

# WLUML Open Letter to the Centre for Constitutional Rights

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## **WLUML letter to CCR regarding decision to represent Anwar al-Awlaki's interests**

The Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUML) international solidarity network expresses concerns and reservations regarding the decision of the Centre for Constitutional Rights (CCR) and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) to represent the Yemen-based radical Anwar al-Awlaki's interests pro bono, in response to the US decision to authorise the targeted assassination of Awlaki.

WLUML supports the important work of the Centre for Constitutional Rights on torture and extraordinary rendition, and joins CCR in opposing the unilateral assassination authorisation, which is not a substitute for due legal process. In fact we would assert that all unilateral assassination authorisations, not merely those against American citizens, should similarly be challenged. Yet, we are equally concerned that the seriousness of the allegations against Awlaki not be underestimated during the constitutional challenge and any publicity regarding the challenge. So far, CCR has been quiet about who Awlaki is and what he is alleged to have done, describing him simply as a "Muslim cleric" or a "US citizen".

In this, WLUML echoes the concerns of Karima Bennouna, a law professor at Rutgers school of law, Newark, New Jersey, and a WLUML council member. Bennouna has gone public with her fears that the CCR and the ACLU are in danger of "sanitising" Awlaki to western audiences. Karima Bennouna, in a 19 November comment piece for the UK newspaper, *The Guardian*, explained that she appreciates that "CCR says it merely seeks to challenge US government policy, and opposes all killings of civilians".

Furthermore, five prominent Algerian non-governmental organisations have written an open letter to the CCR, in which they accuse CCR of betraying victims of non-state actors and Anwar al-Awlaki of being "an important promoter and organizer of crimes against humanity and a leader of Al Qaida in the Arabic Peninsula". While WLUML agrees that the court should be the proper forum to judge the acts of Awlaki, we do not want to lose sight of the concerns of the Algerians who wrote to CCR describing how Awlaki calls for "the creation of a global caliphate where the 'unbelievers' will be 'eliminated'" and through his *44 Ways to Support Jihad*, gives practical advice on preparing for jihad including how to obtain arms training, how to finance and support armed groups (which he calls "combatants of the faith" or "mujahideen") and inciting children to become jihadists.

WLUML would also like to call on human rights organisations to provide more support to victims of Muslim fundamentalist armed groups - many of whom are women targeted and 'punished' for their failure to conform to discriminatory laws and practices said to derive from Islam, and who are often betrayed by the lack of support given to them by human rights organisations. WLUML stands in solidarity with Karima Bennouna in her concern for these victims, "the vast majority of whom are Muslims or of Muslim heritage." (*Guardian*, 19 November)

Finally we would like to request human rights organisations to bear in mind that in their struggle to

extend due process and human rights protection to everyone, no alliance should be established or appear to be established with fundamentalists and fundamentalist groups. Fundamentalists who incite violence and terrorism should not be presented as defenders of human rights, given platforms to advocate for their cause or have their own abuses of human rights downplayed.

### **Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUML)**

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\* From WLUML, International Solidarity Network - Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUML).  
International Coordination Office:  
<http://www.wluml.org/node/6813>