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2 M'sians 'inspire' women globally

Lydia Gomez

KUALA LUMPUR: Two prominent Malaysian women were included in a New York-based advocacy group's list of 100 most inspiring people around the world in advocating the rights of women and girls.

Zainah Anwar, who founded Sisters In Islam (SIS) and is project director of Musawah (an international group for equality and justice in the Muslim family), and blogger, women's rights and HIV/AIDS awareness activist Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir were named in the list by Women Deliver.

Zainah and Marina joined the ranks of other distinguished personalities, including former United States first lady Laura Bush, ABC news anchor and television personality Christiane Amanpour, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, CNN Hero of the Year and anti-sex trafficking activist Anuradha Koirala, talk show host and philanthropist Oprah Winfrey and Spanish Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero.

The list, released in New York yesterday, was compiled based on the person's work in improving the lives of women and girls in health, human

rights, politics, economics, education, journalism and philanthropy.

Zainah, who was seventh in the list, said she was informed of her inclusion in the middle of last month.

"It is an honour for Sisters In Islam to be recognised at the global level.

"Our work breaks the myth that Muslim women are oppressed and victimised, and further breaks the myth that Islam is inherently a religion that discriminates against women."

She added that Musawah, which was initiated by SIS two years ago and led by an international committee of scholars and activists from Malaysia, Indonesia, Pakistan, Egypt, Morocco, Gambia, Nigeria, Iran, the United States and the United Kingdom, had become a source of hope for change in the Muslim world.

Marina, who occupied the 57th position, said Women Deliver contacted her through her blog last week.

"I am very honoured to be named in the list. I think it's nice that Malaysia is recognised.

"People will also take us more seriously," said Marina, who is also a SIS board member.

In a press statement yesterday,

Women Deliver president Jill Sheffield said last year had been

"widely viewed as the year women's issues finally came to the fore in international development.

"This list recognises those who successfully navigated the corridors of power, along with those on the front lines, who have worked to expand the rights and choices for girls and women everywhere."

Representation from Sub-Saharan nations was the highest with 26 names, followed by the Middle East and North Africa with 20 names.



Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir says it's nice for Malaysia to be recognised



Zainah Anwar says Sisters In Islam's work breaks the myth that Muslim women are oppressed