



BRIEFINGS - 3/31/2008

## ***Al-Azhar* Conservative Pronouncements: No to the Inheritance of Christian/Jewish Wife from her Muslim Husband – No to the Equality of Testimony Between a Man and a Woman – No to the Restricting the Number of Wives** [March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2008]



The Deputy Speaker of the Egyptian parliament, *Zeinab Radwan*, had indicated earlier this year that a Christian or Jewish women (referred to in Islam as women of the book) should be entitled to inherit from her Muslim husband. Today, the Council of Islamic Research, considered the highest authority at *Al-Azhar*, unanimously rejected that notion.<sup>1</sup>



As expected, the Council's decision was applauded by most fundamentalists and condemned by liberals. At the same time, the Council rejected the concept of equating the testimony of a man and a woman as contrary to the *Shari'a*, which states that testimony of a woman equals half the testimony of a man. [See [PI 524](#)] Some women's organizations in Egypt were equally dismayed at *Al-Azhar's* refusal to restrict the number of wives men are permitted to have, which presently stands at four. The efforts of these organizations to move jurisdiction over matters relating to marriage from the religious authorities to the courts likewise failed. There has been no reaction yet from the Deputy Speaker.

Source: <http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2008/03/31/47680.html> - 3/31/2008



## **Consternation Over *Gaddafi's* Remarks at Arab Summit** [March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2008]

The unimpressive Arab summit in Damascus, which took place over these past two days, reflected the considerable conflicts which exist among some of the member states. The boycott of the meeting by the Saudi King and the Egyptian president and the total absence of Lebanon exemplified the

extent of the disagreements. The highlight of the summit was the consternation caused by the comments of Libyan president *Mu'ammur al-Gaddafi*. *Gaddafi* referred to what he characterized as the almost non-existent economic and political relationship between Arab countries and stated that **“the only thing that unites us {Arabs} is an auditorium.”** He proceeded to add that **“the relationship between Syria and Iran is a thousand times better than between Syria and other Arab countries.”** What really irked members of the Gulf countries, however, was his unexpected inflammatory statement that **eighty percent of the Gulf Region's population was of Iranian origin**, and his call for a non-belligerent attitude towards Iran. Most of the other summit speeches were tame and non-substantive. As one participant said “There were no explosions and no resolutions.” Writing today in *Al-Hayat* newspaper, *Mahmud Al-Mubarak* sarcastically observed that there is no doubt that the famous saying, “the Arabs agree to disagree,” would not have seen the light of day but for the League of Arab States' lack of accomplishments throughout its sixty years of existence.

Source: [http://www.alhayat.com/arab\\_news/levant\\_news/03-2008/Item-20080330-010827e2-c0a8-10ed-017c-43244264fcfd/story.html](http://www.alhayat.com/arab_news/levant_news/03-2008/Item-20080330-010827e2-c0a8-10ed-017c-43244264fcfd/story.html)  
<http://www.alhayat.com/opinion/03-2008/Item-20080330-00ddb4c2-c0a8-10ed-017c-43243b2f3994/story.html> - 3/31/2008

<sup>1</sup> Under Islam a Christian or Jewish man cannot marry a Muslim woman.

## Intellectuals and Organizations Defend Two Writers against a Fatwa Calling for Their Heads [March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2008]

On March 23<sup>rd</sup>, [PI Online](#) reported on the *takfir fatwa* (an accusation of apostasy which condemns to death) issued by the prominent conservative cleric *Al-Barak* against two writers. ([See PI 548](#)). Today, a statement signed by approximately one hundred intellectuals and human rights organizations denounced the fatwa against the two writers, '*Abdallah Bajad and Yussif Abu Al-Khayl*. The signatories proclaimed: "We reject this kind of ideological slaughtering and distorted rhetoric, based upon the international laws governing human rights, the freedom of expression proclaimed in Article 19 of the Human Rights Charter...as we call on all international and regional organizations to assume their role in protecting the fundamental human right of the writer to write and the thinker to think without the threat of a sword on his or her neck." They asked that all governmental and civil institutions take a firm stand against actions such as the fatwa against the writers, which they consider a form of terrorism that tarnishes Islam.

Source: <http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2008/03/31/47683.html> - 3/31/2008

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