

"THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD IN SUDAN: FROM REFORMS TO RADICALISM"

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A Brief History:

The Muslim Brothers were an Egyptian Movement started originally by Hasan al-Banna in Isma'iliyya in 1928. It spread rather rapidly especially among the lower middle class and gradually became a political movement, though without openly founding a political party. Its involvement in the Arab-Israeli war of 1948 was one of the first open manifestations of this involvement. In the 1940s it also moved into the terrorist sphere like the burning of Cairo, several political assassinations, which led to the assassination of al-Banna himself in 1949. It was in the 1940s that Sudanese students studying in Cairo started their own branch of the Muslim Brothers. Jammal al-Din al-Sanhuri and al-Şadiq `Abdallah `Abd al-Majid were among its earliest propagators and in 1946 they were sent by the Egyptian movement to recruit members in the Sudan. They succeeded in setting up branches in several small towns in 1947/49 but were stopped from acting openly unless they declared their independence from the Egyptian Brothers, who were at the time illegal. Another early recruit was al-Şa'im Muḥammad Ibrahim, a former teacher at Ḥantub secondary school, who founded the Islamic Liberation Movement (ILM; ḥarakat al-taḥrīr al-Islami), at Gordon College in 1947, in order to combat communism. Its leaders, Babikr Karar and Muḥammad Yusuf, called for the establishment of a **Socialist Islamic state**.

Early adherents came primarily from the rural areas of the northern Sudan and were deeply committed to Sufi Islam and opposed to Communism. The ILM enabled them to adopt a modern Islamic ideology without cutting their ties with their families who were mostly

adherents of the *Khatmiyya* Sufi order. This dual loyalty did not disturb the Khatmiyya since it did not regard the Muslim Brothers as political rivals. The Sudanese Muslim Brothers were officially founded at the *`Id* Conference, on 21 August 1954, two years after the Free Officers Revolution in Egypt.

Al-Rashid al-Ṭahir, one of the Brothers' most prominent student leaders, later became the movement's muraqib al-`am (general supervisor). A politician and a lawyer, alṬahir established close relations with the Free Officers, especially with Ṣalah Salim their representative in the Sudan, and supported the Egyptian-Sudanese pro-unionist camp. This changed following Nasser's assassination attempt, in October 1954, when Egypt turned against its own Muslim Brothers, accusing them of the assassination attempt. **The Sudanese Brothers therefore forsook union with Egypt and joined forces with the Ansar-Umma bloc, advocating the Sudan's independence.**

After the 1958 military takeover, led by Gen. Ibrahim `Abbud, the army's chief of staff, the Muslim Brothers were allowed at first to continue their activities, as a religious movement, while all political parties were banned. However, on 9 November 1959, al-Ṭahir plotted to overthrow the regime with an illegal cell within the army, composed of Muslim Brothers, Communists and others. The plotters were arrested and the Muslim Brothers lost their cadres in the army as well as their freedom to act.

The next important stage in their history started in 1964 when Ḥasan al-Turabi and several leading Brothers returned from their studies abroad. Al-Turabi, who had joined the Brothers while an undergraduate at Khartoum University College, in 1954, had completed his post-graduate studies in London and Paris and returned to Sudan with a PhD in Constitutional Law and an appointment in the School of Law at Khartoum University. There he emerged as the

most effective spokesman of the Brothers at university and started to propagate for a peaceful settlement in the South. Most of the mass demonstrations of students and sympathizers in October 1964, which ultimately led to the civilian revolution and the downfall of Gen. `Abbud, were led by the Muslim Brothers in the University. But compared to the Communists they suffered from certain disadvantages within the intelligentsia and the professionals where they lacked support. They therefore founded the Islamic Charter Front (ICF), in October 1964, with al-Turabi as Secretary General. Their reasons for founding the ICF were the following: first, realizing that they were bound to remain a small elitist group, a front organization advocating an Islamic constitution, was likely to gain support among Şufis and Ansar alike; secondly, al-Turabi was a pragmatist whose prime concern was political rather than ideological. Hence the purist (Fundamentalist) tendencies of the older Muslim Brothers were of little concern to him. The ICF provided an ideal platform for this type of dynamic leadership. In the years 1965-68 the ICF cooperated with al-Şadiq al-Mahdi's wing of the Umma party in its anti-Communist drive and in promoting an Islamic constitution. The battle was waged first on university campuses, contesting student elections against the Communists. But campus politics provided the launching pad for broader political action, when the ICF allied with the Ansar, the Khatmiyya and others succeeded in having the Communist Party of the Sudan outlawed in 1965. The ICF also succeeded to formulate an Islamic constitution, in alliance with the Ansar, which was not implemented due to the May 1969 military coup, led by Col. Ja'far al-Numayri [Nimeiri] and his communist allies. Following the coup some of the Brothers' leaders, including al-Turabi, were at first arrested. Others escaped to Aba Island where some lost their lives in the uprising of the Ansar, in March 1970, while a few made their way to Egypt or other countries. `Uthman Khalid represented the Muslim Brothers as

Secretary General of the National Front (NF) of Opposition Parties, founded in London in 1970 under the leadership of the DUP and the Umma parties. Al-Turabi, who was not exiled, met President Nimeiri following the abortive pro-communist coup of July 1971 and asked for permission to resume the Brothers' activities. In 1972 their new organization on campus: the Students Unity Front, succeeded to gain control of Khartoum University Students' Union.

While the NF, including some of the Brothers' leaders, continued to advocate armed struggle from their refuge in exile, the majority of the Brothers, led by al-Turabi, advocated pragmatism, leading to cooperation with Nimeiri, instead. He concentrated his efforts on restructuring it in such a manner that the old guard of Brothers lost whatever influence they still had while his followers, who had joined in the 1960s, were moved to top positions. Turabi and those Brothers who remained in Sudan were thus well prepared for Nimeiri's move towards an "Islamic path" in the mid-1970s. Lack of democracy did not trouble al-Turabi and his colleagues since they realized that they could not rely on the traditionalist parties, the Umma and DUP, in their fight for an Islamic State. Cooperation with Numayri seemed reasonable since the latter was seeking their support, influenced by President Anwar al-Sadat's accommodation with the Egyptian Brothers, in the early 1970s. The Sudanese Brothers founded the National Islamic Front (NIF), following the failure of the anti-Numayri coup, led by the Ansar in July 1976. The appointment of Rashid alṬahir, the one-time leader of the Muslim Brothers, as deputy president and prime minister in that year was also an indication of change. AlṬahir, though no longer a member, was generally identified as such by the population. Once National Reconciliation became official policy in July 1977, the Brothers were well prepared and grasped whatever positions the government offered.

Hasan al-Turabi himself was appointed Attorney General, in 1979, while many of his

colleagues accepted positions in the judiciary, the educational and financial systems and in the Sudan Socialist Union (SSU). The NIF also succeeded to infiltrate into the Ansar dominated western regions, helped by Muslim Brothers who had become teachers in Kordofan and Darfur. A noteworthy outcome of their close collaboration with Nimeiri was their better organization and finances, which partly explains their success in the 1986 elections, in which the NIF came in a close third, after the Umma and the DUP. The NIF's financial supremacy can be attributed to the fact that since the early 1970s it gained control of the Islamic banking system, first through its connections in Saudi Arabia, and later through collaboration with Nimeiri. The establishment of the Faysal Islamic bank, in 1978, enabled the Muslim Brothers to infiltrate the new system as employees and investors and gain access to credits and to a share in profits. The bank also opened the doors for the economic and social advancement of the movement's young adherents and enabled the NIF to establish international financial contacts, primarily in the Arabian Peninsula.

However, one of the most ingenious methods to finance NIF political activities and enhance their standing especially in the outlying regions where they had no support. For that they needed money in order to gain popularity within the Sudanese population. Their manipulative exploitation of Sudanese migrant workers in the Arab oil-producing countries, headed by Saudi Arabia, was their method of achieving this. Following the Nimeiri coup and especially his implementation of the Shari'a laws in 1973, the numbers of migrant workers *{mughtaribin}* from Sudan increased by leaps and bounds, so much so that in 1985, the year of Nimeiri's deposal, about 2/3 of the professional and skilled Sudanese workers were employed outside the Sudan. They sought ways of smuggling their salaries back into Sudan, to help their families, without being taxed. The NIF, with whom many of them had sympathized already in

Sudan, now offered them an easy solution; it took their money and, after deducting their percentage, gave it to their families in Sudan. The NIF thereby tied the *Mughtaribin* to its political-religious agenda, gained the support of their families in Sudan, and financed its own *da'wa* within the army, where it established secret cells of supporters. It was thus well prepared both for the 1986 general elections and for the June 1989 Islamist-Military coup. Following the June 1989 coup the NIF enhanced its domination of the banks, the building industry, transport, and the media. Since roughly 90% of the banks' income was invested in import-export ventures, the NIF has succeeded to dominate that field at the expense of Khatmiyya supporters who had controlled it in the past. The appointment of `Abd al-Rahim Hamid, a prominent NIF member, as minister of finance and economy, leaves little doubt as to the NIF's overwhelming dominance of the state's chief financial institutions. Another reason for the NIF's success in the 1986 elections was its supremacy in the Graduates' constituencies. Graduates living abroad were allowed, for the first time, to vote for any constituency they selected. The NIF exploited this new departure by instructing its supporters to vote en-block for candidates in marginal seats, capturing 23 out of 28 Graduates' seats. However, this victory also emphasized an inherent weakness of the NIF. Its main strength, even at this stage, was among university students and graduates. Since the June 1989 fundamentalist coup, the NIF strengthened its hold over all institutes of learning even further. Dr. Ibrahim Ahmad `Umar, an NIF member, became minister of higher education. He dismissed the university's president and all its deans and re-organized higher learning in the five public and private universities, doubling the number of students. This enabled NIF members, who were mostly graduates, to benefit from the increased opportunities of employment which included senior posts in the academia as well as diplomatic, economic and political positions abroad.

THE MUSLIM BROTHERS AND THE ARMY.

The Muslim Brothers first attempted to infiltrate into the Military College as early as 1955, helped by Abu Makarim 'Abd Hayy, an Egyptian officer who had commanded the Muslim Brothers' Special Apparatus and had escaped to Sudan following the attempt on Nasser's life in October 1954. Next came the abortive coup of 9 November 1959, initiated by Rashid al-Tahir to overthrow the military regime of Ibrahim Abbud, with the participation of both Muslim Brothers and other supporters within the army, which clearly indicated their future intentions. The next stage started in the early 1970s when young Sudanese Brothers, serving in Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Libya, were trained by Egyptian officers, commanded by Salah Hasan, a leading Egyptian Muslim Brother. The NIF's penetration into the army started in earnest in 1977, following national reconciliation, when many young Muslim Brothers joined the army. Its members were put in charge of courses in "Islamic ideology and instruction" [*da'wa*] for senior army officers, thus enabling them to infiltrate into the officers' corps. Four members of the military council which ruled the Sudan since the June 1989 coup, including its leader President `Umar Ḥasan al-Bashir, attended these courses. Following Nimeiri's deposal the NIF succeeded to strengthen its support within the army even further; it openly supported the army's demands for better pay and equipment, while the Umma and the DUP remained hesitant. The post-1989 regime is an indication that the NIF's infiltration into the army has paid the expected dividends.

The Islamist Revolution was not a popular uprising, as in Iran, but a military coup brought about by al-Turabi and his supporters in the NIF, with the military might of a group of army officers and men, led by Omar Hasan al-Bashir. Al-Turabi, along with the leaders of other

political parties was imprisoned in Kobar, where he received special treatment and continued to help his colleagues in the government to conduct the affairs of state. Bashir's move against the Sudanese Bar Association undertaken with al-Turabi's full consent, was to emasculate it and appoint instead fellow-Islamists, headed by Jalal `Ali Lutfi. Under Lutfi the Special Courts Act, was inaugurated and 75 new assistant magistrates, with sweeping powers were appointed to supervise the new courts and to impose on Sudan an Islamist judicial system embracing all civil and criminal courts. `Lutfi and Turabi believed that justice must be Islamic and that the legal system for the whole of the Sudan, Muslim and non-Muslim, should therefore be Islamic.' In November 1989, while still in his cell at Kobar prison, Turabi `played an influential role in the creation of the International Organization for Muslim Women, thereby enforcing his views on women's equality in Islam. [See below]

In 1991 al-Turabi organized and headed the Popular Arab and Islamic Congress (PAIC), which he stated would coordinate all anti-imperialist movements of the Muslim world and guide them on the route towards Islamic revolution. The first congress was convened in Khartoum which had the only international airport through which all Arabs were free to enter without visas, (this was abolished in 1995). After the first Gulf War Sudan became a centre for extremist anti-establishment Muslim leaders who viewed the Arab League and Saudi Arabia, who had cooperated with the west during that war, as having betrayed the Arab-Islamic cause. In Khartoum this congress was hailed as the most significant event since the abolishment of the Caliphate, whilst al-Turabi viewed it as the intellectual Islamist response to the betrayal of Islam by the Arab League and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), who acted purely out of greed and self-interest. On 25-28 April 1991, over 200 Islamist leaders from 45 states gathered in Khartoum and planned their next move. They included many who later

became known as *al-Qaeda* activists, emanating from Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Philippines and Mindanao and of course Palestine, with Yassir Arafat playing a major role. *Hamas*, at the time, had already opened its office in Khartoum which became a safe-haven for the movement and prompted Arafat to convince the gathered Islamists that Khartoum would become the springboard for the liberation of Jerusalem. In fact the founding of the PAIC became the founding stone for turning Sudan into an international terrorist centre, with training camps for Islamists from all over the Muslim world. Thus the Pakistani Islamist Shaykh Mubarak Ali Shah Jilani, set up a training camp in Sudan for some 3000 Pakistani terrorist trainees, whilst 300 Sudanese trainees later appeared in the ranks of the militant *Hizb al-Mujahiddin* in Kashmir.

Osama Bin Laden had met Turabi on several occasions in late 1989, while al-Turabi was still in Kobar prison, and had decided on relocating al-Qaeda's headquarters from Afghanistan, where they had fought the Soviets, to the Sudan now under Islamist rule. One of its first endeavors in Sudan was the building of Port Sudan's new airport, which enabled al-Qaeda to transport arms to the mujahiddin in Yemen and Somali. Furthermore, Bin Laden married Turabi's niece and al-Turabi arranged for Bin Laden to import construction equipment and vehicles free of duty. Al-Qaeda's leadership was free to move in and out of Sudan and was hosted in Bin Laden's guest house. Once established in the Sudan they received a few of hundred empty Sudanese passports from the government and al-Qaeda members who so desired obtained Sudanese citizenship without going through any procedures. All Bin Laden's business in Sudan was conducted through the Islamic banks and he soon became a big land-owner, as a result of his business endeavors. On his farm, south of Khartoum on the Blue Nile, members of al-Qaeda, as well as of many other Muslim extremist organizations, including

Egypt's *Jama'at Islamiyya* and Palestinian *Hamas*, received military training. Bin Laden also imported building equipment from Afghanistan to construct 23 camps for Afghani *mujahiddin*, who moved to Sudan after their anti-Soviet *jihad* ended. Bin Laden also supported the PDF financially and paid for the training of NIF students. Throughout their stay in Sudan the Bin Laden outfit supported al-Turabi and the NIF and helped them achieve their ambitions, Among his more important connections were al-Turabi's ties with the Islamist regime in Iran as well as with the PLO and the Hamas. By then there was a growing rift within Sudan intelligence service, between the military and the NIF, with the army regaining control of the service, despite NIF aggravation. In fact President Bashir was opposed to doing business with Bin Laden and *al-Qaeda* and ordered his officers stop it. It was at that time, in 1995, that street demonstrators in Khartoum demanded 'Prison for al-Turabi', for the first time since the 1989 coup. In September 1995, an assassination attempt on President Qaddafi of Libya took place, which had many similarities with the attempt made earlier on President Mubarak and thus widened the gap between Qaddafi and the Islamists both at home and in the Sudan. In fact he ordered his air force to bombard Islamist training camps on his border with Egypt, in July 1996, with President Mubarak's full blessing. According to a Reuters report, the outcome of Turabi's Islamist undertakings, was that Sudan's isolation increased to such an extent that no other country in the great Nile basin and the Horn of Africa, has ever been encircled like Sudan is today, apart from South Africa. In 2000 Hasan al-Turabi was again in prison and the Turabi era seemed to have come to an end. Whether or not it was the final exit of this brilliant-devious leader from the political-ideological arena of militant Islam remains to be seen.

THE SUDANESE MUSLIM BROTHERS AND SOUTH SUDAN:

The Muslim Brothers policy towards the southern question changed in the 1970s. Instead of

the liberal attitude of al-Turabi and his followers in 1964/65, some now advocated partition claiming that as long as the Sudan remained united an Islamic State would be impossible. The majority continued to insist on an Islamic State within a united Sudan, which would become the bastion for Islam in Africa. The NIF founded the African Islamic Center to undertake its missionary work in the South and in 1982 the Association of Southern Muslims was set up to establish Islamic schools and villages in the South. It was funded by Kuwait and the Gulf Emirates and boosted by the mass influx of Muslim refugees from Uganda, who fled following Idi Amin's deposal in 1979. The close relations between the NIF and southern Muslims helped the party in the 1986 elections in the South and explains the importance of this issue in the NIF's election campaign. In January 1987 the NIF published its National Charter in which it elaborated on its special relation with the South and explained its program of Islamizing it. Turabi proposed a policy in which the Muslim Brothers would play the role of the Islamic vanguard in the South with the traditionalists [Sufis] forced to follow suit. A major concession was the NIF's acceptance of the right of all citizens, regardless of religion, to hold any public office. It promised freedom of conscience and equality before the law, stating that in a federal state, non-Muslim regions would be allowed to opt out of the Islamic legal system, based on Shari`a. However, the NIF consistently rejected any compromise entailing secularism and the June 1989 coup can be partly attributed to the NIF's adamant opposition to accommodate the SPLM.

RELATIONS WITH MUSLIM BROTHERS IN EGYPT AND OTHER PARTIES.

The Sudanese Muslim Brothers remained independent from their Egyptian namesakes and

offered a unique Sudanese version of the Brothers' ideology. They compared their relationship to that between the Sudanese Ashiqqa' and the Egyptian Wafd, in the 1940s, both propagated the Unity of the Nile Valley, but under their own separate identities. An additional reason for their insistence on their own identity was their fear that a united front with the Egyptian Brothers would automatically exclude the anti-Egyptian Ansar, their most cherished Sudanese allies. The Brothers' attempt to exploit front organizations which were less suspect to the Sudanese who disliked extremism, was regarded as a way to reach broader circles especially among Khatmiyya supporters, and is reminiscent of communist practices. Similarly, the Brothers attempted to infiltrate into other parties in order to gain a foothold from within. Rashid al-Ṭahir attempted to become an Umma candidate in the 1957 elections, while Muddathir `Abd al-Raḥim and `Uthman Jaddallah infiltrated into the editorial board of al-Jihad, the Khatmiyya newspaper. The internal rift within the movement, between those declaring their affinity with the Egyptian Brothers and those opposing it, was never really healed. Some of the older leaders, such as al-Ṣadiq `Abd al-Majid and Ja`far Shaykh Idris, continued to attack Turabi's strategy from their exile in the Gulf States throughout the Numayri years. They were closely associated with the Egyptian Muslim Brothers and following the release from prison of Hasan al- Hidaybi, the leader of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt in 1973, they suggested to join the world organization of Muslim Brothers under his leadership. Politically they criticized Turabi's un-Islamic views with regard to the role of women in society and censured his intimacy with Nimeiri and his regime. Their suggestions were defeated in the shura council and though `Abd al-Majid was offered the deputy leadership, upon his return to the Sudan in the late 1970's, he declined and formed an independent movement of Muslim Brothers which challenged the NIF unsuccessfully in the

1986 elections.

THE IDEOLOGY OF THE BROTHERS:

The Islamic Constitution proposed by the Muslim Brothers in 1956 sought the establishment of an Islamic Republic, under a Muslim head of state, with a parliamentary democracy based on Islamic law and legislating in accordance with the shari'a. Muslims would be able to shape their lives in accordance with the dictates of their religion and to uproot social evils and corruption. Discrimination on the basis of race or religion would be forbidden and non-Muslim citizens would enjoy all rights granted under Muslim law. A more pragmatic approach became noticeable following the October 1964 revolution and al-Turabi's rise to prominence. The newly formulated Islamic Charter proposed a presidential, rather than a parliamentary system, for the sake of greater stability, and put greater emphasis on minorities' and regional rights. It undertook a complete revision of personal law in order to grant equal rights to women. The religion of the head of state was not mentioned in the Charter, a clear gesture to non-Muslims. The Charter proclaimed that even though all Muslims constituted one community, a Muslim state should be set up which would encompass only Sudanese and no Muslims outside Sudan should be included in it. Resident non-Muslims, on the other hand, would be citizens with equal standing, guaranteed freedom of religion, decentralization and public rights. Al-Turabi advocated a gradual non-violent approach based on education and opposed the implementation of the hudud at this stage claiming that they should only be applied in an ideal Muslim society. The fact that the NIF later supported the hudud, when imposed in September 1983 by Nimeiri, was justified on the ground that the hudud were part of an educational process whereby the state hoped to improve the morals of its citizens. The NIF continued to

support the implementation of these laws both after Numayri's deposal and following the military coup of June 1989. Dr. al-Mikashfī Ṭaha al-Kabbashi, a leading NIF jurist, was a member of the committee assigned to revise the laws in accordance with the Shari`ah and headed the Supreme Court of Appeal in Khartoum since 1984. In his book: "The implementation of the shari`a in the Sudan between truthfulness and falsehood", the author fully justified the implementation of these Islamic laws, including the execution of Maḥmud Muḥammad Ṭaha for apostasy, in January 1985, in which he was personally involved in his capacity as President of the Court of Appeal. For Kabbashi and others in the NIF there was never any doubt as to the Sudan's Islamic identity which implied the *jahili* status of all non-Muslims. The Sudan's Islamic army would fight the enemies of Islam, "Communists, Crusaders, Zionists, Free Masons" or their Sudanese supporters, under the banner of Islam. However, regions in which non-Muslims constituted the majority would be allowed to opt out of the Islamic legal system provided the Sudan became a federation.

The Muslim Brothers and Democracy, as formulated by al-Turabi, was based both on pragmatic and ideological considerations. Since the establishment of an Islamic state was the primary aim, the ways of achieving it became secondary. Ideologically, there were several differences between western democracy and the Islamic Shura. First, the West separates democracy from religion, which contradicts the shura. Secondly, the shura provides a system whereby the life of all believers is fully coordinated, whereas western democracy is limited to politics. Thirdly, shura grants democratic rights only in so far that these are in full agreement with Shari`a, whereas in western democracy human rights are unlimited by religious considerations. Fourthly, western democracy distinguishes between political passions and

human morals, in Islam the two are inseparable. Finally, the shura provides greater guarantees for the unity of the believers than western democracy. The shura accordingly can become a popular process which unlike secular democracy is based on the sovereignty of God and Islamic morality and free from secular distortions and manipulations. Shura can be applied by any group of people and is not limited by constitutional considerations. Military regimes can therefore apply al-shura as well as elected parliaments, as long as they fully implement Shari`a.

Renewal and Revival (tajdid), were among al-Turabi's most cherished ideas, claiming that Islam had to be rethought on a permanent basis and was open to radical change by the Muslim community, not necessarily by learned reformers. There were eternal principles in Islam, but fiqh, the classical exposition of Islamic law inherited from earlier generations of Muslims, was a mere human endeavor which may be re-evaluated in accordance with present requirements. For many generations fuqaha' had neglected to rethink and redefine the role of the state and the role of the public in the formulation of Islamic law. Modern fiqh should concentrate on social, rather than individual issues, since the former were hardly tackled in a largely individualistic society. The reopening of the doors of ijtihad was advocated by the Muslim Brothers. With very few exceptions, reflecting eternal components of divinity, everything was open to review and re-interpretation. The methodology suggested by al-Turabi was based on his formulation of tawhid, which involved the union of the eternal divine commands with changing conditions of human life and a demand for harmony between reason and revelation. Tawhid should therefore lead to a single comprehensive methodology of reinterpretation, embracing all human knowledge: religious, natural and social, absorbed through the filter of Islamic knowledge.

Women's rights under Islam are one of the central issues in the ideology of the Sudanese Muslim Brothers. This was true also about other Islamic movements throughout the world, however, al-Turabi's contribution to this issue is unique. In his publication *al-mar'a fi ta'alim al-Islam* (1993) he states that in Islam there is complete equality between male and female. Thus women are free to choose their partners in life, have the right to own property and to hold almost any public position. He admits that these principles were not implemented in Islam since early times due to pre-Islamic (*Jahili*) habits that prevailed in society. The early Shari`a judges were the ones who misinterpreted these rules and as result women in Islam had been discriminated against. Therefore, according to al-Turabi women should be allowed to participate in a mixed (*muhallata*) society because the Shari'a does not forbid their socializing with men. Consequently women are allowed by Islamic rules to move freely out of their homes. He also challenges the wearing of *hijab* as obligatory and states that in the Holy Qur'an only the wives of the Prophet Muhammad were obliged to wear it. As for public office both in government (including as judges), municipalities, or the army, al-Turabi proposed sweeping reforms to enable women to play central role in all these positions. However, it is interesting to note that he did not challenge the Shari`a on issues like divorce, inheritance, or other matters of personal status, specified in the Shari'a.

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University of Haifa, 2008–03–21