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NEWS & ARTICLES

GENDER ACTIVISM

The call of Sudanese women human rights defenders

Women activists challenging the fundamental structures of their communities and calling for new terms of peaceful coexistence between the Sudanese people are facing prosecution, sexual violence, and harsh punishment by Sudan's security service, says Nazik Kabalo.

Tahany Hassan, a 17 year old high school female student was shot in the head and killed on July 31st by the Sudanese police in Nayala, South Darfur. She and hundreds of high school students were protesting the big increase in transportation fees, which means that most of them will not be able to go to school any more. In Khartoum, Port Sudan, Alobaied and many other Sudanese states, dozens of women were beaten, detained, verbally abused and sexually assaulted when they took to the streets to challenge the government's deliberate denial of the fundamental human rights of the Sudanese people.

In the past two weeks, twelve Sudanese women activists have been released from detention after living in small stinky cells for almost two months. No one had known their location for most of their detention period. The Sudanese security service known as NISS had denied them access to their family or lawyers. They lived in the Sudanese security detention, completely isolated from the outside world. One of the released women detainees said "they were trying to break us psychologically by this inhuman treatment, we couldn't even go to the bathrooms when we needed to: animals can, we couldn't."

For six weeks the Sudanese students, lawyers, doctors, women and activists demonstrated against the Sudanese government policies. The protests started by Khartoum female students on June 16th and spread throughout the country, and while the first spark was the government austerity measures and high prices, the protests kept growing in number and demands. Inspired by the Arab Spring they called for the overthrow of the regime. The world watched [#SudanRevolt](https://twitter.com/SudanRevolt) through the social media, where women activists were blogging on Twitter and Facebook.

The Sudanese government now knows for sure that women were not just the spark of the revolt or even just protestors. They now know that Sudanese women were mobilizing behind the scenes and in the front lines of the political parties, youth movements and civil society.



On March 18th the Akhir Lahza newspaper reported that Nafie Ali, the ruling party leader and the President's high consultant, said at a gathering of his party's women members, " you all know about those women activists working with international organizations to implement destructive plans against the community."

Sudanese women activists have been fighting on so many fronts at the same time and facing enormous threats. Most women in the civil society organizations, political parties and rights based movements believe that the fundamental structures of the Sudanese community have to be radically changed, and new terms of peaceful coexistence between the diverse components of different religious, ethnical and political groups have to be found. This challenge is being met by the solid work of many women's groups working in peace building and non-violence movements, by people who have lived through the longest civil war in the African continent - a 50 year civil war between the African non -Muslim South Sudan and the Arabic/Muslim North Sudan. They understand that the complicated reasons for this war lie beyond this classification of Arab or African and Muslim or non-Muslims, that it is more related to the culture of deep rooted racism and discrimination in the Sudanese community which remains silent.

For more information follow the link <http://www.wluml.org/news/sudan-call-sudanese-women-human-rights-defenders>

Somalia: Thirty Women Elected to New Parliament

Somalia has recently selected its parliament on Somali soil for the first time since the civil war of the late 1980s. This is a significant achievement since regional power brokers such as Ethiopia and Kenya, with the financial and logistical backing of the European Union, the United States and the United Nations, concocted Somali governments in neighbouring countries.

Such success is unfortunately marred by controversies, with continuous allegations of corruption in the selection of the members of parliament, as well as persistent charges that millions of international donor funds intended for Somali security and basic infrastructure ended up in the pockets of a few men in top leadership positions.

While international news coverage of the above shady political process is repeated *ad nauseam*, the status of the 30 per cent quota for women in current parliament-approved constitution rarely gets any ink.

My reading is that international media outlets as well as Somali journalists take it for granted that failure of fulfilling this quota is best explained by the Islamic faith of the Somali people. This is often cited as being in conflict with decrees imposed from outside by international actors who allegedly paid for the hefty cost of \$60m for the current constitution, and who also provide the salaries of former MPs and senior government leaders.

Sectarian and opportunistic men

Given the above power dynamic,

Somalis acknowledge that though you should never bite the hand that feeds you, there can



still be areas of serious contention between what international donors demand and what is possible in the Somali context. Thus the international community's imposition of a 30 per cent quota for women in parliament is accepted to be included in the final draft of the constitution, even if all the signatories did not support such allocation.

Sifting through the names of the 202 MPs released by the Technical Selection Committee in the last few days, 30 of the names are women, or approximately 15 per cent of the constitutionally mandated 30 per cent. This 15 per cent of women's positions were achieved after weeks of haggling where male clan leaders were cajoled to include women in their nominations.

Having 30 plus women in this parliament is actually an enormous achievement. It shows that there are many women competent and willing to fill public office. In fact, given the tremendously constructive role Somali women continue to play in Somali social and economic life since the wars of the late 1980s, Somali women have proven, beyond any shadow of doubt, that they are the backbone of the survival of Somali society. There is no reason to doubt that they can also become integral pillars of the political survival of future governments. To read more follow the link

<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2012/08/201282385318698928.html>

Iran: Through Human Rights, Global Advocacy & Action Stoning Can Be Stopped!

The U.N. Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on December 10, 1984 through resolution 39/46. The Convention entered into force on June 26, 1987.

This United Nations Convention against Torture defines torture as "... any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity." Stoning surely fits this definition. It is a slow and painful process by which the victim eventually dies by blunt impact injury and blood loss. Global human rights agencies have long delayed their response to the spirit of international human rights treaties in taking a stand against stoning, which is one of the cruelest forms of torture that is used to punish men and women, often for adultery and other 'improper' sexual relations.



Stoning surely fits this definition. It is a slow and painful process by which the victim eventually dies by blunt impact injury and blood loss. Global human rights agencies have long delayed their response to the spirit of international human rights treaties in taking a stand against stoning, which is one of the cruelest forms of torture that is used to punish men and women, often for adultery and other 'improper' sexual relations.

The practice of stoning should be banned under two grounds according to existing human rights treaties and conventions: Under the ICCPR - International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, death penalties should only be executed for the most heinous crimes. The consensus within the majority of the international community is that adultery is not a

heinous crime. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the 1984 Safeguards Guaranteeing Protection of the Rights of Those Facing the Death Penalty both specify that “capital punishment may be imposed only for the most serious crimes.”

Stoning should also be recognized as a form of torture in various human rights treaties and defined as cruel, inhuman, or degrading punishment. Recognition of this has already been made by committees representing the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the Convention against Torture; and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. United Nations Special Rapporteurs, who examine and monitor human rights conditions worldwide, have also brought the issue of stoning to the attention of the United Nations. The U.N. Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women and the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, as well as the Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions have each recognized stoning as a ‘inhuman and degrading punishment.’ The United Nations General Assembly has also recognized this. While the practice of stoning is currently being carried out on both men and women worldwide, stoning is often identified through the context of gender inequality and through discriminatory laws against women. As extremist interpretations of Shari’a law categorize the issues of gender and sexuality, they also divide the definition of what is a ‘proper relation.’ Because of this, stoning has too often been used as a punitive form of punishment against women for ‘improper sexual relations.’ To know more about the issue, follow the link <http://www.awid.org/News-Analysis/Announcements2/Stoning-in-Iran-can-be-stopped-through-human-rights-global-advocacy-action>

The story of the stoning of women in Iran

The practice of stoning has long existed before Islam’s arrival and has been prescribed as a means of punishment to adulterers in the Greek and Jewish culture.¹ Now, this practice is associated with Islam, more specifically with punishment in Muslim communities of sex between at least one married individual. Yet, there is no consensus among Muslims about the issue. Nobel Peace Prize winner, Shrin Ebadi, uses a human rights framework to call for the abolition of stoning and gives religious arguments for why it should be banned. According to Ebadi, not only is stoning not compatible with United Nations Convention against Torture and Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, but there is also no direct mention of stoning as a punishment for adultery in the Quran.²



However, there is public opinion in some Muslim-majority countries such as Pakistan that favor the practice. In fact, Pew Global Attitudes Project conducted a survey in 2009 in Pakistan that found that 83 percent of Pakistanis believe that adulterers should be stoned. Stoning is a legal form of punishment for the adultery of married people in Afghanistan, Iran, Nigeria, Pakistan, Sudan, and the United Arab Emirates.³ However, Muslim-majority countries such as Malaysia, Tunisia, Turkey, Morocco, and Algeria ban this practice.

There is no agreement within the global Muslim community over the validity of the practice under Islamic jurisprudence. Supporters of stoning cite Hadith, or sayings of Prophet

Muhammad, when discussing the legitimacy of the practice.⁴ They also state that it was proclaimed by other prophets and found in the Old Testament. However, there is no mention of stoning in the Quran. Instead, a lesser punishment of lashing is given for those proven guilty of adultery and fornication outside marriage. Furthermore, there is a great burden of proof on those accusing someone of such a crime. According to the Quran, the offense of adultery must be proven through voluntary confession or by testimony of four witnesses of good moral character who state under oath that they have witnessed the crime itself take place. It makes it near impossible to have four people of good morals testify that in the same place, at the same time, they saw the act of penetration. Interestingly, although Islamic jurisprudence does not establish pregnancy as legal evidence of adultery, pregnancy is often used as grounds for accusing a woman of the crime. For example in Iran, the Islamic penal code allows a single judge to rule according to his personal opinion and does not always require the testimony of four witnesses.⁵ Ziba Mir-Hosseini, an expert on Iranian family law at London's School of Oriental and African Studies, said the standard in some cases is "the judge's knowledge." She thinks it is no accident that stoning has increased in Iran in the midst of political unrest. She states: "it has become a political matter ... Whenever there is a dispute between traditionalists and reformers in the judiciary, stoning increases. To read more about the issue follow the link http://www.wunrn.com/news/2012/09_12/09_10/091012_stoning.htm

Activists to launch campaign to get women into Parliament in Lebanon

Local non-governmental organizations are set to launch a campaign to encourage women to take part in the upcoming parliamentary elections.

The activists told The Daily Star that preparations for a nationwide campaign on television and a number of media outlets was under way to send a clear message to Lebanese women that they were capable of assuming key public positions in the country, including in Parliament.

Currently, only four of Lebanon's 128 MPs are women. While champions of electoral reform have for years called on the government to reform the electoral law and include at



least a 30-percent quota for women in Parliament, no significant legislation to boost the number of women in Parliament has been passed.

Last month, the government approved a new draft electoral law that would set a 10-percent quota for women in Parliament.

NGOs and activists have criticized the proposal, saying that a 10-percent quota is far too low and violates international agreements for more female representation. Joelle Rizkallah and Nada Anid, co-founders of local NGO Women in Front, said that the current percentage of women in Parliament was the lowest in the world.

"The 10-percent quota that the government approved came as a shock to us. We had been told by the ministers who voted for the draft law that there would be a 30-percent quota for women ... This was an insult to Lebanese women and the entire country," Rizkallah told The Daily Star. She said that women in Lebanon could not solely depend on men in Parliament to pass reforms and address issues that are pressing for women. "We can no

longer depend on 124 men in Parliament to legislate [bills] that are important for women,” she said. Rizkallah said that Women in Front is currently working with a number of NGOs to run ads on all media outlets and encourage women to run for Parliament in elections scheduled for next year. “We will also hold talks with all political parties to encourage them to nominate women on their lists next year,” Rizkallah added. According to Rizkallah, issues such as a woman’s right to pass her nationality to her children and protection of women from domestic violence have not been seriously addressed because of the absence of women in Parliament. “We know that when we get into the Parliament, reforms that have been neglected for years will be seriously addressed. “The problems facing Lebanese women are felt and understood better by women and we cannot expect more from a Parliament that is overwhelmingly occupied by men,” she said. For her part, Nada Anid said that the government’s approval of an only 10-percent quota for women was proof that politicians do not have women’s representation as a priority in their agenda. “The campaign that will be launched by the NGOs will be heard by the voters and influence their voting next year,” said Anid. Read more: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Politics/2012/Sep-12/187592-activists-to-launch-campaign-to-get-women-into-parliament.ashx#ixzz27Qp9SYPM>

All-female bloc runs in Palestinian elections

A new group running for municipal elections in Hebron is offering residents an alternative to politics as usual in the conservative West Bank city: Women at the helm, instead of men.

The all-female list, which is called “By Participating, We Can,” is gearing up for next month’s vote with a campaign that aims both to win at the polls and to convince voters that women can lead just as well as men.

“Men here traditionally want their women to stay at home, and when they allow them to go



out to work, they send them to do traditional jobs like teaching,” said Maysoun Qawasmi, the 43-year-old group leader, who entered the race this week. “But we want them to go further, to work like men in all possible jobs they can.”

The group is fielding 11 previously independent candidates for the Oct. 20 vote. Should the bloc succeed in garnering significant public support, the women hope to ultimately unite and form an official political party.

But the women are well aware of the challenges they face in conservative Palestinian society, and the chances of an all-woman ticket performing well at the polls - for now at least - appear slim.

Qawasmi said the candidates are campaigning door-to-door to attract what they see as their natural electorate - fellow women. If elected, Qawasmi promises to open women-only facilities, like a sports club - an idea that has faced opposition by religiously conservative Muslims in Hebron who believe it is immodest for women to play sports.

She predicts her group could nab three out of the Hebron council’s 15 seats, and she has ambitious hopes that after the vote, when the council chooses the mayor, she will be selected for the post. A journalist for the Palestinian news agency Wafa, Qawasmi also holds

training sessions to empower Palestinian women in the West Bank. She wears a hijab, or headscarf, but also dons pants and a blouse, and describes herself as secular. At a recent meeting at Qawasmi's Hebron home, the group's members took turns sharing their personal stories of success. Liyana Abu Asheh, 28, said she worked as a civil engineer, stunning locals by helping pave the streets, and now runs her own private business. Asma Deis, 38 and recently widowed, said she's opening a small cleaning materials factory on her own to support her five children. "Women can make the impossible possible," Deis said.

While Qawasmi's bloc is unique in its composition, women have long been politically active in Palestinian politics, and some hold office in the government run by the Palestinian Authority. There are six female ministers in the 24-member Cabinet of Western-backed Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad. In the 132-member Palestinian legislative council, there are 17 female lawmakers. But other indicators show that women in Palestinian society have largely retained traditional roles. Only 16 percent of women in the West Bank are employed, and in Hebron the number drops to 10 percent. If the women's bloc were to win seats, it would likely challenge taboos in Hebron and beyond. These elections are the first in the city of 200,000 since 1976. Local polls held elsewhere in 2005 were cancelled in Hebron, and current mayor Zoher Esaili was installed by Fatah in a bid to prevent its rival Hamas, an Islamist group which has broad support in the city, from winning the post.

Hamas and Fatah had a violent falling out in 2007, and now separately govern the West Bank and Gaza Strip, respectively. Read more: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2012/Sep-16/188092-all-female-bloc-runs-in-palestinian-elections.ashx#ixzz27QbdRAKx>

Activists calling for electoral reform in Lebanon say they were beaten by security forces

Activists calling for electoral reform in Downtown Beirut Wednesday say they were beaten by security forces, with two requiring hospital treatment for their injuries.

Around 40 members of the Civil Campaign for Electoral Reform gathered in Nejme Square and formed a human chain before, they say, security forces came to break up the demonstration and then began attacking many of them.

Adnan Melki, secretary-general of the CCER, said that he was shocked by what happened.

"Our original plan was that if they asked us to move we would go to Riad al-Solh. But they just started pushing us," he said. "We thought of every scenario but we didn't expect this to happen."

Activists were beaten and had their cameras and cellphones confiscated, and were forced to delete any photos they had taken, he said. One woman went to hospital with a broken toe and another activist was treated for head injuries, Melki added.

A source from the Internal Security Forces denied that force had been used and told The Daily Star that parliamentary security staff only asked the activists to move away from the area.

"Police are not allowed to use violence," he said, and added that no reports had been filed. "Nothing can justify what happened, even the sensitivity of the position [near Parliament], which I understand. It was a very peaceful action," Melki said, adding that even onlookers had their phones confiscated and were instructed to return to their offices.



“I think this incident is part of the growing trend of stopping people from expressing their opinion.”

Lebanese media watchdog SKEyes has condemned the alleged attack.

Activists met as various parliamentary committees were meeting to discuss the issue of electoral reform, which has been repeatedly stalled. Elections are scheduled for early 2013. The CCER has planned a follow-up demonstration, in Riad al-Solh, at 1.30 p.m. Thursday, followed by a news conference. Read more: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Local-News/2012/Sep-20/188623-activists-say-they-were-beaten-by-security-forces.ashx#ixzz27QaAL100>

Woman Running Largest Trafficking Operation Arrested in Iraq

Eman Dakhiliya (female) was finally arrested in the late hours of Sunday night September 23 with the company of other traffickers and their serving pimps by an Iraqi security troop in central Baghdad. Eman's many houses in Al Battaween, Karrada, and Palestine street in central Baghdad are served by Amar Zaytuna's gang who kidnap girls and force them to work in Eman's brothels; otherwise they kill them or at least damage their faces beyond recognition. Tens of prostituted women and girls live in inhumane conditions, under continuous threat of beatings, but with abundance of alcohol, drugs and hallucination pills.

The local police station of Al Saadoun cooperated with Eman since 2007. The police men who were not of assistance were transferred right away, as Eman has earned her title “Dakhiliya” which comes after the Ministry of Interior.

Trafficker of Human Organs too: selling human organs was complementary to her business of trafficking and running brothels. The women who could not pay cash for their debts usually could pay with their organs instead. It was a surprise for us also to believe why a prostituted woman would have debts. The traffickers always had ways of trapping the girls and women into addiction and other needs - which created another source of fear and pressure for them.

Women activists (of OWFI) working against trafficking: Eman was new in the industry when OWFI published a fact-finding report on Trafficking and Prostitution in Iraq based on documentation of 2008. We did not dare to present the study to the government as we were treated like “traitors” to the government while revealing issues of trafficking to the international community. Many other traffickers were listed in that study which was made public in 2010. The others are still free to practice and exploit their victims.

Eman revealed as trafficker in our Al Mousawat newspaper issue 17 - page 6 in October 2010 about Eman's houses, gangsters, kidnappers and how much she charges per sale of a girl locally and internationally. The column was written after interviewing the victims.

Serious threats against OWFI: In the second week of October 2010, Eman Dakhiliya sent us her pimps Ammar Zaytuna and Abou Hamra to threaten the column-writer Wissam Yousef and OWFI vice president Dalal Al Rubaie to stay away from their business; otherwise they send us “behind the sun”. She also threatened to press charges against OWFI for publishing

Organisation of Women's Freedom in Iraq (OWFI)

The screenshot shows the OWFI website with a navigation bar (Home, Activities, Campaigns, Articles, Press release, Women's Freedom, Photos, Audio & Video, Links, About us) and a main content area. The central article is titled "Biggest Women's Trafficker arrested in Baghdad" and features a photo of a sign that reads "منظمة حرية المرأة في العراق OWFI ORGANIZATION OF WOMEN'S FREEDOM IN IRAQ". Below the photo is a caption: "After threatening and terrorizing us Women of OWFI August 8 2012". To the right, there is a sidebar with a report titled "Prostitution and Trafficking of Women and Girls in Iraq" and a red banner at the bottom that says "Calling of Women from Around the World to Condemn Attack on Peaceful Protesters in Iraq".

lies- Eman felt strong to use all legal procedures against us. Dalal Al Rubaie, OWFI v.p. immediately addressed a letter to the Minister of Interior Mr. Bolani about the threats. He did not care to respond.

OWFI activist announcing \ challenging in a press conference in August 6th : In a recent press conference which the Ministry of Interior held regarding human trafficking, OWFI activist Dalal announced in front of all attending officials from MOI and Society Police that the traffickers names and location are known; and that an arrest campaign should be held against Eman Dakhiliya instead of talking and giving empty promises in a conference. Finally ... the arrest: On the night of September 2\3, a special security force ambushed Eman Dakhliya with her gang and all were taken; breaking one of the most cruel trafficking rings in Baghdad.

Although she was not the only trafficker in Baghdad, her business thrived fast as she started out from the poorest neighbourhood of Baghdad - Al Battaween - where the most vulnerable homeless young females end up tired, hungry and hopeless. A recent UN study counts Iraqi orphans of war at 5 million. If half of those are females, and half these females are teenagers, at least one million Iraqi female teenagers are vulnerable to the same destiny of being bought and sold into the sex industry of Eman Dakhiliya and others, while Iraq lies on one of the biggest reservoirs of oil in the world.

Background on Anti-trafficking Laws in Iraq: After 9 years of campaigning against trafficking of women in Iraq, we are pleased to announce that the government has finally passed a law that includes acceptable standards of protecting victims of trafficking. Nevertheless, application of the most important measures in the law are still pending.

Note: the Iraqi government does not grant any identification papers to women and girls who were trafficked which keeps them and their children as illegal and runaways all their lives with no medical or educational service.

We in OWFI have sheltered and taken care of them in the last years, but your help and support is most needed to empower those who were marginalized, impoverished and broken by the war on Iraq. To read more follow the link

http://www.wunrn.com/news/2012/09_12/09_10/091012_iraq.htm

GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

Sudanese WHRDs At Risk After Released From Detention

During the protests against the Sudanese government austerity measures which started in June and while 12 women had been detained During the protests against the Sudanese government austerity measures which started in June and incommunicado for 6-8 weeks for most of them. The Sudanese government released most of the detainees arrested during the 2 months protests on August 17-20, at least 200 detainees had been released among them the 12 women.

Women detainees we spoke to were highly sensitive about giving testimonies since the beginning of the protests last June, they had been all signed written pledges to never participate in demonstrations or speak to media or human rights organizations, so they felt its very dangerous for them to speak out. The small numbers who agreed to speak out , received phone call threats, in addition to censorship on their phones, and their



social networks accounts, most of the their male colleagues didn't received such threats when they spoke out .

In result of the psychological pressure and the inhuman detention conditions, most of the detainees suffer from health problems after their release. Prevention from going to bath rooms when needed , bad and small fortunes of food, smelly water and solitary cells for 2 of them in addition to the prevention from access to families or lawyers , those are some of the human rights violations suffered by the women detainees , while sexual assaults specially verbally was used since their moment of arrest until the moment of their release. The families of the WHRDs living under constant fear them , and some of the put more pressure on the WHRDs to stop their activism to protect them . There is strong indicators that the intimidation campaign against WHRDs led by the Sudanese security is affecting their activism and endanger their lives. Sudanese Women Human Rights Defenders Project is very concerned about the safety of those women, and call on the Sudanese government to stop harassing them, and insure their safety, and call on the human rights organizations and women rights NGOs and networks to stand in solidarity with the Sudanese WHRDs , and insure them the needed support and protection. To read more about the issue follow the link : <http://www.wluml.org/news/sudan-sudanese-whrds-risk-after-released-detention>

A young women project at the University of Jordan

A group of young women at the University of Jordan recently put together a video as part of a class project in which they tackled the issue



[Sexual Harrassment, Date Rape, and Domestic ...](#)

youtube.com

29 Apr 2009 - 8 min - Uploaded by ChesterTheLilDrummer

... Masculinity class (PSYC 589C/WGST 430S) at the University

of sexual harassment on campus. The young ladies carried placards with the comments they hear regularly and on daily basis from the young men on campus who have come to think it is acceptable to use this kind of language and approach.

The video was published on YouTube and with that, a door was opened for public criticism and debate outside and within the university.

And, unexpectedly – at least to me – the debate appeared to be not about the persistent and quite serious problem of sexual harassment of young women at Jordan's universities, but of the college professor and her students for allowing and carrying out such a project.

No one wanted to know. No one wanted to resolve the problem. No one at the university wanted to hold a conference to discuss the issue of sexual harassment on campus. No one wanted to discuss whether this kind of video – essentially aiming to shame the young men – was a useful tool in tackling this issue. This type of debate apparently would have been “too academic” for this supposedly academic institution. Instead, the young women were intimidated into silence through a campaign of questioning from other students and the university. The college professor who ran the course was subjected to a smear campaign, her motives were questioned and a shadow was cast over her moral standards. She eventually was removed from a leadership position at the university less than a year after she was appointed, without clear professional cause or explanation.

I do not want to personalise this column or make it about this one person. But I want to compare this case with that of a Sharia professor at the same university who last year decided to shame the young university men and women whom he catches sitting together at university. Persistently he would grab the young men's mobiles and shout at them until they would give him their sisters' mobile numbers so that the esteemed professor could call the sisters and harass them in a tit-for-tat scenario. This same university professor made videos, that he also published on YouTube, of this exercise, followed by many more shame tactics aimed at prohibiting the mixing of young ladies and men at university. Notice, please, that

this university professor was combatting the consensual public mixing of students, while the first project was to combat the common practice of verbal harassment of women by young men. This second professor continues to hold a well regarded public profile, is seen as a modern maverick of 21st century Sharia and is invited to attend seminars and official meetings aimed at discussing education, Sharia and the challenges that they face.

I have a problem with this situation. I have a problem with the fact that a very hardworking and dedicated university leader was allowed to become victim of our inability to tackle the challenges that face us as a society and as an institution of higher education, only because she is a woman who allowed her students to take initiative and “air our dirty laundry”.

All her academic, intellectual and professional contributions were discarded and the university management appears to have allowed the gossipers and backstabbers to win.

At the same time, the university continues to allow the other professor to go after the students who are mixing openly – and normally – on the university campus, using multiple tools of harassment and intimidation. I have yet to hear of one action being taken against his tactic by the university, even though I am aware of several campaigns and appeals to the university by students to try to stop him.

The bottom line is that education, and especially higher education, is not only about academic grades, it is also about arming this next generation – during those amazing four years when we have their attention – with the moral set of values that will enable them to succeed professionally and through hard work and merit.

The lesson I would have liked to see the university showcase when dealing with these two very different university agents and leaders is that the university supports professionalism and open dialogue and rejects dogma and intimidation tactics.

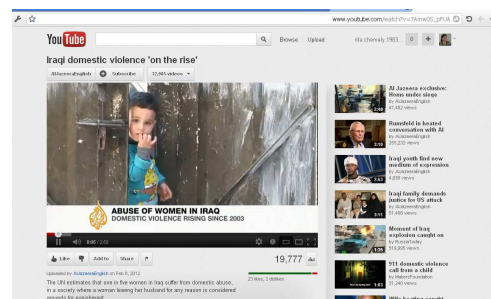
The university should have found a way to laud the professor who provided an academically valid enabling environment for the young women to put forward their views. They, in turn, must be recognised for their courage in creating an awareness tool to tackle the problem of sexual harassment on campus without launching any personal attacks on their abusers.

At the same time, I believe the university should protect its students from the personal attack and harassment carried out by the other professor who clearly has an ideological view against the mixing of young men and women at universities. I assume that since our universities are mixed, this ideological view is not part and parcel of the university’s moral judgement of its students, and as such, it should have come out and put a stop to anyone who is trying to force another reality on the ground. We talk about reforming universities. Shouldn’t the first sign of reform be support for the role models that espouse professionalism and academic excellence in an open, mixed and respectful educational environment? Are we teaching our students that we are too afraid to rock the boat even when we know it is right? Are we teaching them to duck their heads and hide in the face of dogmatic and ideologically driven intimidation? We should review our moral yardstick. The article was published in the Jordan times <http://jordantimes.com/a-student-project>

Iraq - Domestic Violence on the Rise - Film

The UN estimates that one in five women in Iraq suffer from domestic abuse, in a society where a woman leaving her husband for any reason is considered grounds for punishment. One rights group says cases of abuse appear to be on the rise since the fall of former Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein nearly nine years ago. But even for women who do manage to escape their abuse, there are few places in the country they can go to seek refugee. To have more information please follow the news

http://www.wunrn.com/news/2012/09_12/09_03/090312_iraq.htm



Interview with Marieme Helie Lucas: No Spring for Arab Women

Marieme Helie Lucas is an Algerian feminist, sociologist, political theorist and author known for her work against religious fundamentalism. Marieme was born in Algeria to a 'family of feminists' and had been active in the liberation struggle of Algeria. She founded the *Women Living Under Muslim Laws* (WLUML) in 1984. The former international coordinator of WLUML, Marieme founded *Secularism is a Women's Issue* (SIAWI) in 2005.

She talks to FeministsIndia about the Arab Revolution which was 'neither a socialist nor a feminist revolution' but more a victory of the extreme right and religious fundamentalists and argues that it is essential for women's rights that feminists fight for secularism.

Women have played a crucial role in the Arab uprising that started in late 2010. After almost two years, it is being said that women are the biggest losers in this revolution. According to you what has gone wrong?

Nothing went 'wrong': it was clear from the start that this 'revolution' was neither a socialist one nor a feminist one. In both the cases of Tunisia and Egypt, it was limited to overthrowing the government in place. Although it was initiated by ordinary people who took to the streets for reasons of poverty and hopelessness, in fact it has become a victory of the extreme right political forces that work under the guise of religion.

After the near-eradication of the Left parties/movements and workers' unions that went on for decades, and were either completely ignored or largely under reported by the international media, the only organised political forces in Tunisia and in Egypt were the religious fundamentalists ones. They took over the protest movement.

It is interesting to note that, contrary to their lack of proper reporting when the Left forces were under attack, the international media did denounce the government's repression against fundamentalist movements: in that sense, they not only fed the world with a very unbalanced political analysis, but they also promoted the Far Right religious movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood, exclusively, as victims of the state, and not as perpetrators of grave violations of the rights of civilians and notably of women's rights.

As the Muslim Right did previously in other countries such as Iran and Algeria, fundamentalist groups and parties in Egypt and Tunisia manipulated the legitimate discontent that sparked under regimes that did not cater to people's most basic needs. Certainly, Algeria in the nineties is a very good example of their strategy. We can consider that Algeria was the lab for what is now going on in other countries in the region.

The Tunisian and Egyptian regimes were neither more nor less 'undemocratic' than the vast majority of governments in the world today - as is confirmed by the magnitude of the movement of the '*Indignés*' which, for over a year, has been protesting their own rulers' policies in many countries in Europe and North America. However, the argument of lack of democracy was what was broadly used to legitimate overthrowing these governments, regardless of whom and what will replace the existing regimes. To read more from the



interview, follow the link <http://www.wluml.org/news/interview-marieme-helie-lucas-no-spring-arab-women>

GENDER & HUMAN RIGHTS

Saudi Arabia: Plans For Women-only Work Zone

Saudi Arabia is planning to establish a work-zone to be staffed exclusively by women. With women facing many barriers to joining the country's workforce, experts wonder if the zones will only reinforce segregation. Women make up more than 60 percent of high school graduates in Saudi Arabia, but represent just 15 percent of the country's workforce. Many of them go abroad to earn an advanced degree, only to return home unable to find a job.

Now Saudi Arabia is planning its first women-only work zone, an industrial area in the eastern city of Hofuf expected to provide 5,000 jobs. Yet experts are skeptical whether the plan will really provide a solution to female unemployment and underemployment in the kingdom. "It would probably be much more efficient and effective to reduce hurdles for women by building up a normal labor market," Christoph Wilcke of Human Rights Watch told DW. According to Wilcke, these structural barriers include Saudi Arabia's traditional system of guardianship, in which women need a male family member's written consent to take up a job. He added that the country's ban on female drivers and, not least, strict segregation of the sexes at work also limit women's employment opportunities.

Saudi Arabia expert Ulrike Freitag, Director of the Modern Orient Center, told DW she is also skeptic about the proposal for a women-only work zone. "I think this is an attempt to implement the current segregation - which exists in banks, universities and school - on a wider basis," she said, "and suppress efforts toward a truly mixed public sphere." Still, Freitag added, female work zones could possibly open up new chances to women that might not arise in a mixed public sphere. Middle East expert Stephanie Doetzer described her experiences as a journalist working for Al Jazeera in Saudi Arabia's neighbor Qatar.

"Women are often the ones to call for separation of the sexes," she said. "It is women who say, 'I am not comfortable with men at work; I can only think of work in a place where women are among each other'." Doetzer added that women with such conservative attitudes are still in the majority. She said for many women in the Gulf states, a work zone reserved for women is completely reasonable. Doetzer continued that while more and more women in Qatar are working in a mixed-gender environment, it remains a big issue. "Not all women are satisfied with" the situation, she said. "The more women work in Qatar, the more there are who decide to wear a facial veil. That is a sort of portable gender separation, which finds its expression in clothes." To read the entire story follow the link :



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<http://www.wluml.org/news/saudi-arabia-plans-women-only-work-zone>

Film-maker exploring feminism in Algeria

Sofia Djama does not consider herself a feminist. It's not because she doesn't believe in equal rights for women - as a 33-year-old female director in Algeria, she is already a trailblazer. It's more that, as she puts it: "The rights of women in Algeria are such that you can't be feminist in the traditional sense. There are things you can't even discuss or negotiate." The main problem, as Djama sees it, lies in the interstices between legal and social morality in her country. "On one hand, I consider myself totally free," she says, speaking over the phone from Paris, where she spends some of her time. "I have a right to wear a skirt, to go to the beach - the law doesn't ban me from doing so. If I don't want to fast during Ramadan, the law doesn't oblige me to. But from the perspective of social morality, it's absolutely forbidden."

It is this nuanced tension that Djama explores in her second short film, *Softly One Saturday Morning* (*Mollement, un samedi matin*), which scooped two prizes at the prestigious Clermont-Ferrand international short film festival earlier this year. Djama's film tells the story of Myassa, who is returning home late one night after work and is the victim of an



attempted rape. Her attacker pins her against the wall of her Algiers apartment building, but fails to get an erection. The next day, Myassa is faced with a choice: to report the assault to the police or to forget it ever happened.

"It's not a film that is anti-men," says Djama. "I wanted to concentrate more on the failure of the system: we're at a stage in Algeria where young people are undergoing a complete crisis of identity. There are no jobs; they have no room to express themselves freely in a cultural space; they are forced to live at home with their parents; as a result, they are turning to Islam in search of an identity.

"The current government in Algeria no longer relates to its youth and these young people are full of hatred and violence. That's what I explore in the film: both the woman who is assaulted and the man who assaults her are victims."

Softly One Saturday Morning is beautifully shot and subtly directed in a way that enables Djama to portray the reality of modern-day Algeria. It is an existence filled with petty frustrations (the difficulty of getting a plumber to fix a broken tank) and humiliation at the hands of incompetent state authorities. When Myassa reports her attempted rape to the police chief, his first response is to laugh. Throughout, there is an undercurrent of machismo. "A few people have mentioned the name of [feminist film director] Virginie Despentes to me but she has quite a violent approach, whereas I'm not about settling scores," says Djama. "I just want to put it all on the table." In fact, she cites her most powerful influence as Ken Loach: "I adore him and that kind of social realism." To read more about the issue follow the link <http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2012/aug/26/new-africa-film-maker-feminism-algeria>

Lebanon's Mashrou' Leila reflects hope of Arab youth

Hundreds of young Arabs joyfully screamed out obscenities, encouraged by the handsome, Lebanese lead singer at the concert in Jordan's capital. Police looked on worriedly. People outside asked what was going on.

It was a performance by the band Mashrou' Leila, which uses a hybrid of velvety Lebanese slang and indie music conventions to address issues that are difficult, sometimes taboo, in Middle Eastern societies. Lyrics of love and angst are intertwined with issues like poverty, premarital sex and homosexuality in this deeply homophobic region.

Led by vocalist and lyricist Hamed Sinno, a 24-year-old Freddy Mercury doppelganger, the band has been embraced by Arab youth who see the music as part of a social revolution.

"They are about secularism, gay love, social problems that we don't talk about, that we don't accept, that we are afraid to discuss," said Jalal Elias, 19-year-old Palestinian student from Haifa.

"The kind of people who make this music - they made the Arab Spring."

On a recent Friday, some 3,000 fans attended Mashrou' Leila's concert in Amman's ancient Roman auditorium. Young men and women in tight jeans and disheveled haircuts mingled with women in hijab and modest dress.

They cheered as Sinno sang of a gay couple breaking up in a song called, "Smell the Jasmine."

"I wanted to be your housewife," Sinno crooned. "I wanted to raise your children." And the crowd happily screamed obscenities from the band's song "Gossip."

In an interview, Sinno later explained that Jordanian censors wouldn't let him sing the lyrics "prostitute" and "pimp," so he let the fans sing it instead. They also sang along to "Dresses," about a couple broken apart by poverty and religious conflict. The song suggests the couple was having premarital sex - another taboo. Sinno said the band's music reflects the broader spirit of revolution. "I think the people that create music are the product of the same system that produces the revolutionaries we see changing the Arab world today," he said. Mashrou' Leila is one of many bands around the region connecting with a hazy Mideast demographic called "Arab Spring youth" - educated, liberal, Muslims and Christians in their late teens and twenties. Other musicians include folk rocker Youssra al-Hawary, the reggae inspired "Tout Ard," and rapper duo Oka-Ortega. Many of the groups existed before the Arab uprisings that began in January 2011, toppling ageing rulers in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen, and unleashing a civil war in Syria. The artists have since grown in popularity - partly because, according to Egyptian music producer Mohamed Gorab, edgier lyrics and Western-influenced music resonate in a revolutionary time. "This is a new generation that's emerging," said Gorab. "They are feeling more freedom, and the music shows that."

To Read more: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/Culture/Music/2012/Sep-24/188968-lebanons-mashrou-leila-reflects-hope-of-arab-youth.ashx#ixzz27QZZrFyF>



Woman takes command of ISS after crew return in Moscow

A woman took full command of the International Space Station for only the second time in history as three of her American and Russian colleagues made a safe return from the orbiting space lab to the Kazakh steppe.

The Soyuz TMA-04M capsule made a pinpoint landing with U.S. astronaut Joe Acaba and Russian cosmonauts Gennady Padalka and Sergei Revin aboard a vessel whose origins stretch back to the early days of Soviet space flight.

NASA television footage showed the smiling men relaxing in lounge chairs and sipping warm drinks from thermoses while medical teams checked their pulses and chatted to them about their trip.

“It’s good to be home,” a NASA official quoted Acaba as saying the moment he was pulled out of the Russian capsule to mark the formal end of his 125-day stay in space.

The crew then set what may become a new tradition by signing their names on the black Soyuz capsule in honor of their journey. The three leave behind another trio led by new commander Suni Williams - a U.S. space veteran who has logged the most days in orbit by a woman as well as the greatest number of hours conducting space walks.

“I appreciate all the lessons learned and all the great humor that we have had up here,” Williams told outgoing commander Padalka in televised images moments before the handoff. Williams is now in charge of a crew also comprised of Japan’s Aki Hoshide and the Russian Yury Malenchenko. She had seen the trio off with warm hugs as they clambered on board the Soyuz through an escape hatch already dressed in their puffy white travel space suits. The trio on board the ISS had been set to be joined by a new expedition on Oct. 17.

Read more: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/International/2012/Sep-18/188309-woman-takes-command-of-iss-after-crew-return.ashx#ixzz27QbCbZGF>



Shoura Council to have 30 women in Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is expected to appoint 30 women on the Shoura Council before the consultative body begins its next annual session. “The expectations are that up to 30 women will be appointed to the Shoura,” sources close to the council told Al-Sharq Arabic daily.

The newspaper said that talks have already begun with several institutions to propose the names of qualified women in order to be appointed on the Shoura. A high-level panel, headed by the king, will look into the nominees and select the final list, it added. The move comes after Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah announced the government’s decision to appoint women members on the Shoura in September.



“We made this decision because we refuse to marginalize women in Saudi society in their roles that comply with the Islamic Shariah and following consultations with many of our scholars who supported it,” King Abdullah said. “Muslim women in our history have had

stances that cannot be sidelined since the time of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him),” the king said. Female members must be holders of Saudi citizenship, be a minimum of 30 years of age with an impeccable personal record, a high level of competency and practical experience.

Sadia, a humanitarian activist, applauded the latest move. She said: “This is a solid step to involve women in the public sphere. We welcome King Abdullah’s decision that will enable women to serve as full members of the Shoura Council and will have the right to participate in the elections. These reforms recognize the significant contributions Saudi women have been making in society and will offer them new ways to participate in taking decisions for the welfare of the community.” The Shoura Council’s bylaws do not oppose the membership of women and do not specify the gender of the appointed members, the daily reported yesterday. However, since it was founded in 1993, the Council has only had male members. King Abdullah in the same speech, while addressing the Shoura, also announced that women would have the right to run and vote in the 2015 municipal elections. Reacting to the development, dentist Sonia Ali said: “This is excellent start for Saudi women to come out of their shell and take part in governmental activities. This decision of King Abdullah will strengthen the confidence of Saudi women in their abilities.”

Hanouf Al-Jouiad, a postgraduate student, said: “We are thankful to Custodian of the Two Holy Mosque King Abdullah and his government for showing his trust in Saudi women and giving them a chance to be a member of the Shoura Council. Women’s voices will finally be heard and they will be allowed to take part in the decision-making process on serious matters. We look forward to Saudis voting for suitable persons who will be bold enough to take right decisions rather than just looking to work for their interests.”

Fatema Al-Refai, a teacher, said: “We appreciate King Abdullah ‘s efforts to introduce progressive political reforms by opening an opportunity for Saudi women to be a part of the Shoura Council. We hope that the decision taken by the king will benefit women who have been looking forward to making effective contributions to the country’s onward progress. The Shoura Council will give Saudi women an open platform for showcasing their talent and their love for the country. We expect appropriate candidates will be elected to the Shoura Council.” To have more information please follow the link

<http://www.arabnews.com/saudi-arabia/shoura-council-have-30-women>

Family life and roles in Egypt

Women are erratic and emotional, and they make good wives and mothers – but never

leaders or rulers. That, at least, is what Osama Abou Salama, a professor of botany at Cairo University and a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, told young men and women during a recent premarital counseling class. What was striking, though, was the absence of any reaction. None of the 30 people in the class so much as winced.

“A woman,” Mr. Abou Salama said, “takes pleasure in being a follower and finds ease in obeying a husband who loves her.”

Since the Brotherhood rose to power

and one of its former leaders was elected president, much of the uncertainty over its social agenda has centered on its plans for women. Will the Brotherhood try to impose a



conservative dress code? Will it try to bar women from certain fields of work? Will its leaders promote segregation at schools?

But in a country where a vast majority of women already cover their hair and voluntarily separate from men in coed environments, those questions are largely academic.

Mr. Abou Salama's class makes that case. "Can you, as a woman, take a decision and handle the consequences of your decision?" he asked.

A number of women shook their heads even before Mr. Abou Salama provided his answer: "No. But men can. And God created us this way because a ship cannot have more than one captain."

More than any other political group in Egypt, the Brotherhood is fluent in the dialect of the masses. By upholding patriarchal and traditional values about a woman's place in society, it garners popular support, builds political capital and reinforces social conservatism.

"The woman is the symbol of a moral platform through which easy gains can be made," said Hania Sholkamy, an anthropologist and an associate professor at the Social Research Center at the American University in Cairo. "Those who deprive women of their rights, limit their freedom or place them in a subordinate position believe that the political cost of doing so is very low."

The lectures of Mr. Abou Salama, who has raised three daughters, are part of a four-week workshop called "Bride and Groom Against Satan" and sponsored by Family House, a charity financed by the Brotherhood. It is one of several Brotherhood efforts that have grown since the revolution, reflecting, as much as promoting, the religious values that define a large segment of society. Among its many activities, Family House offers financial support to struggling households, provides a matchmaking service and sponsors mass weddings for low-income couples.

"This is part of the reformist methodology of the Muslim Brotherhood," said Walaa Abdel Halim, the Family House coordinator who organizes the youth counseling workshop.

"Shaping a righteous individual leads to shaping a righteous family, and by shaping a righteous family, you get a righteous society that can choose a righteous leader."

Those broader efforts at shaping a conservative religious society, played out over decades by the Brotherhood, were seen as partly responsible for helping elect Mohamed Morsi president in June. At the time, Mr. Morsi, who resigned from the Brotherhood after taking office, gave assurances that he would protect the rights of women and include them in decision making. Less than three months into his presidency, though, Mr. Morsi has not fulfilled a campaign promise to appoint a woman as a vice president. Instead, he named a team of 21 senior aides and advisers last week that included three women.

One of those three, Omaima Kamel, a medical professor at Cairo University and a member of the Brotherhood since 1981, makes it clear that she is not about to press society to change attitudes about women.

"Let's face it, if your work took you away from your fundamental duties at home and if your success came at the cost of your family life and the stability of your children, then you are the one who stands to lose," she said by telephone. "A woman can work as much as she wants, but within the framework of our religious restrictions."

Many analysts and critics of the Brotherhood see that kind of philosophy, one that gives women independence so long as they maintain their traditional obligations, as effectively constraining women to established gender roles. To continue reading follow the link

http://www.wunrn.com/news/2012/09_12/09_03/090312_egypt.htm

Does Hijab protect women from sexual violence and harassment? - ANALYSIS

I was only 6 years old when my family was forced to flee the civil war in Afghanistan for Pakistan in the late 1980s. My sister, Neelo, who is five years older than me, was enrolled in a Saudi-funded Muslim Brotherhood-inspired public school for Afghan refugees. She, like

many Muslim women, wore a simple headscarf. I remember Neelo picking up her tiny bag, wrapping her scarf around her hair, and going to her first day of school. I also sadly remember her coming back from school that day and telling our parents: “The guards told me, ‘Either you are going to wear the full hijab or wear a *chador* [an Afghan burqa], or you can’t come to school.’” Her tiny headscarf was no longer enough. Neelo was forced to wear the most restrictive form of the hijab—almost exactly like the woman in [this image](#). Things were fine until the next year, when I started school myself. My mother sat me down and told me that from then on I would have to walk my sister to school every day. I grew to hate it. Every school day, for years, as the two of us walked toward Neelo’s school, men would stare at her, sizing up her body behind the dark clothes, whispering to each other, making signs with their hands, making catcalls, taunting her, and saying things like how pretty she was—even though the only thing you could see on my sister’s body were her eyes. The men who passed us on sidewalks would say demeaning things—things sexual in nature that I was too young to understand. My mom and dad wanted me to walk her to school because if I wasn’t with her, who knew what these men would do? I grew up hearing stories about women being groped, punched, even abducted—all while wearing hijabs. The perpetrators were from all ethnic groups and were both Pakistanis and, like us, refugees. The experience left me angry, helpless, and traumatized. We never talked about it. What she didn’t know was that I knew she was emotionally and psychologically hurt. I didn’t need her to tell me she was not being protected by her hijab. The tears behind her veil were enough. Those memories came back to haunt me on Tuesday, World Hijab Day. The day celebrates a Muslim woman’s right to choose what she wants to wear. The headscarf and more restrictive forms of face and body coverings are widely known as the hijab; over the centuries, it has become a symbol of conservative Islam and, to some, even a defining characteristic of modest and pious Muslim women. While the practice isn’t uniform in all countries, wearing the “conservative” hijab means completely covering all of a woman’s hair and, in many places, even her face, with a veil, a *pardah* (a long, thin shawl covering the head and upper body, mostly worn in South Asia), a burqa (a sort of shawl, with a hood and built-in veil, worn in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India), or several other national variations thereof. No parts of a woman’s body except her face, hands, feet below the ankles, and, sometimes, neck are allowed to be seen, in conservative interpretations.

Great strides in women’s rights over the past two centuries have allowed religious women to take some liberties in how they want to dress. Yet the dominant response to this by the mainstream conservative religious movement has been to separate the practice from its religious nature and to find reasons to justify not just its observance for piety’s sake, but for supposed practical benefits.

That the hijab somehow protects women against sexual harassment and/or violence is by no means a minority view. Eminent Islamic clerics like Egypt’s [Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi](#)—widely considered a spiritual leader of the Muslim Brotherhood and much of Sunni Islamic thought—and [Ayatollah Sayyed Ali Khamenei](#)—the supreme religious and political authority in Iran and one of Shia Islam’s main sources of jurisprudence—have endorsed this view.



This is not just a false assertion that has no basis in fact; it is also a dangerous one. I know that for a fact because I saw Neelo's hijab fail to protect her for years.

I know this because I've seen, heard, or read multiple first-person accounts by victims of sexual harassment and sexualized violence who were wearing the hijab when they were attacked. The hijab cannot and will not stop men from assaulting women. Even if the only part of a woman's body that shows is her shadow, deviants will sexualize and fetishize it. Take the example of Egypt, where sexual harassment against women has become almost a pandemic—whether they wear the hijab or not.

This billboard in Tehran says: “Hijab Is Security.” (Omid 20)

The myth that there's a correlation between the hijab and a low incidence of sexual harassment and violence against women actually systematically victimizes them. Men are doing women a disservice in that they are placing blame on women who don't cover themselves, as well as insinuating that a woman who is attacked while wearing a headscarf somehow did something to deserve it. As with all victim-blaming, this prevents women from speaking up about sexual assault. Many mainstream conservative Muslim clerics and pseudo-social scientists—like Zakir Naik, in this video, which is a must-see for anyone wanting to learn about this issue—openly imply or proclaim that women who don't wear the hijab are *calling for* sexual harassment and sexual violence. They go so far as correlating a woman's right to wear what she wants in the West with a high incidence of sexualized violence against women there.

They conveniently ignore all of the reports on how sexualized violence is underreported in many conservative Islamic societies because of its taboo nature and the stigma associated with it; they ignore the fact that sexualized violence leads to the honor killings of many of the women victims each year.

Perverts are perverts. They will sexually harass and commit sexual violence against women who wear the hijab or a miniskirt *because* they are perverts—not because women have exercised their right to wear what they want.

Continuing to perpetuate the myth of the magical hijab only makes the problem grow. It doesn't actually solve anything. For that, we need to be able to openly talk about this problem, raise awareness, educate people, draft laws against it, and have law enforcement agencies that actually act upon criminal complaints against men who carry out these crimes. If that had been in place in the 1980s, maybe Neelo—or the millions of other victims like her—wouldn't have had to endure the pain she lived with for years.

To wear or not to wear the hijab is a personal choice that must be protected. Many women who wear it choose to do so and take joy in their gesture of modesty and piety. This, however, is not about the hijab or women's choice. It's about pseudo-science and misogyny.

It's about the fact that women who wear the hijab are not any safer than women who don't. It's about the fact that there needs to be *real* protection for women in Islamic societies, at home, on the streets, and in the workplace—not just miracle garments. Source: <http://www.womenundersiegeproject.org/blog/entry/the-myth-of-how-the-hijab-protects-women-against-sexual-assault>

RESOURCES & CALLS

ANNOUNCEMENTS & CALLS

Trust Women Conference: Putting the rule of law behind women's rights will bring together women and men from the legal, financial, government, corporate and non-profit sectors to drive pragmatic action to fight violence against women and other injustices including trafficking, domestic slavery and discrimination.

“In many countries, basic human rights are systematically denied to women,” said Monique Villa, chief executive of Thomson Reuters Foundation. “Trust Women has been created to help women know and defend their rights. We believe that empowering women helps tackle the very roots of poverty. In the developing world, when a woman works, her children are better fed and better educated because they spend their money on their family.”

Prominent speakers and advisory board members include Queen Noor of Jordan; Christy Turlington, model, author and founder of Every Mother Counts; Cherie Blair, lawyer and founder of the Cherie Blair Foundation for Women; Kiran Bedi, India's first and highest ranking female police officer; Emma Bonino, founder of No Peace without Justice and vice-president of the Italian Senate; Beth Brook, vice-chair of public policy at Ernst & Young; and Benjamin Skinner, a journalist and expert in modern slavery.

The event, sponsored partly by international law firms Latham and Watkins and Linklaters, will promote innovation and partnerships by connecting legal expertise with financial, technological and educational resources that enable women to exercise their rights.

The first day of the conference will explore clashes between “culture” and the law, honing in on concrete strategies to tackle such wrongs as child marriage, female genital mutilation, acid attacks and honour killings. Delegates will delve into what the Arab Spring means for women and how to embed women's rights in new constitutions.

Day two will embrace issues ranging from financial independence and the corrosive effects of corruption to how to put the trafficking business out of business and end domestic slavery.

Comprised of 350 delegates from around the world - female and male leaders in their fields - the conference will offer a provocative mix of keynote speeches, multimedia, plenary discussions, debates, break-out “action groups” and opportunities to engage online.

This joint venture between the Thomson Reuters Foundation and the IHT reflects their respective efforts to ensure women's issues are covered in the media. The Foundation's TrustLaw Women and the IHT's Female Factor are both global hubs of news and information on women's issues.

trust women
PUTTING THE RULE OF LAW BEHIND WOMEN'S RIGHTS

The conference's legal framework was inspired by work the Thomson Reuters Foundation is doing with its TrustLaw Connect pro bono legal platform. TrustLaw Connect was launched in 2010 with the aim of spreading pro bono work globally by helping lawyers put their professional skills to work for non-governmental organisations and social entrepreneurs.

It has more than 750 members, of which 250 are law firms and in house legal teams. <http://www.trustwomenconf.com/about/news/conference-to-put-rule-of-law-behind-womens-rights/>

Conference Registration: <http://www.trustwomenconf.com/how-to-register/>

LONDON (Trust Women) - Thomson Reuters Foundation, the charitable arm of the world's leading provider of news and information, and the International Herald Tribune, the global edition of the New York Times, will co-host a high-level women's rights conference in London on December 4-5, 2012.

For more information follow the link :

http://www.wunrn.com/news/2012/09_12/09_10/091012_conference.htm

AWID Call for Seed Grant Proposals

Greetings from AWID! Following our *Transforming Economic Power to Advance Women's Rights and Justice* International Forum, we are now launching a Call for Proposals to all AWID Forum participants interested in applying for a USD \$5,000 Innovation Seed Grant.

Did the Forum spark a new idea to contribute to the transformation of economic power in your work? Are you planning to share new concepts and connections from the Forum with

others to help engage in economic debates and devise strategies to transform and reclaim economic power based on gender justice and women's rights? Did you think of a concrete initiative that could strengthen feminists and women's movements to more effectively address the important challenges discussed at the forum?

If so, we invite you to send us your proposal to turn ideas inspired by the Forum theme into action. To be considered for Seed Grant funding, proposals must:

- emerge from experiences at the AWID 2012 Forum
be clearly connected to Transforming Economic Power to Advance Women's Rights and Justice
- Include a vision of how you see your proposal grow into something greater
demonstrate creativity and innovation within a
workable methodology and viable budget

Eligibility

Only 2012 AWID Forum participants can apply.

Organizations/individuals that have previously been awarded a Forum seed grant will not be eligible.

In the case of proposals presented by organizations, preference will be given to organizations with annual budgets under USD \$500,000.

In order to be considered for funding, follow the link
http://www.wunrn.com/news/2012/09_12/09_03/090312_awid.htm



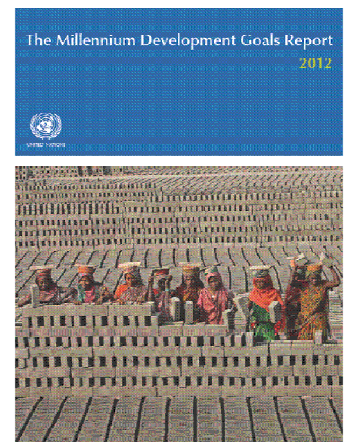
Books and Reports

Millennium Development Goals Report 2012 - Gender

A lot has been achieved and significant strides have been made, however some impediments to reaching all the MDGs by 2015 remain. The 2012 report spells out that recent natural disasters and the global financial crisis has slowed progress and that inequality remains. A particular area of concern includes the slow decrease in levels of vulnerable employment, defined as the share of unpaid family workers and own-account workers in total employment.

Lastly, and perhaps most concerning is the fact that hunger remains a global challenge. The most recent FAO estimate of undernourishment set the mark at 850 million living in hunger in the world in the 2006/08 period, 15.5 per cent of the world population. Additionally, progress has also been slow in reducing child under-nutrition, with close to a third of children in Southern Asia deemed underweight in 2010. to read the report follow the link

http://www.wunrn.com/news/2012/09_12/09_03/090312_millennium.htm



Women with Disabilities - Forgotten Sisters - Report

This report, prepared by scholars and human rights advocates who are members of the Working Group on Violence against Women with Disabilities, focuses on the prevalence and pervasiveness of violence against women and girls with disabilities. The Working Group recognizes the need to ensure that women and girls with disabilities are included as full participants in data-gathering, analysis, and proposed solutions as the mandates of Ms. Rashida Manjoo, the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its Causes and Consequences, and Mr. Shuaib Chalklen, the Special Rapporteur on Disability, move forward. Additionally, the Working Group calls on international organizations, especially those focused on women's rights such as the UN Commission on the Status of Women (which will consider as its priority thematic issue violence against women at its 57th session in

March 2013) and UN Women, and the international community, governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to join us in the effort to highlight these critical issues. Because women with disabilities make up a significant part of the world's population, principles of fairness and equality require that the world engage in a vigorous discussion on how to end violence against them. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank (WB), more than one billion people (approximately 15% of the world's population) live with some form of disability.

Significantly, for the World Bank and World Health Organization disability level threshold of 40, which includes those experiencing significant difficulties in their everyday lives for both low income and high income countries, the male disability prevalence rate is 12 with standard error .18 and the female disability prevalence rate is 19.2 with standard error .19. Based on these figures, it is clear that women with disabilities

constitute a significant portion of the global population and that the pervasive violence against women with disabilities must be addressed. The 2011 Report of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women focused on the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination that contribute to and exacerbate violence against women, noting that factors such as ability, age, access to resources, race/ethnicity, language, religion, sexual orientation and gender identity and class can exacerbate the violence women experience. Although women with disabilities experience many of the same forms of violence all women experience, when gender and disability intersect, violence takes on unique forms, has unique causes, and results in unique consequences. Further, women with disabilities who are also people of color or members of minority or indigenous peoples, or who are lesbian, trans-gender or intersex or who live in poverty, can be subject to particularized forms of violence and discrimination. These intersections must be explored in greater depth to ensure that the complexities of violence against women with disabilities are properly understood and addressed. To read the report, follow the link

http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2133332##



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