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Arab women athletes competing in Rio



War, displacement, poor facilities, scarce funds, social pressures will not stop Arab women athletes from competing at Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro.

War, displacement, poor facilities, scarce funds and social pressures will not stop Arab women athletes from competing at the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro.

“Of course the absence of equipment and facilities hinders the efficiency of my training. However, my ambition to make a record helps me overcome all hindrances on the way,” said Egyptian diver Maha Abdel Salam, 17.

Abdel Salam is among 121 athletes representing Egypt at the Olympics. The delegation includes 36 women, the largest female representation in decades.

Abdel Salam has been preparing for the Games for months, training three times a day and strictly following a diet prescribed by her Chinese coach.

Read more:

<http://www.theArabweekly.com/Opinion/5957/Arab-women-athletes-competing-in-Rio>

Municipal elections offer political first step for Lebanese women



According to the National Commission for Lebanese Women, some 600 women were elected during the 2016 municipal elections, an increase of 15% compared to the last elections held in 2010. More educated and more present in the work sphere, women seem to be gaining representation in the public sphere, serving their local communities.

In Baakline, 15 people are elected to the city council, including the president of the municipality. Sara Bou Kamel, a telecommunications engineer running as an independent, almost won the 15th position on the city council in the Chouf area, but ended up 16th, losing by five votes.

Bou Kamel is highly involved in her community through her activities with the nongovernmental organization TERRE Liban. She worked with the previous municipal administration to implement garbage-sorting solutions in Baakline and to train people to fight deforestation and prevent fires.

Read more:

<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/08/lebanon-women-municipal-legislative-elections.html>

The Hijab Debate – Covering Up: Campaigns of Persuasion



Iranian billboard warns women that looser hijabs mean decreased safety.

Hijab is an individual choice. The woman who wears it feels the headscarf empowers her as a symbol of her distinct identity. Arguments like these address our core liberal beliefs, such as the right to individual choice and the duty to empower the disempowered. We encounter these arguments every time a hijab debate that take place in the English language public sphere. We read and listen and find ourselves persuaded even when we don't actually like the idea of headscarves. But still, we feel persuaded. After all, if we, who live in liberal democracies, deny women individual choice, then, who are we but hypocrites? More importantly, if we deny such minority women a sartorial strategy for empowerment, then, who are but oppressors? This is how we are persuaded. Through our own arguments.



Read more:

<http://www.freewomenwriters.org/covering-up-sanitized-and-sinister-campaigns-of-persuasion/>

Yusra mardini: Olympic Syrian refugee who swam for three hours in sea to push sinking boat carrying 20 to safety

Almost every athlete at the 2016 Olympic Games will have an interesting backstory, but Yusra Mardini's is more extraordinary than most.

Mardini is in Rio to represent a team of 10 refugee Olympic athletes.

While any other 18-year-old's biggest achievements may be confined to the A-level results they leave school with, Mardini's is almost incomprehensible.

She and her sister are responsible for helping to save the lives of 20 people, including their own, after jumping off their sinking dinghy into the Aegean Sea and pushing their boat to land.

Mardini, who now lives in Berlin, will compete in the women's 100-metre butterfly and freestyle heats on Saturday and Wednesday. Her appearance is being touted as one of the most highly anticipated of the Games.

Read more:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/yusra-mardini-rio-2016-olympics-womens-swimming-the-syrian-refugee-competing-in-the-olympics-who-a7173546.html?cmpid=facebook-post>

GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

Turkey – Introduction of Chemical Castration Regulation for Sex Offenders Creates Mixed Reaction

After a debate of six years, Turkey introduced chemical castration for sex offenders, amid objections from women’s groups who claimed that the regulation would not be a real deterrent for Turkey’s ever-increasing sexual assault cases.

The new regulation, which was promulgated in the Official Gazette on July 26, says that medical treatment to lower or terminate sexual drive may be applied to individuals convicted of sex offences.

“This is both against the human rights and medical ethics,” said Gülsüm Kav, the president of the “We Will Stop Femicide Platform,” a nation-wide women’s network which provides legal assistance and support to women who are victims of violence and sexual assaults. The group was formed after the rape and decapitation of a 17-years-old by her boyfriend – also the same year that two women from the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) proposed medical treatment, or rather, chemical castration, for sexual offenders. The two deputies said that they were inspired by a similar debate on the issue in Italy at the time.

Read more:

<http://www.wunrn.com/2016/07/turkey-introduction-of-chemical-castration-regulation-for-sex-offenders-creates-mixed-reaction/>

Turkey – Crackdown Raises Issues of Increased Gender Discrimination & Violence



In the days after a failed military coup shook Turkey, women say they are being silenced.

From the start of the coup attempt by military officials on Friday through to the government’s crackdown in response, women’s voices have been almost entirely absent.

Images of protesters on the streets are mostly men. The military leadership is entirely male. The government is 85% men, with only one female minister. Currently, 43 cities don’t have any female representatives at all.

Publicly, the fact that mostly conservatives are holding vigils at the squares might be a factor in women’s absence, too. At least one religious group, namely the Ismailaga movement, issued a decree stating that they’ve decided the women will stay at home and pray while the men will go out to the streets to support the government.

Read more:

<http://www.wunrn.com/2016/07/turkey-crackdown-raises-issues-of-increased-gender-discrimination-violence/>

Turkey – Appeals Court: 3000 Sexual Abusers, Rapists Avoid Jail By Marrying Their Victims



The testimony of a Turkish Supreme Court of Appeals representative has revealed the sad truth about the practice of victims of sexual abuse being married to their assaulters.

Mustafa Demirdağ, the head of the Supreme Court of Appeals department which oversees sexual crimes, said the number of such marriages which were officially registered had reached nearly 3000, according to daily Milliyet.

Speaking to a parliamentary commission formed to investigate and prevent sexual crimes, Demirdağ said children from 5 to 18 years old could be subjected to sexual abuse, adding that girls between the ages of 12 and 15 were more easily tricked by abusers.

Demirdağ mentioned several cases, one of which was similar to the story of a TV series called “Fatmagül’ün suçu ne?” (What is Fatmagül’s Crime?), which became highly popular a couple of years ago. “Three persons kidnaped a girl. Three of them raped her.

Read more:

<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/3000-abusers-rapists-avoid-jail-time-by-marrying-their-victims-in-turkey-appeals-court.aspx?pageID=238&nID=101387&NewsCatID=339>

Morocco teenage rape victim dies



Teenage rape victim dies after setting herself on fire in Morocco.

Alleged attackers had threatened to publish photographs of ordeal suffered by girl, 16, who was pregnant, says rights group.

Moroccan authorities are investigating the death of a teenage rape victim who set herself on fire after her alleged attackers threatened to publish photographs of the ordeal, a rights group has said.

The Moroccan Association of Human Rights said an autopsy after the girl’s death last week showed that she was pregnant.

The AMDH Marrakesh head, Omar Arbib, said “eight young men abducted the girl,” then 16, last year from Ben Guerir, 43 miles (70km) north of Marrakesh, “and then took turns to rape her”.

Her family lodged a complaint and police arrested seven suspects, who were referred to the prosecutor for questioning, Arbib said. An eighth suspect was later arrested.

“This is the reason why last Friday she set herself on fire,” Arbib said.

Read more:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/aug/05/morocco-teenage-rape-victim-dies>

Turkey's constitutional Court stirs outrage by annulling child sex abuse clause

The Constitutional Court has ruled to annul a provision that punishes all sexual acts against children under the age of 15 as "sexual abuse," stirring outrage from academics and women's rights activists who warn that the decision will lead to cases of child abuse going unpunished.

The Constitutional Court discussed the issue upon an application from a district court, which complained that the current law does not discriminate between age groups in cases of child sexual abuse and treats a 14-year-old as equal to a four-year-old.

The local court said the law does not provide legal consequences for the "consent" of victims in cases where the child victim is from 12 to 15 years of age and able to understand the meaning of the sexual act. "This creates an imbalance between legal benefits and sanctions that should be preserved in crime and punishment," the application stated.

With seven votes against six, the Constitutional Court agreed with the local court and decided to annul the provision. The decision will come into effect on Jan. 13, 2017.

The local court's argument and the Constitutional Court's endorsement have drawn a backlash from academic and human rights circles, which underlined that all individuals under the age of 18 are considered children according to international conventions to which Turkey is a party.

Read more:

<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkeys-constitutional-court-stirs-outrage-by-annulling-child-sex-abuse-clause.aspx?pageID=238&nid=101607>

GENDER & HUMAN RIGHTS

Egypt – Women Protest Against "Tourism Marriages" Bill – Often Exploiting Young, Poor Rural Girls



The bill will "put a price tag on tourism marriages," women's rights activists argued.

Over a dozen women demonstrated against a bill passed earlier this month that would basically "legalize tourism marriages," they claimed.

With bruises painted on their eyes using makeup, and tape over their mouths to denounce domestic violence the bill could expose them to, they gathered in front of the Journalists' Syndicate.

The bill was meant to comply with the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. However, according to activists and human rights groups, the bill stipulates that foreign men would have to pay about US\$7,000 in investment certificates at the National Bank of Egypt if they wished to marry women 25 or more years younger than them.

Read more:

<http://www.wunrn.com/2016/07/egypt-women-protest-against-tourism-marriages-bill-often-exploiting-young-poor-rural-girls/>

Egypt – Draft law at parliament could help stop women being deprived of inheritance – but still is a cultural challenge

The Egyptian parliament is considering a move to ensure rightful heirs — including women — get their inheritances.

Six months after Egypt's government amended the inheritance law to punish anyone who deliberately denies an inheritance to those entitled to it, parliament is discussing additional amendments. A draft law would create a judicial body specifically tasked with actually restituting inheritances to their rightful heirs.

A 2010 survey of 200 Egyptian women showed that 59% of them did not receive any inheritance, and women in Upper Egypt, in particular, do not dare to demand their rights in inheritance.

Ghada Sakr, secretary of the parliament's Committee of Media, Culture and Antiquities, told Al-Monitor four parliamentary committees are discussing the text of the draft law she submitted in mid-June. She added, "I am working on a modern comparative study about inheritance problems in Egypt by studying the cases of a sample of women in Upper Egypt and Damietta."

Read more:

http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/07/egypt-inheritance-rights-women-disputes-courts.html?utm_source=Boomtrain&utm_medium=manua&utm_campaign=20160712&bt_email=mosie@infionline.net&bt_ts=1468342591044

Modern-day Slavery in Oman? Domestic Workers in Peril



In order to escape poverty and support their families back home, thousands of domestic workers from South and South-East Asia migrate to Oman with the promise of stable employment in local households.

Once they arrive in Oman, new employers often seize their passports so that they cannot depart when they want, ultimately, denying them their freedom of movement.

They are made subject to excessive working hours, sleep deprivation and starvation. Many suffer from verbal or sexual abuse.

All too often, the money they work so hard for is denied to them. According to a report by [Human Rights Watch](#), a great number of female migrant domestic workers fall prey to such abusive employment, and become Oman's modern-day slaves.

The country's visa sponsorship system, known as *kafala*, as well as the absence of labour law protections for domestic workers make migrant workers highly vulnerable to exploitation.

The *kafala* creates an "unbreakable" tie between the migrant worker and their employer, which means that the migrant worker's visa is directly conditioned by the employer.

Read more:

<http://www.ipsnews.net/2016/07/modern-day-slavery-in-oman-domestic-workers-in-peril/>

Iran – Women “Arrested for Riding Bicycles” & Forced to Sign Pledge Never to Cycle in Public Again



A group of women has reportedly been arrested for riding bicycles in Iran and made to sign pledges not to repeat the “violation”.

They were planning to participate in a cycling event in the north-western city of Marivan when police told them a new government directive had barred women riding bicycles in public.

The opposition National Council of Resistance of Iran said officers ordered them to sign written pledges vowing not to repeat the “unlawful violation” and took several women who protested into custody.

Female cyclists have long been a subject of controversy in the country, where they risk being punished for flouting modesty laws imposing strict dress codes in public. Official signs appeared in May saying “bicycle riding for women is prohibited” in public walkways and police chiefs have previously warned that women caught cycling would be prosecuted.

Read more:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/women-arrested-for-riding-bicycles-in-iran-and-made-to-sign-pledge-never-to-cycle-in-public-again-a7159761.html>

RESOURCES & CALLS BOOKS & REPORTS

Does microcredit reduce gender gap in employment? An application of decomposition analysis to Egypt

Although gender equality has received a great deal of attention from policymakers as well as researchers, there is still as a large gap between men and women in labor market, especially in Arab societies.

In this paper, the authors examine the impact of microcredit on labor supply of men and women and subsequently investigate whether microcredit can reduce employment gap between men and women in Egypt. Overall, they show no significant effects of microcredit on labor supply of men.

Yet, the paper finds a strong effect on employment of women aged 22 to 65. Borrowing from a microcredit source increases the probability of working for women by 0.071. Since the proportion of working of women was around 2.1%, it implies microcredit can increase the proportion of working of women by around 30 percent. Using decomposition analysis, the authors find that micro-credit can reduce the employment gap between men and women by 0.43 percentage points. If 20 percent of women obtain microcredit, the employment gap between men and women would be decreased by 4.3 percentage points.

Read more:

<http://www.eldis.org/go/topics/resource-guides/gender&id=100501&type=Document#.V7IUzFt95dg>

For a direct link to report:

<http://erf.org.eg/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/1017.pdf>

Driving the Gender-Responsive Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The year 2015 was historic. As UN Women turned five, a historic 'gender equality compact' was adopted by world governments and placed at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with truly transformative, comprehensive and universal ambition.

Gender equality was recognized and affirmed as a precondition for the realization of sustainable development and also defined as a key sustainable development goal by itself, Goal 5. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 is a promise to “achieve (not just promote) gender equality and empower all women and girls.” The 2030 Agenda declares that justice for women and girls and their human rights matter because they are half of humanity, and their needs and potential cannot and must not be ignored.

With the new agenda, world leaders have set an expiry date for gender inequality, discrimination and violence against women. This was clearly seen at the historic and groundbreaking 27 September 2015 “Global Leaders’ Meeting on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment: A Commitment to Action”, co-hosted by UN Women with the Government of China, where 140 countries participated and nearly 70 Heads of State and Government from all regions came together in New York to move from commitment to action and to step it up for implementing the Beijing Platform for Action and achieving the SDGs for women and girls.

For a direct link to report:

<http://www2.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2016/driving-gender-responsive-implementation-2030agenda.pdf?v=1&d=20160812T205353>

EU-Turkey Agreement Failing Refugee Women & Girls – Report

In 2015, more than one million refugees¹ and migrants fleeing war, persecution, gender-based violence and other crises arrived in Europe in search of safety and asylum. Some 240,000 have arrived in 2016, so far. Most of them made the perilous voyage across the Aegean Sea from Turkey to Greece, traveling onward toward Western Europe. While all of these refugees face risks, women and girls especially have experienced sexual assault, extortion, and exploitation and rights violations at every stage of their traumatic journey. They include single women traveling alone, female-headed households, pregnant women, adolescent girls, unaccompanied minors and women with disabilities. Throughout this mass migration to and through Europe, there have been significant and alarming gaps in protection and services for refugee women and girls. At every point where risk could have been mitigated, the humanitarian response has been woefully inadequate. The situation for refugees has become even more complex and precarious since March 20, 2016, when the European Union and Turkey launched a highly politicized plan to reduce the flow of refugees into Europe. A key part of the deal centers on detaining new arrivals in Greece and containing refugees already there, as determinations are made as to whether refugees are given asylum in Greece, sent back to Turkey or resettled in an accepting European country. While urgent action was needed to better manage the crisis, the Women’s Refugee Commission finds the deal short-sighted, discriminatory and legally-dubious, with profound and distressing ramifications for refugees seeking asylum and family reunification in Europe, particularly women and girls.

For a direct link to report:

<http://www.wunrn.org/pdf/eu.pdf>

Announcing Manifesta: Your Platform for Gender Justice Campaigning

Manifesta is a new independent, digitally-networked community and movement building tool grounded in feminist human rights principles

The idea for Manifesta was collectively hatched a couple of years ago by AWID, Association for Progressive Communication, Catapult, Global Fund for Women, the International Network of Women's Funds and Mama Cash, and will be officially launched in beta in September at the AWID Forum in Brazil.

Manifesta is the only online global feminist community and organizing tool dedicated to provide mutual support to advocacy campaigns for gender justice, including the ability to raise funds for feminist causes worldwide.

It will be accessible in several languages and will allow you and your organization – and even any individual—to start, run and deliver your own

campaign, with the technology you need at your fingertips.

Why should we use Manifesta when there are already so many platforms and communications tools available?

Manifesta isn't just another petition or signature-gathering site. It's the first and only "one-stop" digital campaigning platform dedicated to gender justice that organizations and networks can use to get new supporters to their cause, fundraise and build powerful local and global communities of feminist and gender justice activists and supporters for both online and on-the-ground actions to achieve concrete changes in national and international legislations, mass media and corporate and governmental policies.

Read more:

<http://www.awid.org/news-and-analysis/announcing-manifesta-your-platform-gender-justice-campaigning>

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