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Change hits Saudi Arabia: 900 women run for office



More than 900 women are campaigning for public office in Saudi Arabia -- a first in the kingdom's history.

The December 12 municipal election will be the first opportunity for Saudi women to vote or run for office since a 2011 order by the now deceased King Abdullah that granted women some opportunities for political participation in the ultra-conservative Sunni kingdom.

Critics have described the change as anywhere from modest to inconsequential. Women will only participate in elections at the municipal level.

At least two women's rights activists announced on Twitter that they had been disqualified as candidates.

Loujain Hathloul, who was arrested last year for defying a ban on women drivers, and Nasema al-Sada, said their names had been left off the final candidates list, and that they plan to appeal.

Read more:

<http://edition.cnn.com/2015/11/30/middleeast/saudi-arabia-women-candidates/>

Killed defending women's rights: nine female activists who died in 2015

To mark International Day of Women Human Rights Defenders, we remember some of the female activists who have been killed over this past year

Nadia Vera

Mexico: died 31 July 2015

Nadia Vera was found dead in her flat in Mexico City. She had been raped, tortured and shot in the head alongside four other people, including three women and a male journalist, Rubén Espinosa. She was the 36th female human rights defender to be killed in Mexico since 2010. Vera campaigned against attacks on journalists and the selling off of oil reserves. Her activism had led to death threats, prompting her move from Xalapa, the capital of Veracruz, to Mexico City last year.

“Nadia’s murder shows us that there is nowhere safe left in Mexico for defenders fleeing threats or violence. That’s how serious the human rights crisis has become,” said Atziri Ávila, coordinator of the National Network of Human Rights Defenders of Mexico.

Intisar Al-Hasairi

Libya: died 24 February 2015

The bodies of Intisar al-Hasairi and her aunt were found in the boot of a car in Tripoli. Both had been shot.

Read more:

<http://www.awid.org/news-and-analysis/killed-defending-womens-rights-nine-female-activists-who-died-2015>

WLP Partners Unite to End Gender-Based Violence in the 16 Days Campaign, 2015

Violence against women and girls is both a global and local societal ill--global because its perpetrators and victims are in every corner of the world, and local because its forms differ from one place to the next depending on specific cultural, political and socio-economic circumstances. Grassroots educational and training endeavors must help communities fully grasp the extent of violence and the short- and long-term harm done to victims and also to the society at large. We must continually educate ourselves, and each other, about gender based violence in the private as well as the public spheres. Educate for safety and peace.

— Mahnaz Afkhami
President, WLP

On November 25, 2015, Women's Learning Partnership joined the Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL) at Rutgers University, along with over 5,478 organizations and other participants from 187 countries and territories, in the launch of the annual *16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence Campaign*. Our partners engaged in a number of exciting initiatives, including staging sit-ins in Morocco for women's legal protection from violence, launching workshops for refugees on the link between child marriage and denial of girl's education, and forming a human chain in Gaza to call for the implementation of international agreements that protect women from violence.

Read more:

<http://www.learningpartnership.org/lib/wlp-partners-unite-end-gender-based-violence-16-days-campaign-2015>

Morocco's Sociologist Fatima Mernissi Dies at 75



Born in 1940, in Fes, Fatima Mernissi became known for her significant contributions in the literary field through which she focused on reconciling traditional Islam with progressive feminism.

The author of classics such as *Beyond the Veil*, *The Veil and the Male Elite*, *Islam and Democracy* and countless more publications, the campaigner for women's rights gained international attention for her work on Islam and women.

She studied political science at Sorbonne University in Paris and earned her doctorate in sociology in 1974 at Brandeis University, Kentucky after which she returned to her native Morocco. At Rabat's Mohammed V university, she taught methodology, family sociology and psychosociology at the Faculté des Lettres.

As an Islamic feminist and through her sociological work, she has traced attitudes in Morocco that have to do with women and work.

Often comparing Western and Eastern views on topics involving women, she was able to deconstruct the main issues in order to make them relevant in an Islamic context.

Read more:

<http://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2015/11/173892/moroccos-sociologist-fatima-mernissi-dies-at-75/>

Despite Barriers, Saudi Women in First Election Bid



Segregated from male voters and unable to drive themselves to hustings, Saudi women begin their first-ever election campaign on Sunday, a tentative step towards better representation in the male-dominated kingdom.

Around 900 female candidates are standing in next month's municipal election, a poll that also offers a chance for female voters to elect their officials for the first time.

"If we want to develop or reform our country we should put a woman in every decision-making level," says Nassima al-Sadah, a candidate in the Gulf coast city of Qatif for the December 12 vote.

Saudi Arabia, an Islamic absolute monarchy, has no female cabinet ministers and is the only country in the world where women are not allowed to drive.

They have to cover themselves in black from head-to-toe in public, and require permission from a man in their families to travel, work or marry.

Restrictions remain in place despite a slow expansion of women's rights under the late king Abdullah, who introduced municipal elections in 2005 and said women would participate this time around.

Read more:

<http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/195546-despite-barriers-saudi-women-in-first-election-bid>

GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

Combatting violence against women in Algeria: mobilizing and challenges

As part of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence Campaign, AWID spoke with two Algerian activists to learn more about violence against women in the country and the strategies and challenges of the feminists working to end it

In Algeria, the predominantly Sunni Islam North African country, violence against women is widespread, both legally and socially. The 2005 amended Family Code is informed by Islamic law and still discriminates against women, whether in terms of marriage, divorce, inheritance or child custody. In the case of divorce and child custody for example, priority is given to the mother, but if she remarries, she loses her right to custody. This profoundly unequal Code conflicts the country's Constitution, which stipulates in article 29: "All citizens are equal before the law. No discrimination shall prevail because of birth, race, sex, opinion or any other personal or social condition or circumstance."

Experience of violence differs greatly depending on location and status

Dalila Iamarene Djerbal, sociologist and coordinator of counselling centre and programs at the Wassila/Avife Network,[1] highlights the connection between legal discrimination and violence against women across all social spheres.

Read more:

<http://www.awid.org/news-and-analysis/combating-violence-against-women-algeria-mobilizing-and-challenges>

Is education Boko Haram's biggest victim?



Boko Haram translates as “Western education is forbidden,” so it is perhaps unsurprising that a disproportionate number of teachers become victims of the Nigerian militant group. Hundreds have been killed, while many more have fled the violence.

A UNICEF report in mid-September revealed that Boko Haram attacks had displaced 1.4 million children across the region. Meanwhile, girls as young as 11 have been employed as suicide bombers, sent into crowded market places or mosques to blow themselves up, instructed to take as many others with them as they can. Boko Haram only came to many people's attention when it kidnapped 276 schoolgirls from a secondary school in Chibok.

But while the mass abduction, the millions displaced, and the relentless suicide attacks have received most of the headlines, the exodus of teachers and the disintegration of the education system could be a longer-lasting legacy of Boko Haram that sets northeastern Nigeria back a generation.

Read more:

<http://www.irinnews.org/report/102274/is-education-boko-haram-s-biggest-victim>

ISIS Women and Enforcers in Syria Recount Collaboration, Anguish and Escape



Aws, 25, a former resident of Raqqa, Syria, used to be a member of the Khansaa Brigade, the Islamic State's female morality police. Her first husband was a jihadist, and when he died in a suicide operation she reluctantly agreed to marry another fighter.

Dua had only been working for two months with the Khansaa Brigade, the all-female morality police of the Islamic State, when her friends were brought to the station to be whipped.

The police had hauled in two women she had known since childhood, a mother and her teenage daughter, both distraught. Their abayas, flowing black robes, had been deemed too form-fitting.

When the mother saw Dua, she rushed over and begged her to intercede. The room felt stuffy as Dua weighed what to do.

“Their abayas really were very tight. I told her it was their own fault; they had come out wearing the wrong thing,” she said. “They were unhappy with that.”

Dua sat back down and watched as the other officers took the women into a back room to be whipped. When they removed their face-concealing niqabs, her friends were also found to be wearing makeup. It was 20 lashes for the abaya offense, five for the makeup, and another five for not being meek enough when detained.

Read more:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/22/world/middleeast/isis-wives-and-enforcers-in-syria-recount-collaboration-anguish-and-escape.html?ref=world>

Norway Offers Migrants a Lesson in How to Treat Women

When he first arrived in Europe, Abdu Osman Kelifa, a Muslim asylum seeker from the Horn of Africa, was shocked to see women in skimpy clothes drinking alcohol and kissing in public. Back home, he said, only prostitutes do that, and in locally made movies couples “only hug but never kiss.”

Confused, Mr. Kelifa volunteered to take part in a pioneering and, in some quarters, controversial program that seeks to prevent sexual and other violence by helping male immigrants from societies that are largely segregated or in which women show neither flesh nor public affection to adapt to more open European societies.

Fearful of stigmatizing migrants as potential rapists and playing into the hands of anti-immigrant politicians, most European countries have avoided addressing the question of whether men arriving from more conservative societies might get the wrong idea once they move to places where it can seem as if anything goes.

But, with more than a million asylum seekers arriving in Europe this year, an increasing number of politicians and also some migrant activists now favor offering coaching in European sexual norms and social codes.

Mr. Kelifa, 33, attended the education program at an asylum center in this town near the western Norwegian city of Stavanger. Like similar courses now underway in the village of Lunde and elsewhere in Norway, it was voluntary and was organized around weekly group discussions of rape and other violence.

Read more:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/20/world/europe/norway-offers-migrants-a-lesson-in-how-to-treat-women.html?ref=world>

Human Rights for Refugee Women and Girls



December 10th marks both Human Rights day and the end of 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence Campaign. In this update we look at the intersection of these issues in relation to displaced people and refugee crises.

What are the rights of the millions of people displaced as a result of crises, specifically, women and girls, who are not only vulnerable to increased risks of gender-based violence, but are central to galvanising resilience and hope in extremely difficult contexts? This update provides a collection of resources addressing these issues – we also build on the special issue update we created at the start of the 16 Days. Throughout the campaign, we shared a range of new resources on gender-based violence, education and militarism through this Storify.

The United Nations has recognised Syria as the biggest humanitarian crisis today. Over 12 million Syrians are in need of humanitarian aid, while the crisis has displaced 7.6 million people and caused 3.9 million to flee to neighbouring countries. In emergencies, such as in conflict, the risk of violence is heightened for women and girls, who face increased sexual, physical and psychological abuse.

Read more:

<http://www.eldis.org/go/topics/resource-guides/gender/monthly-collections/human-rights-for-refugee-women-and-girls/human-rights-for-refugee-women-and-girls#.Vm51WdJ95dg>

GENDER & HUMAN RIGHTS

Saudi Arabia elects its first female politicians

At least 18 women elected to municipal councils in Saudi Arabia's first poll open to female voters and candidates.



At least 18 women have won seats in Saudi Arabia's municipal polls, the country's first-ever elections open to female voters and candidates, local reports said.

The women who won hail from vastly different parts of the country, ranging from Saudi Arabia's largest city to a small village near Islam's holiest site.

Salma bint Hizab al-Oteibi was elected to the council of Madrasah, a region in Mecca, the official SPA news agency reported, citing election commission president Osama al-Bar.

Saturday's municipal poll, which was hailed by many as historic, saw a turnout of about 47 percent, according to Saudi officials.

Read more:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/12/women-win-seats-landmark-saudi-arabia-elections-151213054750832.html>

Switzerland approves burqa ban which carries £6,500 FINE



Women wearing a burqa will be fined up to £6,500 in Switzerland under new rules imposed by local government.

Females Muslims will be banned from wearing the burqa in shops, restaurants or public buildings in Ticino, southern Switzerland.

The local government in the Italian-speaking region approved the ban after a referendum saw two in three voters backing the move.

The minimum fine is 100 francs (£65) and women can be given a penalty of up to 10,000 francs (£6,500).

Visitors coming into Ticino will be informed at airports and by customs officers at the Italian border it is illegal for people to hide their face under a burqa or niqab, while in the state.

Read more:

<http://www.britainfirst.org/switzerland-approves-burqa-ban-which-carries-6500-fine/>

Tunisia: a step forward for women's rights

Tunisia's parliament adopted a new law on November 10, 2015, that will allow women to travel with their minor children without getting permission from the children's father. The Tunisian authorities should next ensure that all domestic laws conform to international standards and eliminate other forms of discrimination against women.

Tunisian authorities have a long-established practice of preventing women from leaving Tunisian territory with their children without the father's authorization. Fathers were not subject to such a practice. The new law prohibits the authorities from discriminating against women this way by adding an article to the Tunisian law on passports allowing either parent to authorize a minor's travel.

"Tunisia's action recognizes that women are equal partners in making decisions about their children," said Amna Guellali, Tunisia researcher. "Tunisia should follow this important step with measures to end all discrimination against women, notably in personal status matters."

The Women and Family Affairs Ministry submitted the draft to parliament on August 21. The Parliamentary Commission on Rights and Freedoms started debating the draft in September and sent it for approval to the plenary session on October 26. The plenary session adopted the law 143 to 1, with 4 abstentions.

Read more:

<http://www.awid.org/news-and-analysis/tunisia-step-forward-womens-rights>

Lombardy in Italy bans burqas and Islamic veils following European terror attacks

Simona Bordonali said: "Whoever wants to enter a hospital in Lombardy must be recognisable and present themselves uncovered...The burqa [and the] niqab are therefore banned."



A northern region of Italy has amended legislation and approved a ban on wearing burqas and Islamic veils in hospitals and local government buildings, following terror attacks in Europe.

The new regulation in Lombardy, which comes into force on the first day of the New Year, marks the first time an Italian region has explicitly outlawed Islamic face coverings. Existing law in the country, dating from the 1970s, already forbids clothing that makes identification difficult in public places.

Read more:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/lombardy-in-italy-bans-burqas-and-islamic-veils-following-european-terror-attacks-a6770681.html>

Analysis: The value of women voting in Saudi Arabia

Votes continue to be counted in Saudi Arabia's municipal elections, in which women were allowed for the first time to cast ballots. According to official figures, 130,000 women registered to vote in Saturday's poll, compared with 1.35 million men.

Back in 2011, the late King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz al-Saud announced that Saudi women would be allowed to participate in the municipal elections for the first time. Observers said the move, which came with a set of political decisions, was a temporary response to the regional's political unrest, rather than real reform.

Indeed, women's participation was not allowed in the 2011 elections, amid claims of logistical difficulties. The grassroots "Baladi" campaign by women's rights activists to empower women for political participation had been active since 2010.

The campaign, however, was ordered shut shortly before the start of the 2015 elections.

Nevertheless, this latest round of municipal elections in Saudi Arabia is promising, and not only because of women's participation.

New municipal regulations have granted members of local councils wider authorities in reviewing and deciding on issues concerning public health, land allocations, permits and planning. Moreover, citizens as young as 18 can now participate in voting, widening public engagement.

Read more:

<http://www.wluml.org/news/analysis-value-women-voting-saudi-arabia>

Two disqualified as first Saudi women begin campaign for election

Gender equality in the kingdom takes a slow step forward as women prepare to stand and vote in municipal elections



Hundreds of Saudi women began campaigning for public office on Sunday, in a first for women in the conservative kingdom's slow reform process – even as two activists were disqualified.

More than 900 women are standing alongside thousands of men in the 12 December municipal ballot, which will also mark the first time that women in [Saudi Arabia](#) are allowed to vote.

"I've been eliminated as a candidate for the municipal elections," Loujain Hathloul said in a message on Twitter. "I will be filing my objection via the appropriate channels."

Saudi authorities detained Hathloul for more than two months after she tried to drive into the kingdom last December from the United Arab Emirates, in defiance of a Saudi ban on women driving.

Read more:

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/29/first-saudi-arabia-women-stand-election-begin-campaigning>

Norway funds ILO project to improve working conditions for women in Jordan

Norwegian-funded project seeks to empower women working in private companies and private schools to negotiate for better working conditions in terms of fairer remuneration; human resource policies and child care facilities.

The ILO has launched a new Norwegian-funded project that aims to improve working conditions for women in Jordan's private sector by strengthening their negotiation skills to help them secure pay equity and childcare.

The objective of the project is to increase wages of teachers and reduce common discriminatory practices that have been documented in the private education sector. Another core objective is to implement Article 72 of the Labour Law (2010), which relates to the provision of childcare facilities for workers with family responsibilities.

"The project will build on the long-standing efforts of the ILO and its partners to promote fair working conditions for women, including better wages and access to day care, which will eventually lead to increased participation of women in the labour market," said Emanuela Pozzan, ILO Senior Specialist on Gender Equality. "The project will work in tandem to ensure that a holistic approach to gender equality at work is delivered."

Read more:

http://www.ilo.org/beirut/media-centre/news/WCMS_436077/lang-en/index.htm

New Project to Create Jobs by Supporting Start-Ups and Developing Skills of Youth and Women in Palestine

The World Bank Group's Board of Executive Directors approved today a US\$5 million grant focused on job creation in Palestine. The Finance for Jobs project aims at catalyzing private investment in high potential sectors for job creation.

This initial Finance for Jobs Project – which is anticipated to be one in a series - will test the effectiveness of selected financial interventions. This will commence with a matching grant instrument to foster job creation through support to business start-up investment funds currently operating in Palestine. The series of projects will build on lessons learned and achievements over time and will scale-up the design in the direction of the most efficient financing.

"Jobs are among the most pressing issues in Palestine. In the absence of new private sector investment, there is a limited potential for new employment. It is crucial to identify new ways and means to bring sustainable transformational impacts on the livelihoods of the Palestinian people despite the difficult investment climate," said Steen Lau Steen Lau Jorgensen, World Bank Country Director for West Bank and Gaza.

Read more:

<http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2015/12/18/new-project-to-create-jobs-by-supporting-start-ups-and-developing-skills-of-youth-and-women-in-palestine>

RESOURCES & CALLS
BOOKS & REPORTS

Minimum Standards for Prevention and Response to Gender-based Violence in Emergencies

Gender based violence is a life-threatening, global health and human rights issue that violates international human rights law and principles of gender equality. In emergencies, such as conflict or natural disasters, the risk of violence, exploitation and abuse is heightened, particularly for women and girls.

UNFPA's "Minimum Standards for Prevention and Response to GBV in Emergencies (GBViE)" promote the safety and well being of women and girls in emergencies and provide practical guidance on how to mitigate and prevent gender-based violence in emergencies and facilitate access to multi-sector services for survivors. The objective of this resource is to provide clarity on what constitutes effective and appropriate GBV prevention and response in emergencies by offering concrete actions that can be applied across various emergency contexts.

The Minimum Standards are based on international best practice and, while primarily intended for UNFPA staff and partners, may also be used as a resource to guide other agencies' efforts to address gender-based violence in emergencies.

Read more:

<http://www.eldis.org/go/topics/resource-guides/gender&id=73891&type=Document#.Vm53PdJ95dg>

For a direct link to report:

http://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/GBViE.Minimum.Standards.Publication.FINAL_.ENG_.pdf

Ending gender inequality in older age: Guidance for EU development policy

There is clear recognition of the importance of achieving gender equality and women's empowerment, including in EU and global development cooperation. However, this work frequently overlooks the rights of older people. This is despite rapid global population ageing, with the number of people aged 60 and above projected to reach 1.4 billion by 2030 or 16.5 per cent of the world's population. Women aged 50 and above are regularly ignored in data collection, yet they account for 24 per cent of the world's women. Older women outnumber older men and their share of the older population increases with age. Older women are more likely to live alone and in poverty.

From a human rights perspective and in the context of this dramatic demographic trend, understanding gender inequality in older age is critical to ensuring effective gender equality and women's empowerment interventions in development efforts. This briefing by HelpAge's network of independent EU Affiliates explains the nature of gender inequality in older age and looks at how well the EU's development and external action policies on gender equality and women's empowerment currently address these challenges. It provides recommendations on how these policies can be implemented in a way that will benefit all people in older age.

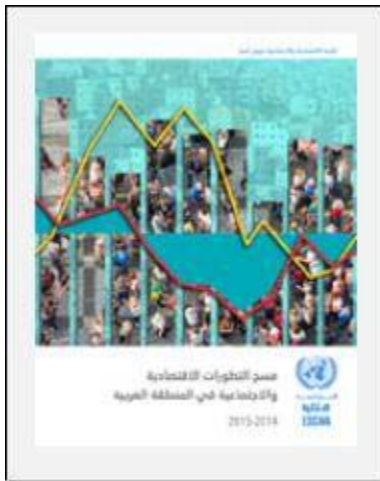
Read more:

<http://www.eldis.org/go/topics/resource-guides/gender&id=73908&type=Document#.Vm52G9J95dg>

For a direct link to report:

[file:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/Gender-Briefing-lowres%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/Gender-Briefing-lowres%20(1).pdf)

Survey of Economic and Social Development in the Arab region 2014-2015



The Arab region has been in a transition phase for the past few years. In 2011, the international community set up the Deauville Partnership with Arab Countries in Transition, aimed at supporting Arab countries' transition into free, democratic and tolerant societies. In parallel to this supportive attention from the international community, intraregional support mechanisms have also been at work. The Gulf Cooperation Council and its member countries (GCC countries) have actively pledged and implemented aid to other Arab countries, many of which could not have regained macroeconomic stability without these intraregional aid inflows.

Read more:

<https://www.unescwa.org/publications/survey-economic-and-social-development-arab-region-2014-2015>

For a direct link to report:

https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/publications/files/e_escwa_edid_2015_2_e.pdf

Employment in the informal economy

The KILM 8 indicator is a measure of employment in the informal economy as a percentage of total non-agricultural employment. There are wide variations in definitions and methodology of data collection related to the informal economy. Some countries now provide data according to the 2003 guidelines concerning a statistical definition of informal employment. The KILM 9th edition contains national estimates on informal employment.

Harvesting information from international data repositories as well as regional and national statistical sources, the KILM offers data for over 200 countries. The 17 indicators provide detailed information related to 36 data tables, including indicators on employment (occupation, status, sector, hours, etc.), labour underutilization and the characteristics of job seekers, education, wages, labour productivity and working poverty. Taken together, these indicators provide a strong foundation from which to address key questions related to productive employment and decent work.

Read more:

http://www.ilo.org/global/statistics-and-databases/research-and-databases/kilm/WCMS_422437/lang--en/index.htm

For a direct link to report:

http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---stat/documents/publication/wcms_422437.pdf

Yemen Labour Force Survey 2013-2014

The Labour Force Survey (LFS) for Yemen was carried out by the Central Statistical Organization of Yemen under the supervision of Ministry of Labour and with the assistance of the ILO. The LFS generated representative data on employment, unemployment and other vital labour indicators at the national level and at the level of governorates of Yemen. The survey also provides information on income from employment and characteristics of former household members who are living abroad, and persons participating in training programs outside of the regular educational system.

The Labour Force Survey (LFS) 2013-14 is the second such survey that has been carried out in the last 15 years in Yemen. Similar to the first survey in 1999, the LFS 2013-14 was conducted by the Central Statistical Organization with assistance from the International Labour Office. More recently, CSO has conducted a population census in 2004 and a household child labour survey of adults and children in 2010. The primary objective of LFS 2013-14 was to provide current data on the employment and unemployment situation at national and governorate level using the new international standards concerning statistics of work, employment and labour underutilization adopted by the 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (Geneva, October 2013).

Read more:

http://www.ilo.org/beirut/publications/WCMS_419016/lang-en/index.htm

For a direct link to report:

http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_419016.pdf

Differences in the effects of vocational training on men and women

The following paper Differences in the effects of vocational training on men and women: Constraints on women and drop-out behaviour authored by our partners at the World Bank, Yale University and the Malawi National AIDS Commission, evaluates the impacts of the “Technical and Vocational Skills Training pilot program (TVST)” for vulnerable youth, the first study of its kind to experimentally evaluate vocational training in Africa.

http://www.ilo.org/employment/Whatwedo/Publications/working-papers/WCMS_432285/lang-en/index.htm

http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_432285.pdf

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