

## Combating “Honour” - based Violence Forum

### Respect and Remembrance Service for Banaz Mahmud

At 1.30pm on Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> June 2007, The Combating “Honour” - based Violence Forum (CHBF) met to pay their respects to Banaz Mahmoud Babakir Agha who was violently murdered by her father and uncle in January 2006 in a so-called “honour” killing. The special service held at Morden Assembly Hall was organised by the forum members to remember Banaz. The service also included a visit to her grave.

Over ten key women’s human rights and violence against women groups represented from the Kurdish, South Asian and Middle Eastern community as well Senior Officers from the Metropolitan Police and Crime Prosecution Service and representatives from Amnesty International gathered at the memorial service. All attending stood and observed one minute’s silence to show their condemnation of the murder of Banaz as well as remembering the countless other victims of so- called “honour” killings around the world.

Gona Saed the facilitator of CHVF chaired the service and invited participants to speak on behalf of their organisations.

Speakers included Nazir Afzal from CPS, Sawsan Salim from Kurdistan Refugee Women Organisation, Diana Nami from Iranian and Kurdish Women Rights Organisation, Heather Harvey from Amnesty International, Hannana Siddiqui from Southall Black Sisters, Dr. Aisha Gill from IMKAAN and Newham Asian Women Project, Steve Allen from the Metropolitan Police and Nadia Mahmud from The Middle East Centre for Women’s Rights.

Surma Hamid and Aisha also spoke about their personal experiences of surviving threats to their lives and their constant fear of being subjected to further crimes related to so-called “honour”.

Bekhal Mahmud, Banaz's sister also sent a poignant personal message to the service calling for more accessible services for potential victims of “honour” killings.

The service also received many messages from various women’s organisations including Rights of Women; Greater London Domestic Violence Project and individuals from the Kurdish community across the UK and Europe.

Participants all agreed that Banaz's untimely death had re-awakened all to hear the many voices of young girls and women who suffer like Banaz and other potential victims of these brutal unjustifiable crimes. Those attending also expressed the importance of committed partnership working across all agencies that included, training police officers on the nature of this form of violence against women and the need for investment in resources, as well as

making use of human rights instruments to help potential victims of “honour” killings.

A sample of readings and quotes from the day are provided below:

Nazir Afsal from the CPS said there is no justification for killing women because of "Honour", murder is a murder and there is absolutely no "Honour" in taking someone's life in this way.

Hannana Siddiqui from Southall Black Sisters highlighted the importance of making the voices of women from affected communities heard. She urged for more funding for the valuable work that women's organisations are doing.

Sawsan Salim said that many Kurdish women from Iraqi Kurdistan in this country are under the threat of deportation to Kurdistan because of the strict Immigration rules, should these women be returned, many of them will be under direct threat of "honour" killing

Diana Nammi stated that women organisations would like to see a full investigation in to the way that police handled Banaz's case from the very beginning so the lessons could be learned to help potential future victims.

Steve Allen spoke on behalf of the Metropolitan Police and commented that now was the time for the police to listen to women's organisations and to make a commitment to take measures to address the “honour” killings and work effectively to prevent more women becoming victims.

Dr Aisha Gill on behalf of Newham Asian Women's Project/Imkaan stated:

“As we remember Banaz today let us also remember all the other women around the world who are victims of patriarchal male violence. For the fate of many of these other women is not otherwise remembered and most often not even acknowledged as a statistic”. She also spoke of the need to name and shame perpetrators and the “importance of forging solutions in ending global impunity and the culture of inequality, discrimination and violence against women thus enabling greater justice for all women subjected to such horrific forms of violence”.

The memorial service was followed by a visit to Banaz's grave where over twenty mourners paid their respects and laid flowers.

Following are some photos of the service:



---

Combating Honour based Violence Forum

**For more information and/or to get involved please contact:**

**Gona Saed at the Middle East Centre for Women Rights  
3<sup>rd</sup> floor, 32-36a Rye Lane, Peckham, London SE15 5BS**

***Tel& Fax: 020 7639 1033***

[www.mecwr.org](http://www.mecwr.org)

[admin@mecwr.org](mailto:admin@mecwr.org)