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NEWS & ARTICLES

GENDER ACTIVISM

Lebanese women decry appointment of male women's minister



Women's rights activists criticized Monday the appointment of a man to head Lebanon's newly created Women's Affairs Ministry, saying women were sorely underrepresented in the newly created Cabinet.

"Is it acceptable to assign a male minister to the Women's Affairs Ministry?" asked a statement issued by the Women in Parliament Coalition.

"Is this the consecration of the patriarchal system in Lebanon or is this due to a lack of competent women for the job?" asked the statement, which was carried by the National News Agency.

Prime Minister Saad Hariri unveiled a new 30-member Cabinet Sunday, in which Jean Ogasapian became Minister of State for Women's Affairs.

Read more:

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2016/Dec-19/385947-lebanese-women-decry-appointment-of-male-womens-minister.ashx>

Why Egyptian women are taking to the streets in 1960s-style dresses



Participants of the "Dresses of the Past When Our Streets Were Safe" initiative posing at a cafe in downtown Cairo, Dec. 8, 2016.

A new Egyptian initiative is calling upon women to wear 1960s-style dresses as a way to fight sexual harassment. The initiative, dubbed "Dresses of the Past When Our Streets Were Safe," seeks to normalize the sight of women on the streets wearing dresses as it was in the 1960s, when sexual harassment rates were at their lowest.

Hadia Abdel-Fattah, the feminist activist behind the initiative, told Al-Monitor, "It is not about clothing, because no matter what you wear you will get harassed anyway. That is why we encourage women to wear whatever they like."

The initiative comes as part of UN Women's 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, an international campaign taking place from Nov. 25 to Dec. 10.

Read more:

<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/12/egypt-women-confront-sexual-harassment-dresses.html#ixzz4TJeYNgB0>

Iranian women demand inclusion in Rouhani's Cabinet

The resignations of three Cabinet ministers in October had raised hope among many women's rights activists in Iran that President Hassan Rouhani would nominate at least one woman to one of the vacant positions. While Rouhani pledged to incorporate more women into his government during his 2013 presidential campaign, he has yet to fulfill this promise.

Upon taking office, Rouhani named three women as vice presidents and also tried to place more women as senior state officials. After the recent Cabinet reshuffle, he named Zahra Ahmadipour as a new vice president as well as head of Iran's Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization. Reports suggest that the president is also considering appointing Zahra Shojaei as the head of Iran's National Library and Archives Organization. If finalized, these two women will replace their male colleagues Masoud Soltanifar and Reza Salehi Amiri, who have now become minister of sports and youth affairs as well as minister of culture and Islamic guidance, respectively, after winning votes of confidence from parliament.

Ahmadipour is one of three women who currently hold Cabinet positions at the rank of vice president.

The other two women are Masoumeh Ebtekar, who has been vice president and head of the Environmental Protection Organization of Iran since 2013, and Shahindokht Molaverdi, who has served as vice president for women and family affairs since Rouhani took office. Elham Aminzadeh served as vice president for legal affairs from August 2013 to July 2016, and currently works as a presidential aide.

Read more

<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/12/iran-cabinet-reshuffle-women-vp-ministers-shojaei-ahmadipour.html#ixzz4TJfEaelX>

UN Experts: Iran must halt the campaign against Iranian woman seeking missing relatives

Justice for Iran (JFI) welcomes the press release which was issued yesterday by five UN human rights mechanisms on the concerning situation of Iranian human rights defender, Raheleh Rahemipour.

A group of United Nations human rights experts; the Working Group on enforced or involuntary disappearances, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, and the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran has said "the Islamic Republic must end the harassment of a woman trying to learn the fate of her brother and his newborn daughter, who disappeared from prison more than 30 years ago".

The UN's Working Group on enforced or involuntary disappearances communicated with the Iranian government in August 2016 about the relatives of Ms. Rahemipour. Since then a systematic campaign of harassment and intimidation against her has been launched by the authorities in Iran. She is to appear before a Revolutionary Court on December 13 charged with 'propaganda against the stated', and 'participation in unlawful assemblies'.

Read more:

<http://justice4iran.org/publication/call-for-action/un-experts-iran-must-halt-the-campaign-against-iranian-woman-seeking-missing-relatives/>

GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

Lebanon: Reform Rape Laws Prevent Rapists From Escaping Punishment by Marrying Victims



Demonstration outside Parliament on December 6, 2016, with women in white dresses and wrapped in bandages, calling for the repeal of article 522 of the penal code. Lebanon's parliament should repeal a penal code provision that allows rapists to escape prosecution by marrying their victims, Human Rights Watch said today. Parliament should also amend other provisions to adequately criminalize sexual assault and rape, including by spouses.

On December 7, 2016, members of the Parliamentary Committee for Administration and Justice announced an agreement to repeal article 522 of the Lebanese Penal Code, which allows halting the prosecution or suspending the conviction of a person who has committed rape, kidnapping, or statutory rape if he marries the victim.

Read more:

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/12/19/lebanon-reform-rape-laws>

Telling Women to Hide Domestic Violence Behind Make-Up?

Moroccan Women Need Help Confronting, Not Covering Up, Domestic Violence



Screenshot from an episode of the Sabahiyat morning show on Moroccan state television, which aired on November 23, 2016.

“We hope these beauty tips will help you carry on with your daily life,” said a make-up artist on the morning show *Sabahiyat* on Morocco's state television last Wednesday. But this was no typical make-up advice: She was teaching women how to cover up bruises from domestic violence.

It was, to say the least, a misguided attempt to commemorate International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, November 25.

The show sparked outrage. Activists in Morocco preparing for United Nation's annual 16 days of activism against gender-based violence – from November 25 until Human Rights Day, December 10 –were furious that the show told domestic violence survivors to “cover up” rather than speak out. They started an online petition calling on the government to take action against the channel.

Read more:

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/11/28/telling-women-hide-domestic-violence-behind-make>

Amendment in Turkish penal code runs the risk of seeking consent from children

Article 103 of the Turkish penal code, recently amended and passed through Parliament, runs the risk of seeking consent from children between 12 and 15 years of age.

The government proposed a bill late at night on November 17, 2016 that would grant amnesty to the perpetrators of sexual abuse if they married their victims, and later had to withdraw it following widespread uproar first and foremost from the TPC 103 Women's Platform comprised of nearly 140 autonomous women's organizations, as well as from numerous groups in society, ranging from women's NGOs to children's NGOs, from general practitioners to lawyers, all across the country and abroad. However, Article 13 of omnibus Draft Law No. 438, which proposed amendments to Article 103 of the Turkish Penal Code (TPC), passed through parliament on November 24, 2016. Accordingly, there is now an age categorization for 12-to-15-year-olds in Article 103 of the TPC.

In its amended form, Article 103 of the TPC does still prevent seeking consent from children below 15 years of age. Yet because age of consent is not clearly stated in the law in a way that leaves no room for interpretation, this could lead to different interpretations in practice, as witnessed in certain cases in the past.

Thus, there is a danger that in practice, some courts could seek consent from children between 12 and 15 years of age.

Read more:

<https://www.awid.org/news-and-analysis/amendment-turkish-penal-code-runs-risk-seeking-consent-children>

Calls for action as 'honour' killings in Jordan show sharp increase

As part of 16-day campaign against gender violence, activists demand stronger penalties for 'honour' crimes and an end to imprisonment of at-risk women



On 8 October, an 18-year-old man from the Jordanian city of Madaba was charged with killing his sister as she slept after allegedly finding her with a mobile phone the family didn't know about. Five days later, two brothers were charged with murdering their sisters aged 27 and 34 at a farm on the outskirts of Jordan's capital, Amman.

The victims were among five women killed during one week in Jordan for reasons related to family "honour". Thirty-eight women have been victims of "honour" killings this year. The country typically reports between 15 and 20 such crimes a year, according to Human Rights Watch.

Read more:

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2016/dec/09/calls-for-action-as-honour-killings-in-jordan-show-sharp-increase-16-day-campaign-gender-violence>

GENDER & HUMAN RIGHTS

Lebanon Deports Domestic Worker Rights Organizer

Crackdown on Activists Undermines Fight for Rights



Sujana Rana being deported to Nepal from Beirut's Rafic Hariri International Airport. Lebanon marked International Human Rights Day on Saturday by deporting Sujana Rana, a Nepalese migrant domestic worker involved in the struggle for the rights of migrant domestic workers.

Her arrest and deportation suggests authorities targeted Rana for her activism, a shortsighted move that will undermine the fight for equal rights in Lebanon.

Lebanon's general security agency detained Rana at her employer's home on November 30, 2016, did not allow her to call a lawyer, and questioned her about her involvement in activism for the rights of migrant domestic workers, according to local organizations. Lebanese authorities later arrested a second Nepalese migrant domestic worker, Roja Limbu, on December 5.

Read more:

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/12/13/lebanon-deports-domestic-worker-rights-organizer>

Egypt: Women's Rights Defender Arrested

Azza Soliman Accused in Escalation of Foreign Funding Case

Police arrested a leading Egyptian women's rights defender at her home in Cairo on December 7, 2016, a serious escalation in the authorities' ongoing crackdown on independent rights groups, Human Rights Watch said today.

The police took Azza Soliman, a lawyer and founder of the Center for Egyptian Women's Legal Assistance, for interrogation before Judge Hisham Abdel Meguid, one of three judges assigned to investigate the foreign funding of independent Egyptian rights groups. Prominent rights activists had previously been summoned for interrogation in the investigation, but it was the first time that judges ordered the arrest of one of those involved in the case.

"The authorities' drive to criminalize independent human rights work in Egypt keeps picking up speed," said Joe Stork, deputy Middle East and North Africa director at Human Rights Watch. "If the government doesn't halt this case, it could end with the country's most prominent rights defenders behind bars."

Judge Abdel Meguid later ordered Soliman released after she paid 20,000 Egyptian pounds (US\$1,100) for bail, but she remains under investigation.

In November, Cairo International Airport authorities told Soliman, as she was leaving for a conference in Jordan, that she had been banned from traveling outside Egypt by judicial order. Soliman also discovered that the Central Bank had frozen her personal assets and the assets of her organization.

Read more:

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/12/08/egypt-womens-rights-defender-arrested>

Women Should Take the Wheel in Saudi Arabia: Saudi Prince Calls for End to the Ban on Women Driving



Saudi billionaire Prince Alwaleed bin Talal has publicly called for an end to Saudi Arabia's decades-old ban on women driving. Although the prince, a business magnate and investor, does not hold an official government position, he is the most high-profile Saudi royal to unequivocally state that the driving ban is discriminatory and should end.

Alwaleed's call appears to align with Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's Vision 2030 development plan. The plan declares that the government will "continue to develop [women's] talents, invest in their productive capabilities and enable them to strengthen their future and contribute to the development of our society and economy."

But Prince Mohammed's declared views on women driving contradict the announced vision and tell a different story.

Read more:

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/12/05/women-should-take-wheel-saudi-arabia>

Egypt's parliament under fire for controversial child custody bill



According to women's rights activists in Egypt, a new child custody proposal being considered by the Egyptian parliament is a step backward and an affront to Egyptian women, particularly divorced mothers.

Female parliament member Soheir El-Hadi along with 60 parliamentarians have submitted a bill amending Egypt's Personal Status Law 25 of 1929, which regulates all issues related to family, including marriage, divorce and child custody. Hadi's amendments have targeted certain articles on child custody, stirring a hornet's nest of controversy among parliamentarians and citizens.

The potential law proposes that divorced fathers should have the right to host their children for two days every week if the mother has custody. Fathers will also have the right to spend a month of the school summer vacation with their children. According to the current law, divorced fathers can only see their children for three hours every week.

Read more:

<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/12/egypt-child-custody-bill-controversy-parliament.html#ixzz4TJdpKu95>

Saudi officials say more professions should be open to women –newspapers

A senior Saudi cleric and a health ministry official said women should be allowed to work as paramedics and opticians, Saudi newspapers reported on Monday, part of a push to relax strict labour codes in the ultra-conservative kingdom.

The government announced an economic reform plan in June that aims to increase the number of women as a proportion of the workforce to 28 percent from 23 percent by 2020 and to quadruple the number of women in senior civil service roles to 5 percent.

Saudi Arabia is the only country where women are forbidden to drive, making it harder for them to get to work. Regulations also bar them from certain professions, while rules on gender mixing in shops and businesses further limit job opportunities.

Saudi prince calls for ban on women drivers to be lifted

"It's fine (for a woman) to work as a paramedic, provided she's decent and in the lawful attire," a senior member of the state-appointed body of clerics, the Ulama, Sheikh Abdullah al-Manea told the Okaz daily.

Women are already allowed to work as doctors and have volunteered as medics in Mecca during the haj pilgrimage for the past few years, with similar requirements for modest dress.

Read more:

<http://news.trust.org/item/20161219105029-k880b>

Syrian girls flee war only to become mothers in Jordan camp

In a crowded maternity clinic at a refugee camp in Jordan near the Syrian border, Elhem cradled her crying 11-month-old son, bounced him on her knee and then handed him to her mother to help calm him down.

"When I had the baby I felt a sense of motherhood and was happy," the Syrian refugee said through a translator, adjusting her floral niqab. "I'm a housewife now."

She's 17, and her experience is common. Elhem, who asked to be identified by her first name, says many Syrian girls in the camp are also mothers, including a friend who gave birth at the age of 15.

Despite efforts to reduce early marriage in Zaatari camp since its opening in 2012, maternal health workers from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) say the number of babies born to adolescent girls remains stubbornly high.

More than 15 million girls worldwide are married before they turn 18, according to campaign group Girls Not Brides. Child marriage deprives girls of education and opportunities, and puts them at risk of serious injury or death if they have children before their bodies are ready.

Read more:

<http://news.trust.org/item/20161215121438-d5wci/>

RESOURCES & CALLS

BOOKS & REPORTS

Women's Stories, Women's Lives : Male Authority in Muslim Contexts

A look at the lives of women in Muslim families today and their struggle for justice and equality.



Researchers and activists from Bangladesh, Canada, Egypt, The Gambia, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Nigeria and The United Kingdom have joined efforts to produce a report documenting the experiences of 55 Muslim women with male authority and guardianship.

Musawah brings you their stories.

Read more:

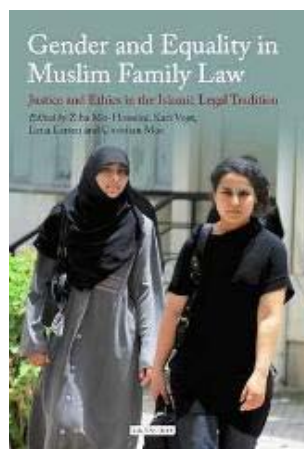
<http://www.musawah.org/women%E2%80%99s-stories-women%E2%80%99s-lives-male-authority-muslim-contexts-0>

For a direct link to report:

<http://www.musawah.org/sites/default/files/MusawahG PL2016.pdf>

Gender and Equality in Muslim Family Law

An Egalitarian Understanding of Qiwamah and Wilayah



Gender and Equality in Muslim Family Law offers a groundbreaking analysis of family law, based on fieldwork in family courts, and illuminated by insights from distinguished clerics and scholars of Islam from Morocco, Egypt, Iran, Pakistan and Indonesia, as well as by the experience of human rights and women's rights activists.

It explores how male authority is sustained through law and court practice in different contexts, the consequences for women and the family, and the demands made by Muslim women's groups. The book argues for women's full equality before the law by re-examining the jurisprudential and theological arguments for male guardianship (qiwama, wilaya) in Islamic legal tradition.

Read more:

<http://www.musawah.org/egalitarian-understanding-qiwamah-and-wilayah>

For a direct link to report:

<http://www.musawah.org/sites/default/files/Table-of-Contents-and-Introduction-GEMFLbook.pdf>

Reaching refugee survivors of gender-based violence – Evaluation of a mobile approach to service delivery in Lebanon

In October 2014, the International Rescue Committee (IRC)'s Women's Protection and Empowerment Lebanon program began implementing an innovative mobile approach to gender-based violence response and mitigation service delivery in Akkar district. The IRC's approach aims to reach non-camp based Syrian refugee women living within Lebanese communities with GBV case management and psychosocial support services.

The global number of refugees, asylum-seekers, and internally displaced people has reached an all-time high. As of 2014, 59.5 million people had been forcibly displaced as a result of conflict, violence, and human rights violations. This increase has been driven largely by the war in the Syrian Arab Republic (Syria) which has resulted in 4.8 million refugees, over half of whom are female.

Only 10 percent of all registered Syrian refugees across the Middle East and North Africa live in camps, with the rest embedded in host communities in urban, peri-urban, and rural settings. In Lebanon, which now has the largest concentration of refugees per capita in the world, 18 percent of the displaced Syrian population lives in informal tented settlements, while the majority reside in houses and shelters in host communities.

Read more:

<http://www.icrw.org/publications/reaching-refugee-survivors-of-gender-based-violence/>

For a direct link to report:

<http://www.icrw.org/sites/default/files/publications/ICRW%20Mobile%20Services%20Assessment%20IRC.pdf>

Unpacking Gender: The Humanitarian Response to the Syrian Refugee Crisis in Jordan

With no political solution on the horizon to end the war in Syria, it is clear that humanitarian agencies must continue to prepare for a protracted conflict. In late 2013, the Women's Refugee Commission (WRC) undertook an extensive literature review and a month-long field assessment in Jordan, including in-depth interviews, focus group meetings and observation. The goal of the project was to identify how the humanitarian community was integrating existing gender guidance across all sectors and if gender was being dealt with centrally as an institutionalized way of working rather than peripherally. It looked at the ways in which humanitarian agencies, including UN agencies and international and local organizations, assessed these needs and planned their programs. It also asked questions about the opportunities and good practices/models for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment.

Read more:

<https://www.womensrefugeecommission.org/resources/233-gender-issues/985-unpacking-gender-the-humanitarian-response-to-the-syrian-refugee-crisis-in-jordan>

For a direct link to paper:

[file:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/Unpacking-Gender--The-Humanitarian-Reponse-to-the-Syrian-Refugee-Crisis-in-Jordan--03-2014%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/Unpacking-Gender--The-Humanitarian-Reponse-to-the-Syrian-Refugee-Crisis-in-Jordan--03-2014%20(1).pdf)

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