

## KHORASANI, NUSHIN AHMADI (1967–)

Women's rights activist Nushin Ahmadi Khorasani has played an important role in Iran since the 1990s. She is a committed member of the One Million Signatures Campaign, the founding member of the Women's Cultural Centre, and she initiated the establishment of the first women's library in Iran. She is the author of numerous articles and books on women's rights issues, has translated a number of feminist books from English to Farsi, and is a member of the Iranian Journalist Union.

### PERSONAL HISTORY

Khorasani was born in 1967 in Tehran, Iran. She has a B.A. in English language and is a postgraduate women's studies student at the University of Tehran. As a student, she was involved in women's rights issues. From 1995 to 1998 she was active in the Women's Society against Environmental Degradation. In 1997 with her husband, Javad Mossavi Khorasani, she established Nashre Toosee (Development Publication). From 1996 to 2001 she was active in the Society for the Defense of the Rights of Children. This organization was established by SHIRIN EBADI, an Iranian lawyer and women's rights activist who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2003. Khorasani also worked with Shahla Lahiji, the first woman publisher and the director of Roshangaran (Illuminators) Women's Publications, and together they published feminist books. In 1999, Khorasani established the Women's Cultural Centre.

From 1998 to 2001, Khorasani worked as the editor in chief of *Jense Dovom* (The Second Sex), Iran's first feminist journal. She produced ten issues of this journal, representing secular feminism, and they had an impact even in small cities in Iran. In 2001, the publication of this journal was stopped by the conservatives who were in control of the judiciary and who were hostile to the reform movement associated with President MOHAMMAD KHATAMI's government. But Khorasani continued the publication of this journal in the form of a book, as the authorities more easily allowed the publication of books than journals. Since 2002 she decided to publish *Fasle Zanan* (The Season of Women), one of the several feminist journals published in Iran.

### INFLUENCES AND CONTRIBUTIONS

Khorasani's publishing work was influential in terms of introducing reform, especially among the religious modernists, and a popular ideology among the reformers who believe in the link between Islam and modernity. Equally important, she tried to create a space for women's issues within these publications. Women's rights activists in Iran and Iranian women's rights activists outside of Iran

## BIOGRAPHICAL HIGHLIGHTS

**Name:** Nushin Ahmadi Khorasani

**Birth:** 1967, Tehran, Iran

**Family:** Husband, Javad Mossavi Khorasani

**Nationality:** Iranian

**Education:** B.A., English language; University of Tehran, and postgraduate women's studies

### PERSONAL CHRONOLOGY:

- **1995–1998:** Active member of Women's Society against Environmental Degradation
- **1997:** Produces books at Toosee Publishing House
- **1999:** Founding member of Women's Cultural Centre
- **1996–2001:** Active member of the Society for the Defense of the Rights of Children
- **1998–2001:** Editor in chief of *Jense Dovom* feminist journal, produces ten issues
- **2002–present:** Editor of *Fasle Zanan* feminist journal
- **2003–2004:** Produces books at Roshangaran Women's Publishing House
- **2006–present:** Active member of One Million Signatures Campaign and associated Web sites: (<http://weforchange.net/>; <http://weforchange.net/english/>; <http://weforchange.net/spip.php?article12>; <http://weforchange.net/spip.php?article83>; <http://www.iftribune.com>; <http://www.herlandmag.info>)

wrote for her publications. Khorasani also produced an Iranian women's annual calendar in the form of a pocket history of Iranian women's rights activists. The authorities also stopped the publication of these calendars. However, the impact of her work contributed to the popularity of women's issues. As a result, in the early twenty-first century every Iranian newspaper has a page on women's issues.

In 1997, Khorasani and Shahla Lahiji initiated the celebration of 8 March, the International Women's Day. Today 8 March is officially recognized in Iran. Since 1997, every year many meetings and conferences are organized to celebrate this day. In 2002, Khorasani and her colleagues

at the Women's Cultural Centre turned the 8 March into a peace and antiwar event. In the same year they held a gathering in support of Palestinian people and launched a campaign against violence against women. They formed a coalition with other women's groups and took women's issues to ordinary people. Their aim is consciousness-raising by organizing seminars and conferences and performing advocacy work, pressuring the authorities for reform of laws in favor of women.

When Ebadi won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2003, this victory shed further light on women's movement in Iran globally as well as locally. Khorasani and her group around the Women's Cultural Centre declared 22 Khor-dad (in the Iranian calendar, this fell on 2 June in 2005) as the Iranian Women's Unity Day (Farsi: Rouze Ham-bastegi Zanane Iran) and demonstrated outside the Tehran University. In 2006 they established the One Million Signatures Campaign. In this campaign they challenge the unequal gender laws and regulations relating to marriage, divorce, custody of children, and *dieh* (blood money). They have the support of ordinary people, some members of the parliament, and a number of ayatollahs, notably, Ayatollah Fazel Maybodi, Ayatollah Yousef Sanei, and Ayatollah Ahmad Janati. This campaign has a number of Web sites that are visited by hundreds of thousands of women both inside and outside Iran.

#### THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE

In 2004, Khorasani attended the Fourth World Social Forum in Mumbai, India. In a recent interview with the author she argued that "two poles have been created in today's world; one is religious conservatism and the other American imperialism which are both against women. We are not going to be situated into these poles; we want to create our own pole. We believe that we can do it through the One Million Signatures Campaign because we are working with ordinary people and are raising the voices of ordinary women."

Prior to 8 March 2007, Khorasani was arrested alongside thirty-two other women activists who were later released on bail, awaiting their trials for possible several months of imprisonment. She argues "We are not against Islam. We want to change the unequal gender relations. Islam for me is equal to my mother and father. I cannot do without it, as I cannot do without my father and my mother. I believe reform is possible within Islam. In our campaign we have the support of students and trade unionists, in particular male students and trade unionists. When I was in jail, I told my jailers that my representatives are in your homes, your wife, your daughter, your son, they all support our campaign."

#### LEGACY

Khorasani will go down in history as an important Iranian women's rights activist.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

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*Elabeh Rostami Povey*

### KHOURI, RAMI (1948–)

Rami George Khouri is a prominent Palestinian American journalist whose background, both in the Middle East and the United States, has made him a popular and widely sought-after media commentator in the Arab world, the United States, and Europe.

#### PERSONAL HISTORY

Khouri was born on 22 October 1948, in New York City, to a family of Palestinian Arab Christians. He was born in the United States because his father, George Khouri—a journalist from Nazareth, mandatory Palestine—had traveled with his wife to New York in 1947 to cover the United Nations (UN) debates about the future of Palestine.

After the 1948 War, the new State of Israel refused to allow the Khouri family—or hundreds of thousands of other Palestinians made refugees by the war—to return. George Khouri stayed in New York and found a job working for the UN office of public information. After attending secondary school in Geneva, Switzerland, Rami Khouri earned his B.A. in political science and journalism at Syracuse University in the United States in 1970. In 1998, Khouri obtained an M.S. in mass communications at the S. I. Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University.

In 1971, Khouri began working as a reporter for the English-language newspaper the *Daily Star* in Beirut, Lebanon. From 1972 to 1973, he continued writing columns for the paper while working as managing editor of *Middle East Sketch* magazine. Following a year in the United States as program administrator for the Division of International Programs Abroad at Syracuse University, Khouri returned to Beirut to become managing editor of *Middle East Money* in Beirut from 1973 to 1974. He then moved to Amman, Jordan, where he served as editor-in-chief of Jordan's English-language daily, the *Jordan Times*, from 1975 to 1982 and again from 1987