

STUDY SESSION 2: MUSLIM WOMEN AND THE HEADSCARF with Ratna Osman and Masjaliza Hamzah

Date: 11 October 2012 (Thursday)

Time: 8 – 10pm

Venue: AWAM Centre

85 Jalan 21/1 Sea Park,
46300 Petaling Jaya.

Map: <http://www.awam.org.my/contact.html>

Ethnicity and religion are two important **identity markers** in Malaysia. While there is some awareness of the need to move beyond ethnic and religious lines, Malaysia remains, at various levels, segregated along such lines. This raises questions about our **future as a nation**.

In the course of AWAM's work, we have come to realise that there is a need to **understand** how ethnicity and religion is politicised in Malaysia and how this **impacts** society and women in particular. This is what we intend to do with AWAM's study sessions. **This study session** is the **fourth** one this year. It is part of a series of sessions that will cover economics, politics, religion and women.

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Tudung, headscarf, veil, hijab, kerudung, rusari, jilbab, niqab, selendang, foulard. Are these pieces of cloth one and the same? What do they represent? The significance behind the practice of wearing the Islamic headgear is as varied as the names and styles with which it is referred to in different cultures and societies. Drawing on encounters personal, social, sexual and political, and referencing relevant Islamic texts, this study session explores the meaning of the Muslim headscarf beyond the binary representations of oppression and piety. The presenters hope to chart the trajectory the tudung has taken from thousands of years ago to its modern manifestation, highlighting its significance within the Malaysian context.

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Masjaliza Hamzah has been the executive officer at the Centre for Independent Journalism (CIJ) Malaysia since March 2010. Prior to that, she managed the Research & Publications unit at Sisters in Islam (SIS), the biggest project being SIS's research on polygamy among Muslims in peninsular Malaysia. Masjaliza was trained as an industrial engineer but worked as a journalist for about 10 years at The Star. She was active in the union and with a handful of colleagues, organised themselves at a time when media activism was frowned upon in the newsroom. Masjaliza was part of the small group of journalists which drafted, circulated and handed over a petition asking for the repeal of the draconian Printing Presses and Publications Act in 1999.

Ratna Osman is the Executive Director of Sisters in Islam, a Muslim women's NGO committed to promoting an understanding of Islam that recognises the principles of Justice, Equality, Freedom and Dignity within a democratic nation state. Her work at Sisters in Islam includes creating public awareness and advocating for reform in laws and policies by promoting and developing a framework of women's rights in Islam, taking into consideration women's experiences and realities. She joined Sisters in Islam in 2009 as the Programme Manager for the Advocacy, Legal Services and Reform Unit, and was involved in the advocacy campaign together with Joint Action Group for Gender Equality (JAG) in pushing for the amendments of the Islamic Family Law Bill. Ratna has delivered talks on the works of Sisters in Islam at various international events like the Universities in Australia and New Zealand, at the Carter Centre in Atlanta, USA. She was also in Barcelona, Spain to receive the 2011 award from Casa Asia on behalf of Sisters in Islam in recognition of their work advocating for the rights of Muslim women.

To register: Send the following information to Wei San at advocacy-programs@awam.org.my by **9 October 2012:**

1. **Name:**
2. **Email address:**
3. **Telephone number:**
4. I would like to attend the study session on 11 October. **YES / NO**
5. I would like to attend the follow up chai + chat for this study session on 13 October (Sat) at 10am – 12pm **YES / NO**

Preparation: Readings will be circulated for the study session.



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