

GRUPO DE ESTUDIOS ARABES (GEAR-DEFIHIS) – ILC

SEMINARIO

Islamic Feminism: A Contradiction in Terms? Challenging the Antinomic Discourse

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The image of Muslim women that has been spread out in Western countries is associated with the veil. The veil is perceived as the symbol of gender subordination by antonomasia. As reification of Islam itself, the veil has been turned into evidence of the incompatibility between gender equality and Islam. Many Western liberal feminists have strongly opposed to veil, which they perceive as a patriarchal tool of oppression of Muslim migrant women in Europe. The syllogism is: 1) Muslim women wear the veil, 2) the veil is an unquestioned patriarchal symbol of gender subordination, and 3) therefore Islam dictates the subordination of women. I believe this syllogism to be false. I will challenge here the theoretical basis leading to the dichotomy of West versus Islam that is grounded in the Western liberal feminist discourse. I will examine how this dichotomy has been posed during the last decade and how does Islamic feminism deal with gender equality in its own way. The goal is perplexing the core of feminism itself posing the question of whether the only path toward gender equality is the Western one.