



SUZANNE MUBARAK

The First Lady of Egypt

Suzanne Mubarak is far from the typical Egyptian First Lady: her father was an Egyptian doctor and her mother a Welsh nurse. Her paternal grandmother is a relative of Jehan Sadat – the widow of Anwar Sadat – who was first lady of Egypt from 1970 until Sadat’s assassination in 1981.

Mrs Mubarak has two sons and two grandsons. Gamal Mubarak, the younger of the two, has pursued an active public profile. She has been a public figure throughout her career and an outspoken advocate for the issues she feels strongly about, affecting positive change in many different ways in Egyptian society.

Brought up in Cairo, after studying at St Claire Heliopolis there, Mrs Mubarak went on to study at the American University in Cairo. She received a Bachelor’s degree in Political Science and a Master’s degree in the Sociology of Education. Her commitment to social affairs was evident in her choice of studies. For her Master’s degree, Mrs Mubarak’s topic of study was; “Social Action Research in Urban Egypt: A Case of Primary School Upgrading in Boulak.”

Widely known as a strong advocate for women and children’s issues and education, Mama Mubarak, as she is popularly known, has been outspoken in her dedication to these causes, and in particular the fight against human trafficking and female genital mutilation.

Mrs Mubarak is also a strong advocate of literacy and education, and is a patron of the children’s television series, *Alam Simsim*, Egypt’s version of *Sesame Street*. Through her initiatives and programmes, she has been responsible for boosting literacy rates in Egypt and preparing young children for school, particularly young women.

In recognition of her outstanding efforts to promote reading in Egypt Mrs Mubarak received the *International Book Committee, International Book Award* in April 1995.

Mrs Mubarak also campaigns for a greater role for women as a crucial component to peace negotiations and bringing about sustainable peace in regions such as the Middle East. Mrs Mubarak established a non-profit NGO, the Suzanne Mubarak Women’s International Peace Movement

(SMWIPM) in 2003. The organisation advocates for investment to develop women’s skills so that they can be fully involved in negotiating peace accords and participate actively in bringing about and supporting peace.

Her campaigning in this regard was given a boost in October 2000, when the United Nations Security Council unanimously passed a resolution that, for the first time, recognised the impact that war has on women as well as women’s contributions to conflict resolution and peace.

The First Lady and SMWIPM have started the End Human Trafficking Now campaign. The campaign is largely responsible for more than 150 countries having signed protocols to combat human trafficking. Legislation has been passed; the current, and biggest, hurdle right now is enforcement of that legislation.

Mrs Mubarak was also responsible for developing a national plan through the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood, to end the practice of female genital mutilation, which has since been banned in Egypt.

The First Lady strongly believes that this practice can be abolished throughout Africa only through education and dialogue; until several years ago this was a subject that was not discussed. Many young girls still do not know that female circumcision is not religiously mandated and they do not have to have the procedure done.

Mrs Mubarak has won many awards both nationally and internationally for her hard work and dedication to public service. They include the *Avicenna Medal*, UNESCO’s highest award, and given in recognition of her role in promoting cultural activities in Egypt. She has also been awarded the *Prize of Tolerance* by the European Academy of Sciences and Arts. She has also been the recipient of the *Grand Cross of the Order of the Phoenix* by Greece’s President, HE Karolos Papoulias, and the *Shaikh Rashid Humanitarian Personality Award* for 2006 for her tireless efforts in protecting the wellbeing of women and children. She has received honorary doctoral degrees from Iwa University, Seoul, Korea, Westminster College; the American University in Cairo; and the American University in Spain. **F**