

The Network Women's Program
of the Open Society Institute
and V-Day invite you to a panel discussion

Casualties of War: Iraqi Women's Rights and Reality Then and Now

with Yanar Mohammed, Jane Fonda, and Eve Ensler

**Monday, November 17, 2003
10:00 am - 12:00 noon
Open Society Institute
400 West 59th Street, 3rd Floor**

Seating is limited. Please RSVP by Wednesday, November 12th to
Lexie Neonakis at women@sorosny.org

Yanar Mohammed is the founder of the Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq (OWFI) and also serves as the Editor in Chief of the newspaper *Al-Mousawat* (Equality). Ms. Mohammed left Iraq in 1993, and moved in 1995 to Canada with her family, where she worked with other Iraqi women to establish the Committee for the Defense of Iraqi Women's Rights (DIWR). Now based in Baghdad, DIWR recently changed its name to The Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq. OWFI campaigns against discriminatory laws and dangerous practices such as honor killings, funds a women's shelter, and works to involve women in the legislative process.

Jane Fonda has long been known for her activism on environmental issues, human rights, and the empowerment of women and girls. After tremendous success as a stage and screen actress, Ms. Fonda now focuses her efforts on community service and social change.

Eve Ensler is a playwright and the director of V-Day, an organization that she founded after hearing the stories of women who were affected by her play *The Vagina Monologues*. Today, V-Day works with organizations around the world to draw public attention to the fight to stop violence against women and girls.

Background: Women in Iraq

Iraq was once one of the most modern and permissive societies in the Middle East. Upper class women began to enter the country's job market in the 1920s and 1930s, and for much of Saddam Hussein's reign Iraqi women enjoyed relative freedom. In 1979, the Iraqi constitution declared all women and men equal before the law. Compulsory education through age 16 enabled women in Iraq to become the most educated and professional in the region, and working outside the home became the norm. Iraqi mothers received generous maternity leave, and in 1980 women could vote and run for election. In the early 80s, women made up 40 percent of the nation's work force. The Unified Labor Code called for equal pay, benefits and promotions for men and women.

UN sanctions after the Gulf War affected Iraqi women and children in particular. Simultaneously, in an effort to gain support of other Arab countries, Saddam Hussein allowed a shift toward the observance of Islamic Shari'a, and he gave tribal leaders freedom to act upon traditional tribal codes. In 1990, Hussein amended a law allowing honor killings without penalty; men who killed female relatives for arguing with their husbands, for adultery, or for having been raped, were exempt from punishment.

Please include the following information when you RSVP:

Name

Organization or Company

Contact Information (address, email, phone)

For more information, please contact:

Lexie Neonakis at OSI: women@sorosny.org or 212-548-0162

Allison Prouty at V-Day: allison@vday.org or 212-924-1229