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Abstract of paper to be presented at the conference.

For details of the conference programme go to www.iraqistudies.org

Speaker: Haifa Zangana (Novelist)

Title: "Neutrality & objectivity in the discourse on "Iraqi women under occupation"... or is it?"

Abstract:

In the discourse on "Iraqi women under occupation", some academics, women' organisations and journalists refer to the killing and abuses of Iraqi women primarily as a result of "Islamist violence". This "Political Islam's violence against women" is noted in parallel or not with that of the occupation. Some discourse goes further by regarding Islamic terrorism against women in Iraq a priority and urgent task, claiming that insurgent groups use rape as revenge for what was done to women in Abu Ghraib.

I argue that using the terms "Islamist" and "insurgents groups" to describe the violence against women in occupied Iraq is misleading. If not used naively or to sensationalise the issue to gain support from western feminists groups, they serve to deliberately cover up the real conflict in occupied Iraq which is political rather than religious. In particular what is covered up is that both the pro- and anti-occupation forces have Islamists of all types as well as secularists. "Islamist" is often used without concrete evidences and documentation by the academic, women organisations and media, feeding on each other. I will also argue that the Iraqi resistance is a taboo not to be mentioned in this discourse while in reality it is often the case the resistance, including Islamists groups, who actually protects and defend the lives and livelihood of Iraqi women.