The ISIM programme ‘Rights at Home: An Approach to the Internalization of Human Rights in Family Relations in Islamic Communities’ held its second series of Sounding Board Meetings in Tanzania from 19 until 23 June 2002. The venue was in Dar es Salaam from 19 to 20 June, and on the island of Zanzibar from 22 to 23 June. The meetings were organized together with the NGO Sahiba Sisters Foundation in Dar es Salaam, a Muslim women’s network to promote a positive role of Muslim women in Tanzanian society.

Sahiba Sisters was represented at the Sounding Board Meetings by its executive director, Salma Maoulidi, and several young staff members. The two permanent members of the project team of Rights at Home, Abdulah Ali-Naim (Emory University, Atlanta, and Visiting Professor ISIM) and Laila al-Zwaini (Programme Coordinator), were also present and accompanied by Farish Noor, a young Malaysian scholar and fervent human rights activist, at the time also an ISIM Visiting Fellow. Sahiba Sisters meetings were co-organized by Saleh Mreh Salim from Mreh Tours and Safaris. Involving an organization of this particular kind draws attention to the lack of connections between the women’s organizations on the mainland and on Zanzibar, which in its turn is dictated by the still current political distance between the two for separate territories, an issue that was to come up repeatedly during the discussions.

The concept of the meetings, similar to the first Sounding Board Meetings in Yemen (see ISIM Newsletter 10, p. 4), was to bring together representatives from different religious, gender, and professional and personal backgrounds, such as human rights activists, scholars, ulama, social welfare officers, teachers, lawyers, children’s rights advocates, and others in order to discuss themes related to ‘Rights at Home’ from different perspectives, and jointly explore strategies and activities to promote autonomy for women and social responsibility, both on the part of the state and of social organizations. The sessions were moderated by Steve Austen (cultural entrepreneur, publicist, and consultant).

The conclusion meeting of the series was held on Monday, 27 January 2003. A report of these five meetings will be published in ISIM Newsletter 12.

Rights at Home
Tanzania Sounding Boards

The First World Congress for Middle East Studies (WOCMES) took place in Mainz (Germany) from 8 to 13 September 2002. The conference was held jointly by the European Association for Middle East Studies (EAREMS), the Association Française pour l’Etude du Monde Arabe et Musulman (AFEMAM), the British Society for Middle East Studies (BRISMES), the German Middle East Studies Association (DAVOS), and the Italian Società per gli Studi sul Medio Oriente (SISAMO). The ISIM co-organized two panels at WOCMES. Annelies Moors (ISIM) and Blanche Destremau (CNRS/IEDÉS – Université Paris I) organized a panel on ‘Migrant Domestic Workers to/in/from the Middle East’. This panel presented the ISIM research project on ‘Cultural Politics of Migrant Domestic Labour’ to an audience working on the Middle East, and engaged in discussion with researchers recently working on migrant domestic labour. Apart from an outline of the project by Moors, Destremau discussed the emergence of a domestic labour market in Yemen, Amira Ahmed (American University, Cairo) presented her research on domestic work as a survival strategy amongst refugee women in Cairo, and Joyce Borkholder (The Protection Project, Johns Hopkins University) together with Mohamed Matar spoke on domestic service as a form of trafficking of persons in the Middle East. The session launched a network on migrant domestic labour in the Middle East. Those interested in joining this network under construction may contact Annelies Moors (moors@pscow.uva.nl).

In cooperation with Amr Hamzawy (Free University of Berlin) and Roel Meier (International Institute for Social History, IISH), Dick Douwes (ISIM) organized the panel ‘Taking Islamist Debates and Discourses Seriously: New Avenues in Research and Collection’. This panel aimed to broaden the scope of critical discussion on contemporary discursive and programmatic changes in the Islamist spectrum. It also introduced a new joint initiative of Egyptian and European research centres aimed at collecting and analysing contemporary publications (including pamphlets, grey literature, tapes, and websites) of Islamist movements with respect to controversies on: democracy and civil society, implementation of the sharia, issues of social welfare, and authenticity and cultural identity. Amr Hamzawy introduced the initiative. The initiative included papers by Gamal Sultan (al-Minar al-Jadide), ‘Crisis and Self-Critique in Egypt’s Islamist Movements’, Dina al-Khawaga ( Cairo University), ‘New Spaces, New Languages: The Islamist Discourse on the TV-Channel Al-Jazeera’; and Roel Meier (IISH), ‘The Role of IISH in Collecting and Preserving the Heritage of Islamic Movements’. Karin van Nieuwkerk (ISIM post-doctoral fellow) presented a paper on ‘Female Converts to Islam: A Comparison of Online and Offline Conversion Narratives’ in the panel ‘Women and Modernity’.

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