will also participate in the WISE meetings as supportive partners. They include Sister Joan Chittister, prolific advocate of women's rights and American Benedictine nun, Rev. Dr. Joan Brown Campbell, leader in the ecumenical interfaith movement in the U.S., Dr. Helen LaKelly Hunt, founder of Sister Fund and author of *Faith & Feminism: A Holy Alliance*, and Devorah Zlochower, director of full-time programs and an instructor of Talmud and halakha at the Drisha Institute.

The events of WISE will also feature the theater debut of [\*\*7WOMEN, 7HEAVENS, Portraits of Muslim Women\*\*](#), a play that juxtaposes stories of seven Muslim women in abrasive, funny, and soothing dialogue with themselves around personal struggles with faith, community, and relationships. The world premier will take place **Saturday, November 18 at 8:30pm** during the WISE conference and is open to the public.

*Sponsor: The ASMA Society, a not-for-profit 501(c) 3 founded in 1997 in New York City, is an Islamic cultural and educational organization dedicated to fostering an American-Muslim identity and building bridges between American Muslims and the American public. ASMA's philosophical objective is to strengthen a culturally American expression of Islam based on tolerance and on cultural and religious harmony and to foster an environment in which Muslims can thrive within a pluralistic society.*

*Project Collaboration: ASMA Society will collaborate with Cordoba Initiative, a not for profit 501(c) 3 founded in 2004 in Aspen, Colorado. Cordoba Initiative is multi-faith initiative whose objective is to heal the relationship between the Islamic world and America/the West*

*WISE has been supported by The Ford Foundation, Sister Fund, Henry Luce Foundation, Danny Kaye & Sylvia Kaye Foundation, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, William & Mary Greve Foundation, Marshall Family Fund.*

*Venue: The Westin New York at Times Square: 270 West 43<sup>rd</sup> street, NYC, NY 10036*

*Schedule: Start on November 17<sup>th</sup> Fri at 5pm and end on November 19<sup>th</sup> Sun at 5pm*

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