

IFE-EFI

Initiative Féministe Européenne pour une autre Europe
European Feminist Initiative for another Europa
Iniciativa Feminista Europea para otra Europa
Feministyczna Inicjatywa Europejska dla innej Europy
Europäische Feministische Initiative für eine andere Europa
Europska Feministička Inicijativa za drukciju Europu
Iniziativa Feminista Europea per un' altra Europa
Europeiskt Feministiskt Initiativ för ett annat Europa
Iniciativa Féminista Européa para uma outra Europa
Európai Feminista Kezdeményezés

ife@efi-europa.org

President Obama and Cultural Relativism: A Fatal Bargain

For many years European Feminist Initiative (IFE-EFI) has been denouncing the intrusion of religions in the public sphere. For many years IFE-EFI has been striving to disclose and uncover the link between patriarchal politics of fundamentalist regimes, whether based on religion or on dominant culture, and the more subtle patriarchy of western democracies.

The women from the Middle East to Europe, from Africa to Maghreb, from Asia to America are fighting against sexist laws, attitudes and behaviors, against social, political, economical and cultural inequalities they are subjected to. They aspire to live in countries where freedom of conscience is not forbidden. They fight for secularism, for egalitarian civil laws and for separation of state and religion. They want to accede to education, work, health, culture.

Women are the first victims of the rules of the capitalist system that crushes them. They are the first victims of political systems governed by laws they have not voted for, as women are considered under-citizens.

Thousands of women all over the world are fighting not to wear the veil. Thousands of them have been killed, raped, hanged because they had refused to wear it.

Nevertheless on June 4th 2009 in Cairo Ms Clinton shows a friendly attitude to fundamentalists, insulting the memory of those women by covering her head. Mr Obama in his speech refers to the "right" of women to wear the veil, presenting it as a choice and consciously or not ignoring the fact of who makes the law and who bears it. To consider the veil as a sign of freedom of expression is to comfortably omit to mention what it is for millions of other women: a sign of submission, of inequality, an attack to their individual freedom.

In European Feminist Initiative we have always denounced the trap idea of "choice" which aims to make women responsible for their oppression or for the discriminations they are the victims of: choice to work part-time, choice to stay at home to raise the children, choice to emigrate, choice to prostitute, to name some.

Shouldn't we rather raise the question differently and also ask to respect the rights for women not to wear veil and their rights to be full citizens independently of their ethnic community or religious belonging?

To jeopardize the rights of women in the name of cultural relativism and respect of « traditions » and "cultures" is also a choice: A choice that more and more political leaders comfortably make today.

The American ultra liberalism ignores any right whatever when one's economic interests are at stake in the Middle East countries, Saudi Arabia, Gulf countries. To sell out fundamental rights of women to get the opening of new markets for American products in so called "Muslim" countries! - *What a fatal bargain!*

The choice of women is to have full rights and not only human rights decided and granted by men.

8th of june 2009