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'Islamic' Chair Cover Gets Iranian Activist In Trouble



A prominent Iranian human rights lawyer and women's rights activist has created a controversy by posting a picture on social media that shows her sitting on a chair with Islamic motifs while holding a glass of wine.

The chair in the photo of Shadi Sadr is covered with a material used in Iran for events marking the Ashura, the martyrdom of Imam Hossein, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad. It is a work by Iranian artist Parastou Forouhar, whose parents were among intellectuals and political activists killed in the late 1990s by Intelligence Ministry agents.

Hard-line conservative Iranian media, including state-controlled television and the Fars news agency, which is affiliated with the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC), accused Sadr of insulting Islamic sanctities and disrespecting Islamic values.

Sadr, one of many activists and intellectuals who had to flee Iran to escape imprisonment in a crackdown after the 2009 presidential elections, told RFE/RL that the photo was not insulting and that she posted the photo to highlight the plight of nonbelievers in Iran.

Read more:

<http://www.wluml.org/news/islamic-chair-cover-gets-iranian-activist-trouble>

Where Are the Women Leaders in Female Dominated Professions?

Back in March, Microsoft put out a YouTube video "What are you going to make?" to commemorate this year's International Women's Day. The video tells the story of how students are not being taught about female inventors, as a girl remarks;

Then on April 3, The *New York Times* published an article; "The Tampon of the Future" which reveals how in the area of life-sciences, it is hard for women to be an inventor. It states that "more than 92 percent of patent holders are men" and that "90 percent of the partners in venture-capital firms (that provide the necessary funding for research) are male". In this climate, how can a female inventor find recognition and funding when men decide what is worthy of being funded? And with men making these decisions, who is going to champion what women need researching?

The article made me reflect on how invisible female leaders and inventors are in female dominated professions. In my own profession of counseling, psychotherapy, and coaching, which is approximately 90 percent female dominated, women have a much smaller voice as thought-leaders and theorists than men do. Most of the theories and modalities we use in our psychotherapy work have been invented by men and still today in our professional organizations and at conferences and workshops, I see how men and their ideas are promoted with greater ease and frequency than women and women's ideas.

Read more:

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rosjke-hasseldine/where-are-the-women-leade_b_9747432.html

There's a mind-boggling amount of work women do that we literally can't quantify

Women often aren't paid for the work they do. Every day they chalk up an average of 4.5 hours of free labor in household chores and childcare regardless of where they are in the world. In developing countries, women can do 10 times as much as men.

If the hours of unpaid labor done by women worldwide were paid at minimum wage, they would be worth at least \$10 trillion—more than the GDP of China, according to a conservative estimate by McKinsey.

But these are just estimates. In truth, we don't have sufficient data on much of the work done by women around the world. The same society and infrastructure that collects and applies data from every facet of our lives can't efficiently track the hours women work and get paid outside official workplaces.

"We cannot close the gender gap unless we close the data gap," said Melinda Gates, who announced at the Women Deliver conference in Copenhagen Tuesday (May 17) that the Gates Foundation will donate \$80 million towards improving data collection with focus on data on women. "By many metrics, it's never been a better time to be a woman," she said.

Nonetheless, she said, progress in gender equality needs to be based on quantifying the gaps.

Read more:

<http://qz.com/686075/we-still-have-literally-no-way-to-quantify-exactly-how-much-work-women-do/>

Egypt – Launching of radio program “She & Her Sisters” – Great success

As part of Women's Voices Program funded by UN Women- Fund for Gender Equality; the Egyptian Center for Women's Rights (ECWR) cooperated with Radio Sawt El Arab to launch the radio program titled “She& Her Sisters”. This program aims to support the Egyptian women and discuss the issues that affect the society in general and women in particular such as the political empowerment for women and their participation in the local councils and the parliament, economic empowerment, the importance of the work for women and the extent of their participation in the labor force, women's rights in Islam, in addition to the importance of acquiring the different soft skills such as time management.

This is done through a daily message provided by NehadAbolKomsan, ECWR's chairwoman, via Radio Sowt Al-Arab at 10:00 AM, over 30 episodes throughout the month of Ramadan. The message is followed by a riddle through a question about a significant issue to women's rights, and the answers are received via ECWR phone number.

Through the Program, each episode message is delivered in a simple way and informal language. It also depends on life stories and situations that frequently occur to women.

Read more:

<http://www.wunrn.com/2016/06/egypt-launching-of-radio-program-she-her-sisters-great-success/>

GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

Death of teenage girl casts doubt on Egypt's efforts to end FGM – activists

The death of a teenage girl during an operation to illegally perform female genital mutilation (FGM) on her in Egypt raises questions about the north African nation's efforts to end the practice, anti-FGM campaigners said on Tuesday.

Mayar Mohamed Mousa, 17, died of heavy bleeding in a hospital in Suez province on Sunday while under anaesthesia, according to the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR), Cairo-based rights group.

The private El Canal Hospital, where Mousa's twin sister also underwent the procedure but survived, was yesterday shut down and Egyptian prosecutors are investigating the death, said Sedkhi Sidhom, an official from Egypt's health ministry.

"Not all cases of female circumcision are reported across Egypt. There are cases of circumcision where the women die and are then buried without a word being mentioned," Sidhom said.

More than nine in 10 women and girls aged between 15 and 49 in Egypt have undergone FGM, and around 80 percent of these procedures are carried out by medical professionals, despite the practice being banned in 2008, according to U.N. estimates.

The teenager's death comes more than a year after doctor Raslan Fadl was convicted of manslaughter in Egypt's first FGM trial after a 13-year-old girl died in a botched procedure.

Read more:

<http://news.trust.org/item/20160531160844-ydijt/>

What ISIS Women Want – Alternative Analysis

The extremist armed group Islamic State should urgently release Yezidi women and girls they abducted in 2014, Human Rights Watch said today, following new research with recent escapees who were raped and traded between members before they fled. Islamic State (also known as ISIS) also routinely imposes abusive restrictions on other Iraqi women and girls and severely limits their freedom of movement and access to health care and education in areas under its control, Human Rights Watch said today.

In January and February 2016, Human Rights Watch interviewed 21 Sunni Muslim Arab women from the Hawija area of Iraq and 15 women and girls from the Yezidi minority ethnic group, all of whom had fled ISIS-controlled areas, most in late 2015. Several of the Yezidis, abducted by ISIS in mid-2014, had spent more than a year in captivity. They described being forcibly converted to Islam, kept in sexual slavery, bought and sold in slave markets, and passed among as many as four ISIS members. Human Rights Watch first documented systematic rape of Yezidi women and girls in early 2015.

"The longer they are held by ISIS, the more horrific life becomes for Yezidi women, bought and sold, brutally raped, their children torn from them," said Skye Wheeler, women's rights emergencies researcher at Human Rights Watch. "Meanwhile, ISIS's restrictions on Sunni women cut them off from normal life and services almost entirely."

Read more:

<http://www.wluml.org/news/iraq-women-suffer-under-isis-sunnis-lives-curtailed-yezidis-new-accounts-brutal-rapes>

Conflict & Women – 10 Facts about Conflict & Its Impact on Women

It is vital to account for this triple role and the basic impact of armed conflict on women so as to be able to sensitise humanitarian aid and post-conflict reconstruction approaches.

War has catastrophic impacts on humanity – regardless of where it takes place, and regardless of the nature of the armed conflict. Mass displacements, large-scale crimes, disruption of normal civilian lives and the inadequacy of resources are only a few of the myriad issues that challenge people during and after war, until a state of peace is restored.

Arguably the impact is greater on women – although this is not with any intent to discount the adversities that men face. By choosing to say “greater”, it is to suggest that the triple role of women in society, i.e., the fact that women tend to work longer and more fragmented days than men, as they are usually involved in three different gender roles – reproductive, productive and community work. The impact of conflict in these three roles, coupled with the purportedly “sacred” notions of honour, social encumbrances and chastity that women are subjected to in peace-time makes them the greater of the genders in terms of the impact of conflict and violence.

Read more:

<http://www.wunrn.com/2016/06/conflict-women-10-facts-about-conflict-its-impact-on-women/>

Will new Palestinian agency be enough to stop violence against women?



Violence against Palestinian women is being reported more frequently, and women there are fighting back — but in a nonviolent way.

One obstacle in the battle has been a lack of accurate statistics with which to influence politicians and increase public awareness. Now the Ministry of Women’s Affairs plans to establish the National Observatory on Violence Against Women. The ministry will collaborate with the Ministries of Social Affairs and Health, the police and a number of civil society institutions.

The observatory, which is expected to see the light in one year, will collect and document cases of violence against women to gauge the gravity and extent of the problem. The data will be analyzed to help develop public policies to confront the situation.

"The idea ... stems from the ministry’s main purpose to end all forms of discrimination and violence against women," Amin Assi, general director of planning and policy in the Ministry of Women’s Affairs, told Al-Monitor.

Read more:

<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/06/palestinian-observatory-violence-against-women.html>

New project enlists Egyptian men to help fight violence against women

The Appropriate Communication Techniques for Development Center in Cairo launched a project May 15 to enlist men to fight violence against women. According to a study conducted by the Thomson Reuters Foundation at the end of 2013, Egypt is the worst country for women's rights in the Arab world.

Yara Fathi, the center's gender programs director, told Al-Monitor the new campaign will emphasize that men can help stop violence against women, despite the prevailing idea that only women support such a cause. Getting men involved will raise the issue's visibility and provide male mentors to speak with other men about the importance of the topic.

Fathi believes integrating men in the fight will achieve success similar to that of the 2012 initiative "I spotted harassment." She said that project, which relied on young volunteers, produced tangible results.

The new initiative targets men in local communities, university-age youth, civil society organizations, schools and the media. It addresses all forms of violence against women, starting with harassment, whether in the street or the workplace; domestic violence by a husband, father or brother; rape; forced early marriage and genital mutilation of young girls, especially in rural areas and Upper Egypt.

Fathi also hopes to raise awareness about the repercussions of such violence for victims' families.

Read more:

<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/06/egypt-men-women-initiative-counter-violence-against-women.html#ixzz4BHHDQ43r>

GENDER & HUMAN RIGHTS

Gender equality: what do the data show in 2016?

We have seen significant progress in closing gender gaps over the last two decades, especially in education and health. Most countries have reduced disparities between girls and boys in enrollment and completion of primary school, and in transition to secondary school. And both women and men are living longer and healthier lives. But critical gaps persist: Women have limited access to economic opportunities, and their ability to make decisions about their lives and act on them—their agency—is restricted in many ways.

Hurdles to gender equality

These gaps are related to entrenched social norms and biases that constrain women and girls and prevent them from fulfilling their potential. In many economies, women face legal provisions that restrict their capacity to access opportunities—these include requirements that they obtain a husband's permission or produce additional documentation to open a bank account in their own name. Persistent gender-based violence is pervasive and reflects the imbalance of power relations in the household and society more generally. Women's responsibility for family care and household chores, which is necessary for social reproduction, restricts the time they can spend on paid work and disadvantages men.

Read more:

<http://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/gender-equality-where-are-we-2016>

Women's Rights in Saudi Arabia: Hala Aldosari on Reform and the Future



Dr. Hala Aldosari, honored by Freedom House on May 24 as co-winner of its 2016 Freedom Award, is a Saudi women's rights advocate whose work on behalf of women is nearly without precedent in the kingdom. A researcher on women's health issues including domestic violence, Aldosari talks here about prospects for significant social reform.

Freedom House: King Salman began ruling Saudi Arabia in January 2015, appointing Mohammed bin Nayef, the long-serving interior minister, as crown prince and his own 30-year-old son, Mohammed bin Salman, as second in line to the throne. Has King Salman promised improvements in women's status?

Hala: The new king has not done any reforms for women's rights. He is one of the hard-liners, as he was as a governor of Riyadh Province. I don't think he has any interest in women's issues. But will there be any changes? I think there will. It's largely because of economics. The government faces the challenge of needing to find more revenue. It needs more people working in the private sector and then to generate more revenue in taxes.

Read more:

<https://freedomhouse.org/blog/women-s-rights-saudi-arabia-hala-aldosari-reform-and-future>

Minimum Age for Legal Marriage Around the World – Girls



The Spanish Government announced it was to raise the marriage age from 14 to 16 to bring it into line with the rest of Europe.

Estonia now has the lowest marriage age in Europe with teenagers able to get hitched at 15 with parental approval.

Globally, the average legal age of marriage for boys is 17 and 16 for girls but many countries permit them, particularly girls, to marry much younger.

Several places, including the state of Massachusetts in the United States, allow girls as young as 12 to get married in "exceptional circumstances" with the consent of a judge.

But in many cases this is a leftover from an earlier age and is rarely tested. Many countries with low marriage ages do not have a particularly high number of under 18s getting married.

Read more:

<http://www.wunrn.com/2016/06/minimum-age-for-legal-marriage-around-the-world-girls/>

UN Voices Alarm over Plight of Girls in Iran



The UN has criticised Iran for forcing girls to wear hijab (Islamic veil) at the very young age of 7 irrespective of their religious affiliations. Following [areview](#) of the situation in Iran, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) urged the country to “review its hijab laws and regulations and ensure that the right of girls to wear or not to wear hijab is fully respected.”

The UN watchdog for children’s rights condemned Iran for the pre-defined ages of puberty for girls at 9 and for boys at 15 lunar years and asked the State to increase the minimum age of marriage for both girls and boys to 18 years. The CRC also stated that an increasing number of “girls at the age of 10 years or younger” are “subjected to child and forced marriages to much older men.” and urged the Iranian government to “to increase the legal age of marriage to 18 years and criminalize marital rape.”

Read more:

<http://justice4iran.org/publication/call-for-action/un-voices-alarm-over-plight-of-girls-in-iran/>

How European policies are dividing refugee families



The couple have lived apart for three years, ever since Mughrabi fled their war-torn hometown of Yabroud, Syria, and made his way to Germany. It used to be a proper partnership. He supported their six children by working in construction, while she took care of their home. Now, their relationship has been reduced to a flurry of text messages, selfies and voice recordings on WhatsApp, Viber, and Facebook Messenger.

Al-Khatib, who is 40, says she tried to join Mughrabi in Europe via family reunification procedures. After being told by the German embassy in Beirut that she would have to wait until 2017 for a visa interview, she decided to take matters into her own hands.

Read more:

http://www.irinnews.org/feature/2016/05/17/long-goodbye?utm_source=IRIN+-the+inside+story+on+emergencies&utm_campaign=3f68288256-RSS_EMAIL_ENGLISH_ALL&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_d842d98289-3f68288256-15654885

RESOURCES & CALLS

BOOKS & REPORTS

Women's Refugee Commission - Falling Through the Cracks: Refugee Women and Girls in Germany and Sweden

This short (20 page) report overview looks at the reality for refugee women and girls living in Germany and Sweden. Both countries have welcomed unprecedented numbers of refugees however the magnitude and speed of the migration has led to short-term solutions which do not always address, and in some cases perpetuate, the risks of violence against women and girls. Key issues covered:

- The needs of women and girls often go unaddressed in accommodation centers, where asylum seekers must live while their claims are processed.
- There are no standard processes to identify and support Gender-Based Violence (GBV) survivors.
- Current policies and asylum procedures also exacerbate the risks to women and girls, where women and girls must navigate increasingly complicated legal and bureaucratic processes without sufficient support.
- Finally, restrictions to family reunification, results if women and children being left in conflict zones, or encourages dangerous journeys across the Aegean sea and through Europe.

Read more:

http://www.eldis.org/go/home&id=100189&type=Document#.V3EhZxL_cs

For a direct link to report:

<http://peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/Refugee-Women-in-Germany-and-Sweden.pdf>

Patterns of veiling among Muslim women

Understanding why women veil today is a challenging question as it is probably connected to multiple phenomena. The literature – both qualitative and theoretical– suggests a range of hypotheses about why women veil.

This paper exploits a unique source of data, the Gallup World Poll, and is the first cross-country empirical investigation of veiling patterns in Muslim-majority countries, complementing a rich literature on veiling from other disciplinary perspectives.

The authors find evidence of links between veiling and religiosity, age, education levels, marital status, support for political Islam, and employment status.

On the basis of these correlations, we discuss possible reasons for why women veil. These include: to conform to religious beliefs, as a sign of obedience to the patriarchal bargain, to increase their mobility outside the home, to protect against the threat of violence, and to signal their support for political Islam.

Read more:

<http://www.eldis.org/go/topics/resource-guides/gender&id=100204&type=Document#.V1vzdtj95dg>

For a direct link to report:

<http://erf.org.eg/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/995.pdf>

Guidelines to Protect Migrants in Countries Experiencing Conflict or Natural Disaster – Women & Girl Migrants

IOM (International Organization for Migration) welcomed the publication of the “Guidelines to Protect Migrants in Countries Experiencing Conflict or Natural Disaster” by the Migrants in Countries in Crisis (MICIC) Initiative.

Almost all countries host a migrant population and no country is immune to conflict or natural disaster. IOM’s experience has shown that migrants were among those worst affected in every humanitarian crisis of the last decade.

“We have a collective responsibility to improve protection for vulnerable migrants in countries experiencing crisis,” said IOM Director General, William Lacy Swing. “States, international organizations, employers, recruiters and civil society all have a role to play in ensuring that migrants and their particular needs and vulnerabilities are taken into account in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from crisis.”

Read more:

<http://www.wunrn.com/2016/06/guidelines-to-protect-migrants-in-countries-experiencing-conflict-or-natural-disaster-women-girl-migrants/>

For a direct link to report:

http://micicinitiative.iom.int/sites/default/files/document/MICIC_Guidelines_web.pdf

Female political prisoners and conditions of women’s wards in Iranian prisons

At least 40 women are imprisoned on political, ideological and security charges in a number of prisons in Iran.

However, this figure must be considered minimum, as the Iranian regime conceals most of the information about political detainees held in secret prisons.

Under the mullahs’ rule in Iran, women are supposed to stay home and therefore, having any kind of political or civil rights activity is considered a serious crime for women and evokes greater retaliation by the government.

Prison conditions are also very poor and inhumane. As such, many of imprisoned women have developed various illnesses. Some of them have children but are deprived of visiting them.

A number of prisoners and prison conditions have been briefly reviewed in this pamphlet.

Read more:

<http://www.women.ncr-iran.org/index.php/documents/2535-female-political-prisoners-and-conditions-of-women-s-wards-in-iranian-prisons>

For a direct link to report:

<http://www.women.ncr-iran.org/images/documents/Prisoners-prison%20conditions-March%202016-EN.pdf>

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