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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

2008 Gruber Women's Rights Symposium
"ENSURING WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN TIMES OF CONFLICT AND OF PEACE"
Features International Women Activists Who
Challenge Religious, Political and Cultural Biases

Yanar Mohammed, Sapana Pradhan Malla and Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian
to Receive Prestigious Gruber Prize and its \$500,000 Award
at Columbia Law School on November 11, 2008

November 4, 2008, New York, NY – Hailing from some of the world's major hotspots, four of our most dynamic women leaders will come together in New York this month for a highly unusual forum on peace. The group will focus on important issues that are not generally mentioned in post-conflict talks, such as the measurements used by women in defining peace, how women can change the political debate and how they can interpose their voices in the discussion.

Moderating the panel discussion will be **Zainab Salbi**, founder and CEO of Women for Women International, who is originally from Iraq. Panelists are the 2008 Gruber Foundation Women's Rights Prize recipients: **Yanar Mohammed**, co-founder of Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq, who succeeded in protecting numerous Iraqi women threatened by domestic abuse and what are termed honor killings; **Sapana Pradhan Malla**, a practicing Nepali lawyer and member of Nepal's Constituent Assembly, who has been a leader in advocating legal reforms that have extended gender equality in many areas; and **Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian**, a leading feminist scholar, therapist and activist who has worked to end domestic violence against Palestinian women, particularly in what have been referred to as honor killings.

The Peter and Patricia Gruber Foundation will present Ms. Mohammed, Ms. Pradhan Malla and Dr. Shalhoub-Kevorkian with its 2008 Women's Right Prize – an unrestricted \$500,000 (US) award to be shared equally by the recipients. The panel discussion will immediately follow the Prize ceremony on November 11, 2008, at Columbia Law School.

"This should be an extremely informative and engaging discussion," said Patricia Gruber, the Foundation's president. "The experiences of this year's Prize recipients provide a unique view of what it requires for women to advocate for peace in societies that traditionally exclude women from participating in political discourse."

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The event participants are:



Yanar Mohammed – Co-founder of Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq, she has spoken out publicly, in spite of the danger to her own life, against the religious fundamentalism and nationalism that serve to oppress the women of Iraq and the Middle East. In 2003, she co-founded Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq (OWFI) to help achieve full equality for women in post-war Iraq. She is the publisher of Al Mousawat, which calls for full equality for women. Mohammed and her organization have opened two women's shelters and several safe houses to protect women threatened by domestic abuse and what are termed honor killings.



Sapana Pradhan Malla – A practicing lawyer before the Supreme Court of Nepal, she has been involved in almost all leading public interest litigation in that country, including equality in inheritance, legalization of abortion, criminalization of marital rape, equality in marriage and family law. She has succeeded in getting the Court to agree to maintain confidentiality in cases related to violence against women and cases involving HIV and AIDS. Vice president of the Legal Aid Consultancy Center and National Coordinator for the South Asian Women's Law Association, she has brought several landmark cases to the Supreme Court of Nepal and been instrumental in the most recent legal reforms protecting fundamental reproductive and property rights. behind the passage of legislation to criminalize marital rape and in the drafting of a Gender Equality Amendment Act and a model Human Trafficking Act.



Dr. Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian – A criminologist and specialist in human rights and women's rights, she has conducted academic research that examines the multiple forms of violence inflicted upon Palestinian women and girls. A prolific author and university professor, she writes and lectures around the world on issues of violence against women, particularly in the Arab world. She also consulted with Human Rights Watch on its most recent report on violence against Palestinian women in Israel and with the UNIFEM division of the United Nations, and has been director of the Gender Study Project at Mada al-Carmel in Haifa since 2006.



Zainab Salbi will be the panel's moderator. Founder and CEO of Women for Women International, Ms. Salbi has initiated a quiet but strong movement to help women survivors of wars and civil strife to rebuild their lives. She is the author (with Laurie Becklund) of *Between Two Worlds: Escape from Tyranny: Growing Up in the Shadow of Saddam*, a memoir that documents her life growing up in Iraq. She is also the author of *The Other Side of War: Women's Stories of Survival and Hope*, in which she chronicles the stories of women who overcame the horrors of war and rebuilt their families and countries.





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In addition to the cash award, Ms. Mohammed, Ms. Pradhan Malla and Dr. Shalhoub-Kevorkian will each receive a gold medal and an official citation which reads:

*The **2008 Gruber Women's Rights Prize** is proudly presented to: **Yanar Mohammed, Sapana Pradhan Malla, and Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian**, three activists devoted to enhancing women's rights and empowering women under the most difficult conditions of armed conflict and war:*

***Yanar Mohammed**, co-founder of the Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq (OWFI), for fighting tirelessly to stop the eradication of women's rights in Iraq. OWFI is a women's organization that has continued to speak out openly for women's rights against all odds.*

***Sapana Pradhan Malla**, a member of Nepal's Constituent Assembly, for fighting to include women's human rights in the constitution and, as a member of the Forum for Women, Law & Development (FWLD), for leading the successful effort to decriminalize abortion and to criminalize marital rape.*

***Dr. Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian**, a Palestinian feminist activist and researcher, for concentrating on sexual abuse and femicide, a term she coined for the abuse that puts women in a state of living death during times of war.*

"The recipients of the 2008 Gruber Foundation Women's Rights Prize have been strong advocates for women under the most difficult circumstances, including deeply ingrained societal and political bias and ongoing military action," said Sakiko Fukuda-Parr, former director of the UN Development Program Human Development Reports, and a member of the committee that selected this year's Prize recipients. "Their success in moving government to undo centuries-old inequalities against women is a valuable source of inspiration and guidance to women's rights advocates everywhere."

Additional Information

The **Women's Rights Prize** of the **Peter and Patricia Gruber Foundation** is presented to an individual or group that has made significant contributions, often at great personal or professional risk, to furthering the rights of women and girls in any area and to advancing public awareness of the need for gender equality to achieve a just world.

Members of the Committee that selected the 2008 Women's Rights Prize recipients:

- **Sakiko Fukuda-Parr**, The New School—International Affairs, United States
- **Pinar Ilkkaracan**, Women for Women's Human Rights-New Ways, Turkey
- **Cecilia Medina Quiroga**, University of Chile, Chile
- **Navanethem Pillay**, International Criminal Court, The Hague
- **Peter Rosenblum**, Columbia Law School, United States
- **Zainab Salbi**, Women for Women International, United States
- **Sakena Yacoobi**, Afghan Institute of Learning, Afghanistan

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Laureates of the Gruber Foundation Women's Rights Prize:

2007

Ms. Pinar Ilkkaracan – recognized both individually and for her leadership in two organizations that she co-founded; helped reform Turkish laws to advance gender equality and advocated for sexual and reproductive rights

Women for Women's Human Rights – played a critical role in advancing women's civil and reproductive rights and raising awareness about gender-based violence

The Coalition for Sexual and Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies – helped shatter myths about customs and religious practices and united women's rights advocates from 14 countries in an effort to protect women and girls

2006

Unión Nacional de Mujeres Guatemaltecas (UNMG) – a leader in working toward peace-building and equitable participation in Guatemala

Sweatshop Watch – strong advocate for the economic and political rights of migrant workers in the US

Judge Cecilia Medina Quiroga – advanced the rights of women through international law

2005

Shan Women's Action Network – dedicated to ending the oppression of minority women along the Thai-Burma border

The Women's League of Burma – a multi-ethnic umbrella organization committed to empowering women and enabling their participation in the democracy movement

2004

Professor Sakena Yacoobi – founded a grassroots program within the International Rescue Committee that quadrupled the number of Afghan girls enrolled in school

Afghan Institute of Learning (AIL) – provides health and human rights education to 350,000 women and girls in Afghanistan and in Pakistan's refugee camps

2003

Judge Navanethem Pillay – the first black woman to serve on the bench of the High Court of South Africa; strong advocate for human rights and women's issues

Pro-Femmes Twese Hamwe – an umbrella organization comprising over 40 women's groups across Rwanda; dedicated to achieving peace and eradicating discrimination

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The Peter and Patricia Gruber International Prize Program honors contemporary individuals in the fields of Cosmology, Genetics, Neuroscience, Justice and Women's Rights, whose groundbreaking work provides new models that inspire and enable fundamental shifts in knowledge and culture. The Selection Advisory Boards choose individuals whose contributions in their respective fields advance our knowledge, potentially have a profound impact on our lives, and, in the case of the Justice and Women's Rights Prizes, demonstrate courage and commitment in the face of significant obstacles.

The nomination form for the 2009 awards and additional information about nomination requirements and selection criteria may be found on the Foundation web site at www.gruberprizes.org/Nominations/Nominations.php

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The Peter and Patricia Gruber Foundation honors and encourages educational excellence, social justice and scientific achievements that better the human condition. For more information about Foundation guidelines and priorities, please visit www.gruberprizes.org.

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For more information on the 2008 Gruber Prizes, email media@gruberprizes.org or contact Berneta Akin of the Gruber Foundation at (340) 775-8035. Media materials and additional background information on the Gruber Prizes can be found at our online newsroom: www.gruberprizes.org/Press.php

NOTE TO MEDIA: PRIZE RECIPIENTS AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEWS

To schedule a one-on-one interview with the recipients or to attend and cover the symposium, contact Alyson O'Mahoney at (914) 241-0086, ext 13, or email aomahoney@robinleedyassociates.com.

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