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**“Contemporary Iranian Feminism:
Identity, Rights and Interpretations”**

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Women in Iran, as in any other country, live in complex societies where constantly changing social realities demand careful attention. The notion of Islamic feminism is a contested and contentious one that can be perceived as a response to this social reality where globalized western norms meet those of Islam. In the last decade, a body of literature has been written on the phenomenon of Islamic feminism, which closely links it to the rights discourse in Islamic countries. The term *Islamic feminism* may seem a paradox within itself, however, by using Iran as a case study, this paper aims to show that the idea of Islamic feminism, rather than being paradoxical, is actually a legitimate and potentially powerful shaping force within Islam and Islamic societies. Due to the transitional nature of the Iranian society, its distinct politics and its young population, the Iranian women’s movement has become one of the most vocal in the Muslim world. What is striking about post-revolution Iran is the irony that the contradictory agenda of the Islamic regime has led women to acquire a feminist identity, “despite the opposition to this term expressed by the conservative majority and the official discourse of Islamists and secularists.” For the purpose of this paper, Iranian feminists are categorized into four groups: Islamic state-feminists, Islamic non-state feminists, Muslim feminists and secular feminists. Each group is differentiated according to its interpretations of *Fiqh* (Islamic Jurisprudence), human rights and its relationship with the government. This categorization is based on the author’s experience working with and interviewing women’s rights organizations in Iran from 2003 – 2004.