

Zeinab Badawi

Zeinab was born in the Sudan but moved to London at the age of two. Her father Mohammed-Khair El Badawi – was involved in pre-independence politics in Sudan. Her great-grandfather Babikir Bedri, was the pioneer of education for girls and women in Sudan. Today the family still run Al Ahfad University - an all women's university in the capital, which educates females from all parts of Sudan and the rest of Africa.

Zeinab: "When I was growing up it was not uncommon for me to meet aunts and great-aunts who had PHD's from some of the world's top universities. My grandmother – who would be more than a hundred years old today - could read and write. So I have never understood why anyone would object to female education on any grounds."

Zeinab herself went to school in London, taking A'levels in Russian, Latin and History before going to St Hilda's College, Oxford University, to study for a BA in Philosophy, Politics and Economics - 1978-81.

She is currently a patron of the BBC World Service, the charitable arm of the BBC, a board member of the National Portrait Gallery. She has been a board member of the British Council, a former Chair of the London based freedom of speech campaign organisation Article 19, a board member of the Overseas Development Institute.

She speaks good Arabic and has four children.