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EU signs the Istanbul Convention

Violence against women is rooted in the unequal power relations between women and men and reflects one of the strongest expressions of gender inequality. In this context the European Institute for Gender Equality has been strongly supporting the EU and the Member States in their efforts to eradicate violence against women since the very start of its activities seven years ago. "The elimination of violence against women involves challenging the unequal division of social, political, and economic power among women and men, and the ways in which this inequality is perpetuated through institutions at all levels of society" says Virginija Langbakk, EIGE's Director.

The signing of the Istanbul Convention by Commissioner Věra Jourová on 13 June 2017 on the basis of two decisions adopted by the Council on 11 May 2017 is therefore an extremely important step in establishing the first legally binding instrument dedicated to combating violence against women. Calling as it does for a regular monitoring of State efforts and policy initiatives and the designing of more effective strategies.

The Chairwoman of EIGE's Management Board, Prof. Dr Kalliope Agapiou-Josephides, highlighted the importance of the signing by Commissioner Věra Jourová of the Council of Europe Convention (Istanbul Convention) on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence and underlined EIGE's commitment to take all necessary actions to fulfill its role in this respect.

Read more:

<http://eige.europa.eu/news-and-events/news/eu-signs-istanbul-convention>

Khamenei critical of 'Western-influenced' Rouhani education plan



Feminist persistence pays off at UN Commission Status of Women, but challenges loom large in the changing world of work.

Iran's supreme leader criticized the government of President Hassan Rouhani Sunday for promoting a "Western-influenced" United Nations education plan which his hard-line allies have said contradicts Islamic principles. Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's remarks came ahead of May 19 polls, in which the president is seeking re-election.

"In this country, the basis is Islam and the Quran. This is not a place where the faulty, corrupt and destructive Western lifestyle will be allowed to spread its influence," Khamenei told a gathering of educators, according to his website.

"It makes no sense to accept such a document in the Islamic Republic," Khamenei said, referring to the Education 2030 plan proposed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

Read more:

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2017/May-08/404883-khamenei-critical-of-western-influenced-rouhani-education-plan.ashx>

Lebanon - Wedding Dresses Seafront Display Part of Activists' Campaign to Change Rape Law Giving Impunity if Rapist Marries Victim



Activists campaigning to change Lebanon's law on rape have staged a macabre protest on Beirut's famous sea front.

What appeared to be more than 30 white wedding dresses were hung from nooses, strung up between the palm trees.

Lebanese law currently allows a rapist to be exonerated if he marries his victim.

The activists are pressing to have the legislation abolished at an upcoming session of parliament. Minister for Women's Affairs Jean Oghassabian described the article as being "from the stone age".

"There are 31 days in a month and every single day, a woman may be raped and forced to marry her rapist," said Alia Awada from the non-governmental organisation Abaad.

A proposal to scrap Article 522 of the penal code, which deals with rape, assault, kidnapping and forced marriage, was introduced last year and approved by a parliamentary committee in February.

Read more:

<http://wunrn.com/2017/06/lebanon-wedding-dresses-seafront-display-part-of-activists-campaign-to-change-rape-law-giving-impunity-if-rapist-marries-victim/>

Iranians rally behind soccer player suspended over wife's modeling

Last June, Mohsen Forouzan, a goalkeeper formerly with Tehran's Esteghlal Football Club, posted a photo on Instagram to announce his engagement to Iranian model Nasim Nahali. The photo quickly triggered reactions since Nahali was unveiled and the timing of the post coincided with the holy month of Ramadan. The Young Journalists Club, which is affiliated with Iran's state broadcaster, immediately described it as "a matter far [removed] from Sharia and ethics."

Almost one year later, on May 23, the Iranian Football Federation's Ethics Committee issued a ruling to suspend Forouzan from all official soccer activities for three months. The reason for the move was described as due to "materialistic measures adopted by his wife" that "had circulated in social media networks and later in public opinion, without observing Islamic principles and ethics and thus harming the credibility of football and the good reputation of the Football Federation among the public."

But what were the "materialistic measures" taken by Forouzan's wife? According to the media and Iran's soccer community, the ruling referred to her "modeling activities." Born in 1989, Nahali is a model for wedding dresses and various manteau, long coats commonly worn by Iranian women outside their homes. Like most Iranian models, Nahali often posted pictures of herself on Instagram.

Read more:

<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/06/iran-football-forouzan-nasim-nahali-modeling-outcry.html#ixzz4kG64Zew3>

Yemeni expats find sisterhood, escapism on Beirut roller derby track



Memories of her country ravaged by civil war, cholera and famine, and constant worries over her family cast a dark shadow over Hadeel al-Hubaishi's life as a student in Beirut. She left her native Sanaa, the Yemeni capital, to study at the American University of Beirut on a Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) scholarship in 2014. Little did she know that a civil war would break out in her country shortly after her departure, making it difficult to visit her family.

Then, at the beginning of 2015, her MEPI friend Nada Ben Jemaa — and Elisabeth Wolffhechel, a Danish humanitarian worker — made her an offer that would first become a distraction and then a passion: to help them establish the first roller derby club in the city.

"At that time, I was looking for a fun activity to do outside academic and work life, so I told them I would join them every weekend," Hubaishi told Al-Monitor.

In a few weeks, Hubaishi became one of the pioneers of Lebanese roller derby — a contact sport played with two teams of five players on roller skates. The players skate clockwise and clash often.

Read more:

http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/06/FOR_yemeni-expats-find-roller-derby-club.html#ixzz4kG7WZUYt SUN

May Day rallies for Muslim women's labour rights



May Day marchers have taken to the streets in several cities across Sweden to call for Muslim women's right to work while wearing the hijab.

The International Worker's Day event on Monday followed a decision by the Court of Justice of the European Union, which allowed private companies to ban employees from wearing visible religious symbols - a ruling Muslims said was a direct attack on women wearing the headscarf in the workplace.

The decision came after lawsuits were filed by a Belgian and a French woman who argued that they had been dismissed from their jobs for wearing the hijab. The hijab is a headscarf worn by many Muslim women who feel it is part of their religion.

Protesters in the capital, Stockholm, as well as in the cities of Malmo, Gothenburg, Vasteras, Sala and Umea, chanted slogans such as "crush racism", "my hijab is not your business" and "employment is our right".

"Muslim women here [Gothenburg] don't usually go out to protests on May Day, so it's empowering to see so many people from different backgrounds fighting for labour rights," Maimuna Abdullahi, one of the event organisers, told Al Jazeera.

Read more:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/05/day-rallies-muslim-women-labour-rights-170501135615726.html>

GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

ISIS Recruitment of Western Women

In the past two decades I have interviewed almost five hundred terrorists, extremists, and in the case of dead suicide terrorists—their family members, close associates or hostages. These interviews have taken place in Europe, North America, Turkey, Russia and the Middle East. My research questions have always been the same—to learn what put them on the terrorist trajectory, and what might have prevented that, and what could be done to take them back off it.

In that vein I consulted with the UK government when they were putting together their PREVENT program and I also designed the psychological and Islamic challenge portions of what came to be known as the US Department of Defense's Detainee Rehabilitation Program to be applied to the more than 20,000 detainees and 800 juveniles that US forces held in Iraq in 2007.

We all know that the Islamic State (IS) is the most powerful, ruthless, horrific and well-funded terrorist group in recent history. Today we are here to talk about their recruitment of western women. Sadly, all over the world, young, Western women are slipping out of their bedrooms, giving silent farewells and leaving heart-rending notes to their families—apologizing for their sudden disappearances. Young women—even girls—are taking their leave all across the globe—from Paris, London, Copenhagen, Sydney, and in the United States from cities like Denver, Colorado.

Read more:

<http://wunrn.com/2017/06/isis-recruitment-of-western-women/>

Jihadi Brides or Female Foreign Fighters? Women in Da'esh: From Recruitment to Sentencing

According to the author, gendered perceptions of violence and extremism affect how women in Da'esh have been described, presented, and subsequently treated. Indeed, those that have escaped the group's clutches have received shorter sentences or pardons in courts of law, and they have often been portrayed by the media as misunderstood victims rather than motivated agents. Well, these biases may need to end, says Strømme, both for the sake of judicial precedent and from a security standpoint.

Da'esh has stunned the world with its gross human rights abuses, gendered violence, and practices of sexual slavery, and yet, the organization has attracted a large amount of female recruits. Women who have joined Da'esh have been met with a storm of disbelief and gendered commentary, and have even been designated their own term – 'jihadi brides'. This policy brief explores agency and women in Da'esh: why women join, their roles, and how women are treated if they return to the West. The brief illuminates how gendered understandings of Western female foreign fighters are affecting judicial processes and potentially creating gaps in our security structure.

Read more:

<http://wunrn.com/2017/06/jihadi-brides-or-female-foreign-fighters-women-in-daesh-from-recruitment-to-sentencing/>

Website helps Lebanon's migrant workers expose abuse



This year on International Workers' Day, on May 1, domestic migrant workers demonstrated in the streets of Lebanon, protesting their lack of rights. That same day, Dipendra Uprety launched the website This Is Lebanon to gather the testimonies of domestic workers and their families. Domestic workers have no rights in Lebanon, because they fall under the “kafala,” or sponsorship, system, which is not regulated by labor law. Some of them, therefore, perhaps unsurprisingly, are subjected to untold abuse.

A 2010 Human Rights Watch (HRW) report explained, “The domestic worker sector is rife with complaints of nonpayment of wages, excessive working hours, forced confinement, and even physical and sexual abuse — fueled by Lebanese labor law that excludes MDWs [Migrant Domestic Workers] from standard labor protections afforded to almost all other categories of workers, such as the right to a weekly day of rest, paid leave, benefits, and worker compensation.”

As a consequence, as documented in 2008 by HRW, one domestic worker dies per week by trying to escape, by killing themselves or after being beaten.

Read more:

<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/06/lebanon-domestic-workers-verbal-sexual-abuse.html#ixzz4kG6z8iYG>

Will Jordan abolish a law that protects rapists?



Women's activists say they are closer than ever to abolishing Article 308, which pardons rapists who marry their victim.

After more than a decade of lobbying and campaigning, women's rights activists and officials in Jordan say they are closer than ever to abolishing a law allowing rapists to escape punishment if they marry their victim.

This week, the Jordanian government voted to get rid of Article 308 of the Penal Code. The article permits pardoning rape perpetrators if they marry their victims and stay with them for at least three years, provided the victim is between 15 and 18 years old.

"It's a huge step on the part of the government. It shows commitment. Usually, women's issues in Jordan are shoved to the back, but the government showed some seriousness with this vote. This is a very important and long-awaited step," women's rights activist and writer Rana Husseini told Al Jazeera.

The cabinet vote comes after months of heated debate on the controversial issue.

Read more:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/04/jordan-abolish-law-protects-rapists-170426114305294.html>

GENDER & HUMAN RIGHTS

Saudi Arabia: King issues decree loosening some guardianship regulations, but women remain under control of men in most areas

On 17 April 2017, King Salman Bin Abdulaziz issued a Royal decree instructing governmental entities in Saudi Arabia to provide services for women without requiring the permission of their male guardians unless mandated by a legal regulation. Yet, two women are currently imprisoned under the Guardianship system.

The decree listed four specific orders to that extent:

1. For all governmental entities not to ask women who seek their services for a male guardian's approval unless it is mandated by law; and for the entities to review all of their related regulations which require a male guardian's approval in order to identify their legal basis and submit a report of these services with their legal basis in three months' time;
2. For employers to provide transportation for female employees according to available resources and for the Ministry of Labour and Social Development to ensure that employers comply with this according to regulations;

On 19 April 2017, Mariam Al-Otaibi was arrested after her father filed a complaint against her for being absent from the house, using the Guardianship system. She is being held in the women's section of Al-Malaz prison in Riyadh. Al-Otaibi was heavily involved in the campaign (#IAMyOwnGuardian) to end the male guardianship system in Saudi Arabia and had previously sought protection against family abuse from the authorities, to no avail.

Read more:

<https://www.awid.org/news-and-analysis/saudi-arabia-king-issues-decree-loosening-some-guardianship-regulations-women>

Women's quota: A societal challenge

Lebanon has been able to overcome another gridlock by agreeing on a new electoral law. It comes at a crucial moment in the country's history to set the basis for a reshuffle in the political representation scheme. This settlement has been particularly positive after worries of political stagnation and vacuum, which are the last things Lebanon needs amid the surrounding disturbances.

The early discussions around the new draft law included pledges of a quota for women in order to guarantee better representation of Lebanese women in politics. Unfortunately, the political factions could not agree on the women's quota which has been negatively perceived by women's rights associations. The National Commission for Lebanese Women, represented by its President Claudine Aoun Roukoz, expressed its discontent at the news the government could not adopt the quota in the electoral law. However, the commission has praised the endeavor of Prime Minister Saad Hariri, who is committed to setting a quota for women in the Future Movement lists, and it called upon all the political factions to follow the same path.

According to "Women's Quota: Parliamentary Elections 2017," the word "quota" is a Latin word meaning "share" or "portion."

Read more:

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2017/Jun-17/409926-womens-quota-a-societal-challenge.ashx>

Swedish PM blasts Islamic school gender segregation

It is “disgusting” if girls at a private Islamic school in Stockholm are directed to the back door of a school bus while boys use the front door, as claimed by a television documentary, Sweden’s Prime Minister Stefan Lofven said Tuesday.

“It does not belong in Sweden” to have primary schools dividing children, aged between six and 10, by gender, Lofven said.

In Sweden “we take the bus together whether you are a girl or a boy, a woman or a man,” the prime minister said. “This suggests that we have more to tackle when it comes to segregation.”

The issue was highlighted by the Kalla Fakta, or Cold Facts, program on Sweden’s TV4 channel.

Al-Azhar school headmaster Roger Lindquist told Sweden’s TT news agency that the school management was not aware of the division.

“I don’t know why it still turned out that way,” Lindquist told TT news agency.

“It was a mistake.”

But the school says on its website that “boys and girls have separate courses in swimming and sports.”

Read more:

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/World/2017/Apr-05/400626-swedish-pm-blasts-islamic-school-gender-segregation.ashx>

Rule change allows players to wear hijab



Basketball enthusiasts around the world said a decision to allow players to wear religious headgear in competition will encourage more people to play the sport because it gives participants the right to practice their faith and focus on playing ball.

The unanimous vote Thursday by international Basketball’s governing body, known as FIBA, allows female players to wear hijabs and male players to wear turbans and yarmulkes following a ban initially imposed for safety reasons 20 years ago. In 2014, FIBA allowed a two-year testing phase for head coverings.

Iranian national basketball team player Shadi Abdolvand said Basketball will change in Iran because younger players will be encouraged to “pursue their goals.”

Read more:

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/Sports/Basketball/2017/May-05/404548-rule-change-allows-players-to-wear-hijab.ashx>

Women-only cafe opens in Upper Egypt

Iman Sameh, whose husband did not want her to go to cafes and risk harassment by men, found an entrepreneurial solution: opening her own cafe just for women.

Women-only cafes have recently become quite popular in Egypt, but Sameh's was the first to open in Upper Egypt's conservative Luxor province. The Pink Cafe offers a venue for Luxor women to go out and have fun without risking criticism from their conservative community.

The cafe caters to entirely female customers. The entrance is marked with "Girls Only" signs and the all-female staff wears pink uniforms in the all-pink decor. Smoking is strictly forbidden.

Sameh told Al-Monitor, "I thought about opening the cafe because it is difficult to find a decent place to hang out at in Luxor or spend my spare time without being harassed. My husband is against the idea of me going to cafes where men are allowed, so this is how I started thinking about a women-only cafe."

Sameh said, "I conducted a quick survey on Facebook, asking women [friends] how they felt about such a cafe, and many supported my idea and encouraged me. They even gave me suggestions such as creating a children's entertainment corner, suggested sound tracks for background music and warned against allowing smoking, all of which I took into consideration and applied."

Not everyone was encouraging her plan, however. Some of her neighbors told her that the cafe was a waste of time and men would try to get in. She was also told that she would have trouble getting a permit.

Read more:

<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/06/women-only-cafe-in-upper-egypt.html#ixzz4kG4fyGm1>

Meet the Iranian tycoon smashing gender stereotypes



Businesswoman, city councillor and social activist Fatemeh Daneshvar tells Al Jazeera that she fears 'nothing but God'.

Fatemeh Daneshvar moves easily around the room as she speaks of her accomplishments, pausing at one point to admire a photo of her children, and at another to flip through a glossy magazine packed with images of some of the thousands of women her charity has aided.

Daneshvar, 43, now counts seven major businesses to her name, having spent years pursuing a successful career in the male-dominated mining industry. She serves on Tehran's city council and the Iranian chamber of commerce, and has authored dozens of reports on the social problems plaguing Iran, from addiction to child labour. She donates one-fourth of her income to her own charity, Mehrafarin, which supports women and children whose fathers have abandoned them.

But of all that Daneshvar has achieved over the years, she is proudest of her work with Iran's street kids. She runs a programme to train and support dozens of exceptional orphans, giving them a chance to succeed in the broader community.

Read more:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/04/meet-iranian-tycoon-smashing-gender-stereotypes-170425083206166.html>

RESOURCES & CALLS
BOOKS & REPORTS

**World Employment and Social Outlook:
Trends for women 2017**

This report provides a portrait of the situation of women in the world of work today and their progress over the past 20 years.

This report examines the global and regional labour market trends and gaps, including in labour force participation rates, unemployment rates, employment status as well as sectoral and occupational segregation. It also presents a global in-depth analysis of the key drivers of female labour force participation by investigating the personal preferences of women and the societal gender norms and socio-economic constraints that women face.

A key finding of this report is that closing these labour market gaps would yield significant economic benefits in terms of GDP growth while at the same time improving individual welfare in multiple dimensions. However, the report finds that there are significant socio-economic and gender norm constraints influencing a woman's decision to participate. Accordingly, the report introduces a comprehensive framework to address the drivers of these gender gaps and outlines a series of policy recommendations to improve the labour market outcomes of women.

Read more:

http://www.ilo.org/global/research/global-reports/weso/trends-for-women2017/WCMS_557245/lang--en/index.htm

For a direct link to report:

http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---inst/documents/publication/wcms_557245.pdf

Women's Global Life Stories Project & Publication – Male Authority in Muslim Contexts – 12 Countries – Musawah

Musawah developed and implemented the Global Life Stories Project over several years. In 2011, a team formed in Indonesia to conduct a pilot project by developing the methodology, deciding on the scope and testing their process by documenting a number of stories. The team comprised five activists from Alimat, an Indonesian coalition working on reforming religious knowledge to advance gender equality and justice. The team decided to approach the project as a collective and mutual learning experience that is inter-disciplinary and grounded in national activism and the process of movement building. Over the course of a year, the Indonesian team worked carefully to better understand the issues, decide how to undertake the process in an ethical and principled manner and actually document the life stories of five Muslim women from different regions of the country.

At the conclusion of the pilot project, the project coordinator recruited Musawah Advocates from 12 countries (see box) to take part in the global project as country teams. Ranging in size from one to seven persons, the national 'teams' implemented the project with the guidance of one or more coordinating members.

Read more:

<http://wunrn.com/2017/06/womens-global-life-stories-project-publication-male-authority-in-muslim-contexts-12-countries-musawah/>

For a direct link to report:

http://www.musawah.org/sites/default/files/MusawahG_PL2016.pdf

Call to Women Filmmakers – Short Film Competition: Religious Freedom Is Good For Business



The Middle East Women's Leadership Network (MEWLN) and the Religious Freedom & Business Foundation (RFBF) are pleased to announce the Religious Freedom Film Competition. The goal of the competition is to challenge women filmmakers around the world to create short films that showcase how religious freedom leads to innovation, peace, security, entrepreneurship, and human flourishing in

communities. The competition begins in March 2017, with the grand prize winner receiving \$5000 and a trip to present her work at the 2018 Global Business & Interfaith Peace Awards in Seoul, South Korea, on March 8, the night before the opening of the Winter Paralympics.

Strategically, these films will help to show that a commitment to religious freedom and interfaith understanding is a means to fulfilling the UN Strategic Development Goal 16: "Promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, providing access to justice for all and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels."

Read more:

<http://wunrn.com/2017/06/call-to-women-filmmakers-short-film-competition-religious-freedom-is-good-for-business/>

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