



**10.03.2016 - Every day 39,000 girls under the age of 18 are married in developing countries. To mark International Women's Day and focus on the issue of child brides, UN agencies in Brussels collaborated in screening "I am Nojoom, Age 10 and Divorced" on 9 March.**

The director, Khadija Al-Salami, Yemen's first female film maker, travelled especially from Paris to be at the event, held at the BOZAR Centre for Fine Arts and attended by an audience of over 200.

Joined on stage for a post-screening panel discussion by representatives from UN Women Brussels, the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and EuropeAid, Al-Salami revealed some astonishing glimpses of the film-making process. She was able to speak frankly and authoritatively on the issue, having herself been subjected to marriage at 11 years old.



## **THE STORY OF NOJOOM**

Khadija Al-Salami's film is an adaptation of the bestselling book (of the same name) that documents Nojoom Ali's bid to legally extricate herself from an abusive arranged marriage to an

older man. The film features striking backdrops of Yemen's mountain villages and ancient "skyscrapers."

Tugging on heart strings, it brings to the fore some of the most difficult issues underlying the problem of child marriage in Yemen, and conveys how deeply-embedded traditions and rural life, fuelled by lack of education, create conditions ripe for gross violations of basic human rights.

The film artfully highlights the importance of education and jobs. Nojoom's father tells his story which depicts the harsh realities of life of many men in Yemen who cannot find work and how notions of honour and dignity affect relationships within families and communities and create socially acceptable circumstances for child marriage.



*Photo: [Rod Waddington](#)*

## **THE INSPIRATION OF AL-SALAMI**

Though a story of desperation, the film offers hope in its message of courage and how the telling of one girl's story can affect millions of lives around the world.

A child bride herself, the film's director is no stranger to adversity and delivered some enlightening revelations to the audience about her experiences in creating the film. Lack of electricity and security concerns were primary obstacles, along with the theft of the electricity generator.

Al-Salami single-handedly recruited her own actors, to whom she concealed the true nature of the plot for fear they would resist its social, political and culturally progressive implications. In both her life story and the film, she has shown what it takes to defend the rights of girls in the most adverse circumstances and thus turn tragedy to triumph. She now has a [foundation](#) for sending girls to school in Yemen.

The film speaks to many of the UN's [17 Sustainable Development Goals](#) such as [#4 Quality Education](#)

,  
[#5 Gender Equality](#)

and

[#16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions](#)

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