THE JUNCTION POINT OF ISLAM AND FEMINISM: SIS (SISTERS IN ISLAM), AN ISLAMIC FEMINIST ORGANIZATION[*]

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Abstract:

The purpose of this study is to put forth the studies and perspectives of SIS (Sisters in Islam), an Islamic Feminist organization in Malaysia. Within this context, the struggle of Muslim women to be individual and the perspectives of Sisters in Islam in parallel with Islamic Feminism were dealt. Some general information about Islamic Feminism and Malaysia was given and some detailed data on SIS' studies and Islamic Feminism was indicated.

This qualitative study conducted with content analysis taken both as the research design and data analysis of the study, document analysis is used as the method of data collection. The documents analyzed during the study, that is, the sample of the study is the website and publications of SIS and some other national and international scientific sources on SIS.

As a result of the detailed observations and analyses of the sources, it was indicated through examples that the studies and perspectives of SIS work well together with Islamic Feminism and Islam. Furthermore, it was determined that the organization is in the effort of creating awareness not only among women, but also men. All the national and international studies of the organization are stated to be not solely about women, but about social areas such as human rights, social responsibilities and making the nation conscious. Taking as findings of the study, and all of the information and analyses sets that the activities of Sisters in Islam can be classified into three as Societal, Scientific and Governmental issues.

SIS asserts that subordinated status of women is central to the interpretation of the Islamic sources by cultural tradition in patriarchal system against women. Therefore, they proceed their studies by asserting the opinion that the sources of Islam are to be revised and reinterpreted again from the perspective of women.

Key words: Islamic Feminism, Sisters in Islam, Malaysia, Women, Content Analysis as a Research Design.

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INTRODUCTION

It was just after the historical transformation movements that had affected Western ideology and started to show its influence all over the world, the concepts such as "freedom, individualism, social rights, etc." spread to each and every unit from a person to a whole country. Those concepts brought the subordinated status of women to their notice and women's question, then named as feminism, came to the fore.

Feminism is a theory that aims to change the society in order to put an end the gender pressure on women and to make the gender attitudes equal. On the other hand, feminism can be interpreted in various ways by different theories and approaches, such as hostility against men, regarding women superior to men or displaying an aggressive attitude against men. Different feminist theories can handle the situation from different perspectives. From those theories, "Islamic Feminism"[1] is the one who puts religion into the center while pursuing its studies and activities.

Islamic Feminism began to be articulated by Iranian and Egyptian academics around 1990s. They ground their movements and ideas to the traditional interpretations of Islamic sources (the Qur'an, Sunnah, Hadith, tafsir), Islamic law and women's rights in order to raise awareness on gender equality and domestic violence.

After the expansion of the use of the notion "Islamic Feminism", some criticisms against the concept were made by various fields claiming that "Islam" and "Feminism" interfere with each other and they cannot be quoted in one term. On the other hand, some others assert that both concepts admit the ideas that Islam subordinates women while some others think that Islam says that women and men were created within supplementary roles called as gender stereotypes[2].

Islamic feminism seeks and pursues a global gender equality and justice. Between the Islamic countries, there are some constitutions founded by Muslim women questioning and advocating Islamic law and women's questions. Sisters in Islam (SIS) is one of these advocacy groups established in Malaysia and its cofounded movement Musawah. The frontrunner scholars Ziba Mir Hosseini and Zainah Anwar are the founders of SIS.

In parallel with the notion of Islamic Feminism, and as Islamic Feminists, SIS carries out some activities collateral to Islam and Feminists.

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[1] In different sources, Islamic Feminism can be named as "Muslim Feminism" or "Islam Feminists". In this study, regardless as its political connotations, the term was be used as "Islamic Feminism" as used in literature.

[2] These gender stereotypes were handled by Sandra Bem. Bem invented a gender roles scale called Bem Sex Role Inventory and tried to measure the terms related to masculinity and femininity, assessing to identify the roles attributed to women and men in society. For more detailed information, see the source Bem, 1981, p. 354-364.

Within this context, the aim of this study is to clarify the studies and perspectives of SIS. The problem that was to be targeted to be replied was whether Islam and Feminism can be quoted together by taking the activities and ideology of SIS is in parallel to that of Islamic Feminists.

To make this clarification, in the introduction part of this study, taking SIS as an instance, feminism and the involvement of Muslim women to feminist movement was discussed briefly. Then, a passage to Sisters in Islam from Islamic feminism was made.

In other sections, some brief cultural and traditional features of Malaysia were given in order to form some cultural and traditional background. Within the core of the study, the activities and studies of SIS was expressed. From the explanations of SIS' area of focus, it is clearly seen that SIS not only do research on the interpretation of Islamic sources, but it also advocates some problems regarding women's status in the society such as legislation of laws, domestic violence, etc. Furthermore, the activities of SIS can be grouped as Societal, scientific and governmental issues.

This study is a qualitative research based on content analysis design. Within a qualitative content analysis, every kind of texts and documents such as written texts, pictures, electronic documents, TV cartoons, audio or video can be analyzed to determine the objective of the material (Berelson, 1966). Content analysis is handled differently by researchers whether it is a research design or a kind of data collection technique. For instance Miles, Huberman et al (2015) and Saldana (2011) seizes on content analysis as a research design or strategy such as phenomology, grounded theory, case study or ethnography. On the other hand Yıldırım and Şimşek (2016) and Seggie and Yıldırmış (2017, p. 30) takes content analysis as a technique for data analysis. Last but not the least, Taylan (2011, p. 64) claims that content analysis is both a research design and a technique for data analysis. In this study, content analysis is regarded as both a research design and data analysis technique and all the problems and questions of the research were carried out within this framework.

The analysis process of the research was conducted together with document analysis as a method of data collection. The data was gained from the website and publications of SIS and some other national and international scientific sources on SIS, which together forms the sampling of the research.

In short, in order to make an overall evaluation on the activities and publications of SIS, content analysis is used as a design for the analysis of the documents. Conent analysis is also used on classifying the activities of SIS in order to reach a qualitative analysis.

As a theoretical approach to construct the background of the study, feminist method was used. While generating and making classification into the activities of SIS from a feminist standpoint. The main focus of this theoretical point is that "*much current feminist scholarship has moved on from the question of whether there are power inequalities between researchers and respondents, to consider how power influences knowledge production and construction processes*" (Doucet & Mauther, 2008, p. 40), which is found adequate for the development of the theoretical ground of this research.

1. MALAYSIA

Malaysia is between the first countries that succeeded in modernizing in spite of the fact that it is not between the first countries stepping into the modernization process. The citizens embraced Islam after 15th century (2018).

> *Malaysia is a modern country where women seem to have no problem. The interpretation of Islam was influenced by the East's female dominated structure. Women do not have visible problems in working life, politics and education; however they have some cultural problems. Islamic law with its new interpretations and different applications is enforced in the country. The formulation of both modern and religious women serves its purpose here. The public support this formulation. The Muslim women in Malaysia face with all the problems carried by modern World. Women's non-governmental organizations and Pioneer feminists can work through internationally. It is possible to make a description of Islam compatible with the modern World; however this does not include all the issues regarding women* (Böhürler et al, 2008, p. 418).

Situated in Southeast Asia, the colony of Malaysia was under the British protection until 1957. In 1957, the state declared its independence and started to be ruled with monarchy. It is a constitutional monarchy with thirteen states. The population of Malaysia consists of three main ethnic groups; Malays (50.4 %), Chinese (23.7 %), and peoples of the South Asian subcontinent. Collectively, indigenous groups are known as Bumiputras (sons of the soil). The national language of the country is Malay, but English is also used in the country as it has been an English colony. The other languages are Chinese, Tamil, Telugu, Malalalam, Punjabi and Thai (2018).

> *In Malaysia, religious lines generally follow ethnic lines. Almost all Malays are Muslims; most Indians are Hindus, with a substantial minority of Muslims, Sikhs, and Parsees; and most Chinese are Confucian Buddhists, with a minority Muslim representation. Christianity has won some adherents among the Chinese and Indians. The indigenous peoples of Sabah and Sarawak*

are still largely animist, although many have become Christian. Shamanism is also practiced on East Malaysia.

Malaysia has a unified judicial system, and all courts take cognizance of both federal and state laws. The legal system is founded on British common law. Most cases come before magistrates and sessions courts. Religious courts decide questions of Islamic law and custom. The use of religious law by states, and selective, inconsistent enforcement by religious officers, has become controversial. The use of the Internal Security Act (ISA) against dissidents and restrictions of the press and freedom of expression remain concerns of civil libertarians and international human rights organizations.

In a research about Malaysia, W.M. Nor Wan Daud (2001, p. 144-147) states that the effects of a possible reform or social change movement in a part of the society can be come across in other parts of that society. Malaysia is a state consisting of Muslims over than 50% of the total population and the intellectual group and the leaders are exposed to modern Western ideology and cultural elements rather than those of Islam.

The Turkish journalists and documentarists Ayşe BÖHÜRLER and Aslıhan EKER prepared a project "Muslim Women Are Behind Walls" in the beginning of 2000s in order to address to different cultures, problems and political entities from different geographical areas. They did research in thirteen Islamic countries one of which is Malaysia (Böhürler et al, 2008).

In an interview from this project, Marina Mahattir (the daughter of the vice president of those times) stated that even though some of the Malaysian women can be seen in in upper positions of the governmental and other sectors, some other women who are less lucky do not have these kinds of positions. They may be regarded as good samples of the Muslim World; nevertheless, it is too difficult to find justice for women in family law and marriage. The world of men are taken more seriously. This is the problem in Malaysia (Böhürler et al, 2008, p. 418-459).

In another interview made with Ivy Josiah, one of the directors of Women's Aid Organization, Josiah told that they established some shelters for women in order to combat violence against women. They presented the government some proposals for laws (Böhürler et al, 2008, p. 437-439).

On the other hand, there are some criticisms against the activities of SIS. One of these criticisms was held forth by Professor Zeliha Kamaruddin who thinks that SIS is a harsh feminist organization. The ideas of SIS are reformist and these kinds of organizations exaggerates women's question in order to legitimatize themselves. The reason for her consideration is that on one hand they claim that women need to have more rights; on the other hand they regard feminist and egalitarian approaches opposite to Islam.

The most devastating statement between these interviews came from Meriam Suleyman: "I break to pieces between my Western values, my Eastern upbringing style and my Islamic background." Moreover, Suleyman finds the problems of Malaysian women and Western women close to each other, as both do not regard religion as the sole resource of women2s problems. They want to adapt to modern life by protecting their Islamic values (Böhürler et al, 2008, p. 448).

It can be concluded from these descriptions that Malaysia is a multinational country regarded as being a moderate Islamic state. There are many different tones of voices; however the voices regarding women's questions are in the same tone. There are many organizations about advocating women's rights claiming and discussing different opinions. Indeed all these organizations are feminists as they advocate women's rights; nevertheless some label themselves as feminist while some others do not.

2. A GENERAL OVERVIEW ON SIS (SISTERS IN ISLAM)[3]

SIS (Sisters in Islam), established in 1987 in order to struggle against women's legal problems in marriage and present a solution for a comprehensive law reform especially about the new Islamic Family Laws, is a Malaysian group of Muslim women. The founders of this civil society organization were women lawyers, activists, journalists and academics.

On the first days of its establishment the group focused on a law reform. As time passed, in mass media and mosques, women were referred as having a subordinated status; men have the right to commit violence against women, especially to their wives, etc. So, Islam started to be regarded as a religion of pressure against women and the exile of the group has deviated. These women found a new way in order to settle this issue as making some textual studies; an intensive re-reading of the Islamic sources. They studied the Qur'an in detail by focusing on the verses that were regarded as involving gender discrimination on the subject areas such as subordinating women, polygamy, domestic violence, women's access to divorce, etc.

Their main aim was to announce that Islam is not a religion oppressing women. It was the androcentric interpretations of the Islamic sources (Qur'an and Hadith) which were affected by patriarchal culture and traditional. In order to raise the awareness of the public on this misunderstandings and misinterpretations, the members of the group made some linguistic analyses of the sources. This semantic and syntactic method was a must because men tend to interpret the polygamy issue as they can

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[3] This general information part about the organization was compiled from "The SIS Story", *www.sistersinislam.org.my/page.php?35*.

marry up to four; it is the saying of the God and they have this right. On the other hand, women see this marriage as a conditional case of that time.

The group classifies their vision into two groups: societal and organizational vision. They express their societal vision as to make the society available to uphold freedom of expression, free from gender discrimination and judicious. They state their organizational vision as a leader for Islam and gender equality in the country and all over the World. In the light of their vision, they define their mission as "to promote the principles of gender equality, justice, freedom and dignity in Islam and empower women to be advocates for change (2018).

Within the first years after the establishment of the group, the families and friends of these eight members supported the group financially. As the studies of the group started to be broadening within time, SIS decided to set up an Office with a permanent staff in 1998.

After Islam had started to spread in Malaysia, women's question regarding all rights and responsibilities of women were dealt with a feminist perspective. SIS emphasized re-reading of basic Islamic sources as they believed that the subordinated status of women stemmed from the misinterpretation of those sources by androcentric cultural traditionalists.

To Gürhan, these studies bring the classical and postclassical interpretations to light. These androcentric interpretations include deep influences of the experiences of men and these women who made these hermeneutic studies add their womanhood experiences to the reading of Qur'an (2010, p. 375).

In her popular work Badran differentiated the term "Islamic Feminism" and "Islamic Feminists" by underlying that the former is a Project while the latter one is an analytical term indicating identity. And she adds that some Islamic feminist do not regard themselves as feminists. They label themselves as religious or secular. But some others, such as SIS, articulate themselves as Islamic Feminists (2002).

Moreover Baloğlu characterizes the activities of SIS as a construction of Islam-centered theology and ratifies their efforts. He adds that Islam does not approve the subordinated status of women, these misunderstandings are culture based and their duty is to provide gender equality as a governmental, religious and democratic issue (2011).

The members of SIS were not only women, but also men started to register to the group; which means that SIS focus on both sexes.

Currently SIS is supported with more lawyers, judges, scholars, muftis, and local donors.13 full-time staff and 1 part-time staff are working for SIS (2018).

Today, the organization is run by an operation unit consisting of an executive director and board members. The other three main branches and departments of SIS are Advocacy, Legal Services and Public Education; Secreteriat for MUSAWAH (the global movement for equality and justice in the family) and Communication, Research and Publications Unit (2018). SIS has been awarded by some institutions. Some of these awards are *2nd Civil Society Award*, *Annexe Heroes* in 2009; *Putra Brand* in 2010; *The Casa Asia Award in 2011* (2018).

Musawah the meaning of which is "equality" in Arabic is the global equality and justice movement launched in 2009 (2018). Musawah used social networking sites effectively. For instance when celebrating International Women's Day, over 300,000 followers of Musawah in Twitter reached to the tweet seminar 'Reading for Gender from the Qur'an' on 8th March 2014 by Amina Wadud (2018). They also publish some brochures, booklets and documentaries in order to raise the awareness of women and men all over the World (2018).

Although SIS is supported by many people from different sectors and the government, the group also takes some critics from some institutions such as *Department of Islamic Development-JAKIM, Malaysian Islamic Party, Malaysian Assembly of Mosque Youth-MAMY* thinking that they use the term ISLAM in an inappropriate way (2018).

By considering all these information gained from the website and publications of SIS, it can be put forward that the activities of SIS can be classified into three as Societal, Scientific and Governmental issues. These typology and comments on SIS is discussed and exemplified in detail in three sub-titles:

a. Societal Issues

These are the activities of SIS that were performed in order to raise the awareness of the public and to help women access to their legal rights by some legal counseling services. Seminars, meetings, conferences, public educational programs, TV Shows, publishing (books, booklets, brochures, articles, the bulletin Baraza, etc.), legal counseling services are all between these societal issues.

In 1988, they organized a workshop to inform the authorities about women's legal problems. In 1989, the core of the group has comprised of these women: Amina Wadud, Askiah Adam, Norani Othman, Rashidah Abdullah, Rose Ismail, Sharifah Zuriah Aljeffri and Zainah Anwar. They organised a national conference named as "The Modern Nation State and Islam" in 1992. In 2000, SIS passed to a new sector and began to give some education on women's rights in Islam open for public.

The public lectures that SIS organized were on the participation of women on public and private sphere, Islam, modernity and democracy; titled as Muslim Women Speak: Claiming The Right to Public Participation, Islam in Indonesia: Current Trends and Future Direction, Text and Context: Islam, the West and the Challenge of Modernity, Human Rights, Religion & Secularism, Women in Islam - What Identities? Whose Interest?, Political Islam & the Challenge of Democracy, Islam, Politics & Constitutionalism, Shari'ah's Response to Contemporary Emerging Needs: The Use of Fatwa & Binding Legislation, Contraception, Abortion & Reproductive Genetic Engineering: An Islamic Perspective (Sisters in Islam, 2018).

They also published two booklets which include questions and responses and named as Are Women & Men Equal before Allah? and Are Muslim Men Allowed to Beat Their Wives?

In 2012, SIS organized a panel called "Equality in the Muslim Marriage: Challenges and Possibilities" and attended to a Talk Show "Pride without Prejudice - Imagining a Future Malaysia" in 2011 (2018). So far, SIS has organized more than 300 events including workshops, forums, courses, dialogues, etc.

SIS has published some articles and question-answer booklets that are available online on their websites in order to conduct their right claims. "Islam and Polygamy, Women as Judges, Guardianship Law and Muslim Women, Hadith on Women in Marriage, Are Men and Women Equal Before Allah, Islam and Family Planning, Are Muslim Men Allowed to Beat their Wives?" are some of these resources of SIS.

SIS has been on mass media both locally and globally. On the report Building Moderate Muslim Networks prepared by Angel Rabasa and working team in 2007 state that women's groups try to protect their rights in the fields of education, legal rights, health, employment, etc. and sometimes are regarded as "reformists" in Muslim countries. In the report, SIS has been taken as one of the groups promoting gender equity. Combating subordinated status of women seen central to Islam, SIS do some reinterpretation studies of Quranic concepts and some other activities (Rabasa, 2007).

SIS has been on mass media both locally and globally. On the report Building Moderate Muslim Networks prepared by Angel Rabasa and working team in 2007 state that women's groups try to protect their rights in the fields of education, legal rights,

In 2003, SIS established a clinic for legal counseling and served 1786 clients until 2006. SIS has a legal advisory service named as TeleNisa which tries to reach everyone in need of legal service. In order to help more people,

they use various ways such as e-mail address, Facebook, a helpline on the phone, face-to-face legal advice and post address for letters.

This kind of legal consultation services of SIS tries to seek the rights of women and justice for all. They carry out some campaigns, legal aid services, legal literacy, court watch and legal literacy media in order to do advocating and amendment of the laws (Ismail and Dzulkifli, 2011, 373).

In a study on the legal services of SIS, an analysis on the legal consultations to SIS in 2008 was made. From the findings of this study, it is seen that there were 1144 consultants:

Table 1: SIS Consultation Services Cases Statistics 2008 (Ismail & Zulkifli, 2011, p. 374)

Type of Cases	*Total*	*Percentage*
Marriage: registration/ marriage representative (wali) procedure/ judge as representative (wali hakim) / re-marriage (rujuk)	465	37
Polygamy	68	6
Divorces	113	9
Responsibilities (Nafkah)	332	27
Children: Out of marriage child and foster child	15	2
Violence towards women: domestic violence/ sexual/ sexual harassment	47	4
Court's procedure: Unsatisfied reports over Syariah court's decision/ reports regarding appointment with lawyers/ rules regarding switching legal aids (lawyers)/ undue influence (action by force)	27	2
Distribution of Legacies (Faraid): Real Estates/ Deeds/ Hibah	42	3

Syarie Crimes: Out of marriage- Close Intimacy/Gambling/ Drinking/ Adulteries/ Not fasting	9	1
Miscellaneous	124	10
TOTAL	**1144**	**100**

As seen from the table above, from 1144 cases in a year, it was the problems with the marriage that was consulted mosly with the percentage of 37%.

When taken generally, it is possible to classify SIS' efforts to advocate women's rights into three groups: First is the actions made against the government for domestic violence, polygamy, etc. Second is the letters sent to the editors of some of the Malaysian newspapers to avoid public's being misdirected? Another action is the public educations (Murat, 2004, p. 141-145).

Another important point between the activities of SIS is MUSAWAH Project which is trying to seek a global justice and equality. In 2009, SIS held a meeting in Kuala Lumpur consisting of participants over 250 countries. Turkey was between these countries (Yılmaz, 2013, p. 168).

b. Scientific Issues

As stated before, the founders of the organization consisted of Muslim women most of who are academics and scholars. As a matter of this course, it is natural that they run some scientific activities to follow their way. Ziba Mir Hosseini, the Muslim theologian Amina Wadud, Shad Saleem Faruqi and many other academics.

Together with scientific conferences, workshops, symposiums, national and international publications; they carry out some linguistic and hermeneutic studies (reinterpretation of the Islamic sources with a semantic and syntactic method) in order to constitute an Islamic feminist discourse and Islamic feminist theology which can be available for any academics all over the world.

c. Governmental Issues

The aim of the organization was to combat to laws and policies of the government. These issues are the proposals, challenges and efforts to the government to promote the rights of Muslim women and to participate to the national and international organizations in the name of Malaysian government (local or national).

The memorandums that were submitted to the Government are the major instances for these.

In a newspaper column in 2008, it is written that SIS presents the government a proposal in order to annihilate the restrictions of women's travelling overseas. The news was also present in some of the newspapers in Turkey.

The researchers who carried out some studies on Islamic Feminism mostly came across with the name "Zeinah Anwar". Despite the fact that Malaysia is seen as a country in a progressive and modern Islamic manner, its approach towards family and women is much more traditional than that of other countries. For instance there are some legislation enabling men to marry with more than one wife and the woman cannot get divorce from her husband because he married to a second wife. However, a man can get divorce from his wife via a telephone text. This is the condition in Malaysia.

From its webpage *www.musawah.org,* their current activities can be listed as: The news regarding Muslim Family Law that was published locally and globally; their oral statement to United Nations Working Group In January 2014. In 2014, Musawah also participated to 57th United Nations CEDAW meeting and challenged to some of the Governments' using religion as a tool to justify discrimination.

Another global event that Musawah participated and supported was the 58th United Nations Commission on the Status of Women took place in New York in 2014. The themes were gender equality, challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for women and girls.

3. SIS AND MUSAWAH

Currently SIS is carrying on its activities and makes some announcements via social media devices such as Facebook and Twitter, not to mention Musawah and Amina Wadud. When these accounts are considered, it can be construed that the group is quite peaceful and tries to bring the place of women in the public sphere into the forefront. However, Musawah's shares are sharper than those of SIS.

Here are some of the tweets between 2014 and 2018 from the accounts of Musawah, Sisters in Islam and Amina Wadud. From these tweets, it can be concluded that grouping the movements and activities of SIS into three groups discussed above is in situ as there are societal, scientific and governmental activities:

- International Women's Day is just around the corner! "People strongly believe that a life of a woman is not complete until she begets her own child. The language people in society use for women

who do not have their own child hurts the woman". Fatimabiwi. (Musawah, Twitter, 2 February 2018)

- Shari'ah, Fiqh, Islamic Law. What do these terms really mean? Stay tomorrow for an exciting video! (Musawah, Twitter, 22 January 2018)

- What is the difference between formal, substantive and transformative equity? Read our Knowledge Brief. (Musawah, Twitter, 7 December 2017)

- Now you know: Turkish women march against "unacceptable" dress code. (Musawah, Twitter, 1 August 2017)

- #CEDAW Committee is clear. "Child marriage" is rape masquerading as marriage. (Musawah, Twitter, 4 July 2014)

- #SYRIA TO #CEDAW: Today, women are the breadwinners and decision-makers of households. (Musawah, Twitter, 4 July 2014)

- AND JUST TO BE CLEAR, the Qur'an does NOT distinguish between fathers + mothers where the upbringing of children is concerned. (Musawah, Twitter, 5 July 2014)

- The Rise of Islamic Feminism http://www.musawah.org/rise-islamic-feminism#sthash.7ZB8SEko.uxfs … via @sharethis GET the facts and go with the movement FT (Amina Wadud, Twitter, 13 August 2014)

- "Engaging a discourse does not mean we only respect those views that agree or concede with ours, but also to be able to respect and listen no matter how these expressions and opinions are alien or new to us." (Sisters in Islam, Twitter, 31 January 2018)

- Can Muslim women be feminists?: "In the Muslim World today, women are at the forefront of reform, pushing for a new understanding of Islam," says Malaysian feminist Zainah Anwar. (Sisters in Islam, Twitter, 13 December 2017)

- Teach boys to respect women at early age, and introduce gender sensitisation (cont) http://tl.gd/ncrmds (Sisters in Islam, Twitter, 30 May 2014)

- Importance of sijil nikah. It's cruel that children born out of wedlock for any reason are barred from public education. #kursuskahwin (Sisters in Islam, Twitter, 31 May 2014)

- Unicef called government to adopt prevention to ensure #children are protected from #SexualAbuse http://fb.me/2ZApGsEfw (Sisters in Islam, Twitter, 2 June 2014)

- American documentary celebrates a Muslim WWII heroine: Noor Inayat Khan http://fb.me/1plEKmtN8 (Sisters in Islam, Twitter, 13 June 2014)

- "What is beauty?" Malaysia's leading #feminists take on traditional conceptions of beauty #beMorethanBeautiful http://fb.me/34ahCT2WV (Sisters in Islam, Twitter, 11 June 2014)

- Join Musawah Advocate, Mona Eltahawy as she meets #women of the Arab Spring #genderequality #change http://fb.me/3sVXFXxrO (Sisters in Islam, Twitter, 13 June 2014)

- Pls join to promote for Blood Donation drive tis Saturday,Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Sabah. (Sisters in Islam, Twitter, 17 June 2014)

- The 5 day workshop on Islam, Gender Equality & Justice have begun (Sisters in Islam, Twitter, 21 June 2014)

- The Power of Feminism and why we still need to fight for women's rights http://fb.me/1im4LQw42 (Sisters in Islam, Twitter, 2 July 2014)

- World's first church, mosque, and synagogue under one roof: "We decided we needed to use the space to develop a... http://fb.me/2obsMb6Cr (Sisters in Islam, Twitter, 2 July 2014)

- Islam is not terrorism. And not all Muslims are terrorists. Similarly, Judaism is not Zionism. And not all Jews... http://fb.me/6INMBxs0I Islam is not terrorism. And not all Muslims are terrorists. Similarly, Judaism is not Zionism. And not all Jews are Zionists. (Sisters in Islam, Twitter, 17 July 2014)

- Plenty of SIS laughs to go around in #protest of Turkish DPM remark that women stop #laughing in #public :D... http://fb.me/2nY4jk7lm (Sisters in Islam, Twitter, 1 August 2014)

- The idea that "I belong to my husband in marriage" is merely a patriarchal interpretation of Islam. (Sisters in Islam, Twitter, 10 September 2014)

- "TO DENY PEOPLE THEIR HUMAN RIGHTS IS TO CHALLENGE THEIR VERY HUMANITY" - NELSON MANDELA http://fb.me/6KReBBGRQ (Sisters in Islam, Twitter, 13 September 2014)

4. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Feminism is the movement that seeks to establish gender equality in the private and public sphere; that is, equal opportunities for women to those for men. From some people, feminism can be regarded as a political movement for misandry and even the word feminism itself can carry some

negative collocations stemming from these misunderstandings and misinterpretations.

During its history, feminist movement faced with some discrepancies resulted in different types and theories of feminisms. Between these different types, Islamic feminism is the one which takes religion as a basis and tries to advocate against the traditional and cultural misinterpretation of Islamic sources subordinating women.

1990s were the years when Islamic feminism expanded in the world and Muslim women started to claim their rights and began to establish some organizations. Malaysian Islamic Feminist civil society organization Sisters in Islam, the core of this study, ground their advocacy to Islam and they state that the subordinated status of women is as a result of the misinterpretation of the Islamic sources (such as the Qur'an, Sunnah, Hadith, tafsir) stemming from culture, tradition and patriarchal system. So, they carry out intensive research on Islamic sources.

One of the most important visions of feminism, raising awareness of women is also the vision of Islamic feminism and SIS; however SIS also tries to enlighten men.

From the findings gained by this research, it can be put forward that in parallel with the claims of Islamic feminism, the ideology and the activities of Sisters in Islam work well together, which indicates that the notions of Islam and Feminism can be articulated together.

From the webpage and some scientific articles, social media tools, panels, activities, articles, TV programs of SIS, it can be concluded that together with this linguistic, sociologic and hermeneutical research, SIS also make some studies on inheritance of women, women's access to divorce, Islamic law and women's rights in other fields in order to raise awareness on gender equality and domestic violence. Another finding from this study is the classification of the activities of SIS. The findings of the study reveal that the activities of the Islamic Feminist organization Sisters in Islam can be classified into three as Societal, scientific and governmental issues: Societal issues are those made for public in order to raise awareness of women and men about the rights of women. These are made with public educations, meetings, seminars, TV programs, etc. The second is the scientific issues actualized all over the world within feminist theory, taking Islamic Feminism as a basis (the women's centers and departments of gender studies all over the world, sociology of religion, conferences, seminars, thesis, etc) Last group is the governmental issues presented by SIS to Malaysian and some other governments in order to advocate Islamic legislation of the laws and other women's questions.

All these data and analyses, in response to the main problem of this paper, indicate that SIS gathers the concepts of Islam and Feminism well. The subordinated status of women stem from the misinterpretation of Islamic sources by traditional and patriarchal ideology against women. In this respect the Islamic sources are to be reinterpreted and re-read.

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