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Gaza organization recruits men to fight for women's rights



Despite efforts by women's rights organizations in the Gaza Strip to fight for their rights, empower them and change societal views of women as dependent beings, the director of the Women's Affairs Center in the Gaza Strip, Amal Siyam, said, "The process of developing the rights of women in Palestinian society is quite slow, as the community continues to hold onto customs and traditions that give men control and guardianship over women in most aspects of their lives." She added that women's rights organizations have begun to directly target and confront men, instead of focusing only on helping women regain societal rights.

The Women's Affairs Center, established in 1991 in the Gaza Strip, plays a leading role in empowering women and promoting gender equality. The center's main objective is threefold: develop women's capacities, promote fact-based decision-making processes, enhance the local community's view of women's rights and achieve gender equality.

Read more:

<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/11/palestine-gaza-center-women-affairs-role.html#ixzz4WISUIrxl>

Egypt's graffiti artists struggle to bring women to street walls

In downtown Cairo, a graffiti drawing shows a woman stuck between dozens of men who are blaming her for being sexually harassed. The painting, which is one of hundreds tackling women's issues in Egypt, appears on one of the walls of a street near Tahrir Square where widespread demonstrations took place during and after the revolution.

"We have been using the walls to address one of the most important topics in Egypt: the challenges women face in a conservative society that involves many different issues, including the political, the social, the economic and the cultural," Dina Saadi told Al-Monitor. Saadi is one of the female graffiti artists whose graffiti drawings appear on Cairo's street walls as part of a public art project dedicated to women and the issues they face.

The project, titled Women on Walls, has been bringing the woes of Egyptian women to the walls of outdoor spaces with the aim of empowering them through street art and encouraging female street artists to participate in the political scene of graffiti.

"Because Egyptian women have always been an essential part of any political or social revolution, the project has introduced them and their issues into public spaces and made them more visible on the walls," Saadi said.

In December 2012, the Women on Walls project was founded by Mia Grondahl, a Swedish photojournalist and street art documentarian, and Egyptian artist Angie Balata, with funding from the Danish Center for Culture and Development.

Read more:

<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/01/egypt-graffiti-artists-women-walls-cairo.html#ixzz4WITS0fA6>

Is this the beginning of a revolution by Saudi women?

A police spokesman in Riyadh announced Dec. 12 the arrest of a young Saudi woman, Malak al-Shehri, for violating Saudi regulations by taking off her abaya — a loose-fitting full-length robe — in a public place, and openly revealing her relations with young men. The girl was held at the women's prison as a preliminary measure before being transferred to the public prosecution office and the Investigation Commission affiliated with the Ministry of Interior.

On Nov. 28, Shehri, 21, had posted on her Twitter account — which she deleted after being fiercely attacked by conservatives — that she would go out the next morning wearing a skirt with a “stylish jacket,” and start her day with breakfast at McDonald's and then coffee and cigarettes with a male friend.

The next day, Shehri headed to al-Tahliya Street in Riyadh, without wearing her abaya, and posted a photo of herself on Twitter.

This provoked the wrath of the Riyadh Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice, which submitted a request to police to arrest Shehri on charges of public disobedience.

After the news of Shehri's detention became public, social media activists launched a Twitter campaign called “#FreeMalakAlshehri.”

Read more

<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/12/saudi-arabia-malak-shehri-abaya-execution-women-rights-cause.html#ixzz4WIU7XRP>

How women pried open the doors to Turkish military schools again

Just two years ago, Al-Monitor reported on a rise in the number of female soldiers in the Turkish Armed Forces. Then the Ministry of Defense picked a fight by deciding women were no longer needed in the navy and air force.

Every year, the academies accepted a small number of female students who have finished high school. These students had to meet a long list of physical, medical and academic standards, along with securing high scores on standardized college entrance exams. On this year's applications, however, the option allowing women to apply for the navy and air force disappeared. This came as a shock to potential applicants, their families and women's organizations, especially given Turkey's history. Female pilots have had a special place in Turkey's air force. Sabiha Gokcen, the world's first female combat pilot, is one of the adopted daughters of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the founder of modern Turkey. After entering the Military Aviation Academy in 1936, she flew 32 combat missions and logged 8,000 flight hours. Gokcen became a role model for Turkish women, who had already gained suffrage rights in 1934. The first female NATO pilots are also from Turkey. From 1955 to 1959, 20 female students were accepted into the Turkish Air Force Academy. In 1992, all military academy branches started accepting women.

So after having the door slammed in their faces in 2017, potential female applicants and their families started organizing on social media, particularly those who wanted to apply to the air force.

Read more:

<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/01/turkey-air-force-academy-denies-entry-to-female-candidates.html#ixzz4WIZZpZhM>

GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

Deaths, deportations and arrests: violence against migrants in Morocco

EU policy is blocking routes to Europe for those suffering from the neocolonial and capitalist exploitation and nurturing of conflicts throughout Africa by western countries.

"We are in Morocco. Here, many Blacks have lost their lives. Here, it's Boukhalef. The Moroccans call us azzia. They talk about us to scare their children. And when they see us they flee. Oh oh, it hurts us".

Written by the Senegalese musician and no borders activist living in Tangier, Xelu Baye Fall, these words (translated from Wolof) are written "for all the people who have died at the border/For all the people who have died at the fences." The song is about Charles Paul Alphonse Ndour, a 26 year-old Senegalese man who was killed by Moroccan men in Tangier in August 2014. The lyrics reference the racism and violence experienced daily in Morocco by sub-Saharan Africans. "Azzia", meaning black-skinned, is a derogatory term used primarily against sub-Saharans, along with the taunt "Ebola".

It is crucial to connect the everyday racism experienced by sub-Saharans in Morocco with the overt racism of the deadly EU border regime: the militarisation of the border as the EU spends millions to build fences (in 2015 Morocco built a fourth razor wire fence and deep trench at the border to Melilla with EU funding), the refusal of a safe passage to Europe to avoid the deaths of thousands at sea, and detaining people who do reach Europe in prison-like conditions.

Read more:

<https://www.opendemocracy.net/5050/lily-jay/deaths-deportations-and-arrests-violence-against-migrants-in-morocco>

Dangerous journeys: violence against women migrants in Turkey

Syrian women migrants in Turkey face many forms of violence - sexual harassment, forced and early marriage, polygamy and trafficking for sexual exploitation. The perpetrators include soldiers, border officers and migration officers.

There are three million registered migrants in Turkey, 90% are from Syria of whom one and a half million are women. Interviews with migrant women reveal that many are exposed to sexual harassment and assault during war, migration and resettlement processes, with the perpetrators including soldiers, border officers and migration officers.

Without an identity card, women cannot access services. They cannot report sexual harassment, go to the police, or even go to hospital. If they try, the services don't take any action, they take them away them to migrant offices first.

Whilst Turkey has adapted international law into national law to offer some protection, there are major implementation gaps. Activists struggle with discrimination, racism and patriarchal values which mean that state agencies fail to fulfil their duty to protect against and investigate cases of violence. The Ministry of Family and Social Policies requires that shelters only work with women where the violence has taken place within Turkey.

However, many women leave their countries due to violence, and are in need of accommodation when they arrive. They currently cannot access shelters, most of which in Turkey are run by the state.

Read more:

<https://www.opendemocracy.net/5050/yasemin-mert/dangerous-journeys-women-migrants-in-turkey>

ISIS brutalizes women in the name of Islam – and it still has thousands of female slaves in its grasp

Handcuffed man sits on a dirty couch in a small room. The walls are painted a sickly pale yellow that is even less appealing in the harsh fluorescent lighting. Two fighters and an officer clad in green camouflage stand by, watching.

The prisoner is in his mid- to late 30s, relatively fair-skinned for an Iraqi, with curly auburn hair and light brown eyes. According to the Peshmerga, the fighting force of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), he was the leader of an Islamic State intelligence unit. His jailers explain that the prisoner was responsible for interrogating people in Islamic State-held territory, trying to gather information and root out any internal dissent.

I purposefully twirl a piece of my hair around my index finger. I am aware that the prisoner, as a member of an organization that insists on the complete submission of women, is likely fighting back fury at the sight of an unveiled woman looking at him without fear.

“Tell me about your wife,” I begin. “How did you treat her?”

“My wife completely covered her body and face and never left the house without me,” he replies sullenly. I don’t know how much encouragement he received from his captors before speaking with me, but he seems healthy and uninjured. “She is forbidden from going anywhere without me.”

Read more:

<http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/10/11/women-survive-they-do-not-live-isis-islam-yazidi/>

13-year-old girl forced to marry her 'rapist' step-brother



A man in his 20s has married his 13-year-old step-sister after making her pregnant. The marriage took place in the northwest region of Kef in Tunisia, in the presence of their parents who had previously attempted to stop the wedding.

Although having sex with someone under the age of 15 is punishable by up to six years in prison under Tunisian law, according to article 277 of the country’s criminal code, if no force was used during the attack an alleged rapist can halt his prosecution by marrying his victim. Chokri Mejri, a spokesperson for the court, claimed the girl “was not raped”.

“We interviewed the girl and after verifying all the details, we considered her fit for marriage,” Mr Mejri said.

The North African country has lead the way on advancing women’s rights within the Arab world, yet gender stereotypes and archaic laws remain ingrained in its justice system.

Read more:

<http://www.wunrn.com/2017/01/tunisia-stepbrother-avoids-prison-by-marrying-age-13-stepsister-pregnant-after-rape-public-call-for-new-anti-vaw-legislation/>

Donors thinking big: beyond gender equality funds

The case for investing in southern women's rights organisations is firmly established, but to create sustainability, resilience and long-term change donors need to invest in the infrastructure of the organisations and movements.

Members of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) provided \$35.5 billion in aid to gender equality in 2014; this was an all-time high. Around 28% – nearly \$10 billion – went to civil society organisations (csos).

The vast majority of this aid supported international non-governmental organisations (ingos) or civil society organisations based in the donor country. In 2014, only 8% of gender focused aid to civil society went directly to csos in developing countries.

No DAC agency is able to systematically track its funding to women's rights organisations specifically. However, data reported by DAC members suggests that women's groups may be missing out from the increase in aid going to civil society organisations for gender-related work. In 2014, \$192 million was reported as targeting women's rights organisations directly. This is lower than in previous years. Where resources are reaching southern women's groups, they are typically small-scale and short-term. While small amounts of money can stimulate learning and innovation, they do not enable vital expansion, scale-up and strengthening of organisational and operational capacity.

Read more:

<https://www.opendemocracy.net/emily-esplen/donor-funding-beyond-gender-equality-funds>

Feminist Activist and Woman Human Rights Defender Mozn Hassan and Nazra for Feminist Studies Included in Asset Freeze Case Associated with Case 173 for the Year 2011 Known as the "NGO Foreign Funding Case"

In today's court session at Abbasia Court, which looks into the request for the freeze Lawyer Azza Soliman's assets and that of her law firm, a request was made for the asset freeze of feminist and woman human rights defender Mozn Hassan and Nazra for Feminist Studies, within the context of case no.173 for the year 2011 known as the "NGO Foreign Funding Case", as her name is listed in the case, and that of Mohamed Zaree from the Arab Penal Reform Organization (APRO), based on a request from the investigative judge, where the session was postponed to 14 December 2016 to review case papers and document submission, in addition to issuing the verdict for Azza Soliman and her law firm in the same session.

Subsequently, Hassan joins several human rights defenders (HRDs) whose assets have been frozen within the context of the same case, such as investigative journalist Hossam Bahgat, Gamal Eid, the Director of the Arab Network for Human Rights Information (ANHRI), Bahey El-Din Hassan, the Founder and Executive Director the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS), Ahmed Samih, the Executive Director of Andalus institute for Tolerance and Anti-Violence Studies, Abdel Hafiz Tayel, who is the Executive Director of the Institute for the Right to Education and Mostafa Al-Hassan, the Director of Hesham Mubarak Law Center.

Read more:

<http://nazra.org/en/2016/12/feminist-activist-and-woman-human-rights-defender-mozn-hassan-and-nazra-feminist-studies>

Precarious migrant motherhood in Lebanon

Ethiopian migrant domestic workers who give birth to children in Lebanon are caught in a trap between the struggle to bring up a child with no legal status, and the difficulty of exiting the country.

Rubka* is an Ethiopian migrant worker in Lebanon who is a live-in domestic worker for Tete Mona, an elderly Lebanese woman. Rubka also manages a 'garderie' for Tete Mona – an unregistered daycare where around 7 Ethiopian migrant women pay Tete Mona USD100 a month for daycare for their children aged between 1 and 6 years. The mothers all live and work locally, and drop their children off in the morning and pick them up as soon as they have finished work. The children are fed their lunch, and spend most of the day watching children's TV and/or playing with each other in the small space.

It is primarily Rubka who looks after all the children – so she does domestic work and childcare; but this arrangement works for her too, as it allows her to also look after her three-year old son, Yafit (which she would not have been able to do in a 'regular' contract job as a domestic worker). Recent changes to laws affecting migrant workers in Lebanon combine racial and gender biases to put women like Rubka and their children in extremely precarious positions.

Yafit's father is a Syrian man with whom Rubka had a relationship. Although this man is named as the father on the birth certificate, he was married with other children and soon after Yafit's birth, he left the country.

Read more:

<https://www.opendemocracy.net/5050/bina-fernandez/precarious-migrant-motherhood-in-lebanon>

The Sharia debate in the UK: who will listen to our voices?

Over 300 abused women have signed a statement opposing Sharia courts and religious bodies, warning of the growing threat to their rights and to their collective struggles for security and independence.

We are women who have experienced abuse and violence in our personal lives. Most of us come from Muslim backgrounds, but some of us come from other minority faiths.

We are compelled to voice our alarm about the growing power of religious bodies such as Sharia Councils and their bid for control over our lives. We oppose any religious body - whether presided over by men or women - that seeks to rule over us: because they do not have any authority to speak or make decisions on our behalf and because they are not committed to women's rights and social justice. Whether we are women of Muslim, Hindu, Sikh or Christian faiths or of no faith, we have much in common with each other in the face of cruelty, tyranny and discrimination in our families, in our communities, and in the wider society. Many of us are deeply religious, but for us religion is in our hearts: a private matter between us and our God. Religion is not – and must not be – something that can be used to deny us our freedom or the little pieces of happiness that we find by mixing and borrowing from many different traditions and cultures which give meaning to our otherwise difficult existence.

We know from personal experiences that many religious bodies such as Sharia Councils are presided over by hard line or fundamentalist clerics who are intolerant of the very idea that women should be in control of their own bodies and minds.

Read more:

<https://www.opendemocracy.net/5050/pragna-patel/sharia-debate-who-will-listen-to-us>

Challenging corporate power: struggles for women's rights, economic and gender justice

The report is the result of a Cross Movement Dialogue convened by AWID and the Solidarity Center with the facilitation of Just Associates (JASS) in early 2016 in São Paulo, Brazil. This dialogue brought together women trade unionists, women workers, feminists, Indigenous and Black women, LGBTQI activists, and women human rights defenders to discuss, debate and share understandings of corporate power, and what it means to their struggles and their lives.

In the first section, the paper explores how corporations in collusion with elites and other powerful actors are exerting their power to transform economic and political systems. The report then illustrates how this power impacts women and oppressed peoples.

The five stories of struggle captured in this report were shared during the Cross Movement Dialogue and illustrate that women and oppressed groups around the world have the power to challenge the dominance of corporations.

Read more:

<https://www.awid.org/publications/challenging-corporate-power-struggles-womens-rights-economic-and-gender-justice>

For a direct link to report:

https://www.awid.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/ccp_fullreport_eng.pdf

Closing Statement for "It Happens" Campaign

Nazra for Feminist Studies, ElNadeem Center for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence and Torture, the Center for Egyptian Women's Legal Assistance (CEWLA), and New Woman Foundation (NWF) launched "It Happens" Campaign, within the context of the 16 Days of Activism International Campaign to Combat Violence against Women, during the period 25 November to 10 December 2016.

"It Happens" Campaign tried to shed light on several aspects concerning the crime of rape in both private and public spheres, such as the psychological effects rape survivors suffer from, problems faced in the medical sector and services provided, and shortcomings of legal definitions. The campaign published video clips, info graphs, research papers, and conducted story telling performances and film screenings. The campaign also tried to work on breaking the societal and institutional complicity that shadows how this issue is dealt with and contribute in ending the normalization of this crime and the silence around it.

The launch of this campaign coincided with some developments that threaten the work of feminist groups and organizations which include travel bans, asset freezing, arrest warrants.

Read more:

<http://nazra.org/en/2016/12/closing-statement-%E2%80%9Cit-happens%E2%80%9D-campaign>

For a direct link to report:

<http://nazra.org/sites/nazra/files/attachments/closingstatementforithappenscampaign.pdf>

Global Wage Report 2016/17

Human capital explanations of pay gaps, developed by Becker (1964) and Mincer (1974), focus on education and accumulated work experience. These suggest that women have different educational backgrounds or attainment levels from men, and are more likely to have career interruption(s) that lead to lower levels of accumulated work experience.

Empirical studies provide evidence that differences in human capital represent a significant part of the wage differential between men and women. However, as gaps in education between men and women have narrowed, particularly in more developed economies, so has the explanatory power of education in explaining the remaining gap (World Bank, 2012).

Indeed, in 43 out of 53 countries,* after controlling for individual characteristics and place of residence, differences in education between men and women are very small or have even reversed, such that women have higher levels of education than men. In these cases, education not only fails to explain the observed gap but, when taken into account, actually increases the unexplained gap.

Read more:

<http://www.wunrn.com/2016/12/global-wage-report-201617-wage-inequality-in-the-workplace-what-lies-behind-the-gender-wage-gap/>

For a direct link to report:

http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_537846.pdf

The status of women human rights defenders in Syria – report



Read more:

<http://www.wunrn.com/2016/12/syria-the-status-of-women-human-rights-defenders-in-syria-report/>

For a direct link to paper:

<http://whrdmena.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Syria-Eng.pdf>

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