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Muslim women gather to plan council  
NEW YORK, Nov. 21

An international group of Muslim women has met in New York to plan the first all-female council formed to issue fatwas, opinions based on religious reasoning.

The women, from 25 countries, hope to give the female perspective on Islamic Law on issues including domestic violence, divorce and inheritance, the Christian Science Monitor reported Tuesday.

There are very few women around the world who are officially sanctioned to issue fatwas, and some have questioned whether more conservative Muslims will give any weight to the opinions of the female council.

Rebab al-Mahdi, a political scientist at the American University in Cairo, predicts the council will be described as part of "a Western cultural invasion."

"This is what conservative clerics always say, and people listen," she said.

The leader of the initiative, Daisy Khan, who serves as executive director of the American Society for Muslim Advancement, stressed the importance of the council.

"Islam is a religion of law, and it is important to express the principles of social justice within the framework of Islamic law," she said. "This is why we need muftias, in order to do that. Otherwise, it falls on deaf ears."

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