Women in Islam

I *Islamic Feminism, the Veil, Politics, and Love*

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Imams

- Literally, source of guidance
- Shiism—successor to Muhammad (alayhi salaam)
- Often prayer leader
- Spiritual leader of a mosque
- Equivalent to pastor or rabbi
- Leads congregational salaat
- Gives khutbah
- Almost always male
Can women lead prayer?

To lead prayer:
- Be able to read Qur’an
- Know the Qur’an
- Know Muhammad’s (alayhi salaam) teachings
- Acceptance by congregation

- al-Shafi’i: Women can only lead other women
- Al-Tabari, Abu Thawr: Women can lead both sexes
- Ibn Majah: A woman may not lead a man
- Dr. Yusuf Qawadari: Woman can lead both sexes in own home
- Hanbali: Women can lead both sexes for tawareeh
Women in the Prophet’s Time

- **Umm Waraqa bint Abdallah** of the Ansar tribe
  - Led prayer for people of *Ahl-dariha* (home: residence, neighborhood, village)
  - People of Umm Waraqa’s *ahl-dariha* had own *mu’adhdhin*

- **Umm Salamah Hind bint Abi Umayya**
  - Led other women in *asr* prayer
  - Stood in middle of them

- **Ayesha bint Abu Bakr**
  - Led other women in obligatory prayer
  - Led women in prayer during Ramadan
  - Stood in middle of first row
Ghazāla al-Harūriyya

- Habib ibn-Yazīd al-Harūrī’s wife
- Harūriyya sect of Kharijite Islam
- Women can serve as Imam (Shi’a definition)
- Ghazāla served as general and prayer leader over men

http://ewintwethepeople.files.wordpress.com/2011/04/subhiyya.jpg
Nakah and Khutbah

- **Under Shariah**
  - Women have full legal agency
    - Can initiate own marriages
    - Can act as agents for others to marry
    - Can oversee marriages of others
  - Several recent instances of women giving *khutbah*
    - Sometimes, also lead prayer
Modern Perspectives

- Dr. Khaled Abou El Fadl
  - Women can teach
  - Women can lead both sexes in prayer

- El-Tawhid Juma Circle (Toronto, Canada)
  - LGBTQ friendly
  - Women can give khutbah, lead salaat
  - No gender separation
  - Also in Atlanta and Washington D.C.

- Noor Cultural Center (Toronto, Canada)
  - Woman president and khatibs
  - Women serve as mu’adhdhin

- Taking Islam to the People Eid Gah (Durban, South Africa)
  - Two khutbahs, one by man and one by woman
Chinese Hui

- Ningxia province
- Nüsi
  - Women’s mosques
  - Women only
  - Led by women imams (nu ahong)
- Nu ahong
  - Marriages, funerals
  - Preaching
  - Resolving disputes
  - Guidance, counseling
  - Education
  - Do not lead prayers
