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Syrian Kurdish women march to end gender-based violence



Hundreds of female protesters took to the streets of the Syrian Kurdish-majority city of Qamishli Sunday to call for an end to violence against women.

Some banging large drums and others ululating, they marched through the streets, an AFP correspondent said.

"Underage marriage is a crime," said one sign held up by a protester, on International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.

Another demonstrator held up the picture of a woman with a swollen eye, her mouth covered with one hand.

"We must take part in this day in large numbers," said Hanifa Mohammed, 47, wearing a green jumper and a dark-coloured headscarf.

"Women must organise and reach decision-making positions," she said. "They must determine their future."

Women of all ages carried the portraits of fighters in the Women's Protection Units (YPJ), the all-female branch of the Syrian Kurdish militia.

Read more:

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2018/Nov-25/470064-syrian-kurdish-women-march-to-end-gender-based-violence.ashx>

On UN Day, Thousands Protest Violence Against Women



Protesters in cities across Europe and elsewhere marked the U.N. International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women on Sunday, with tens of thousands turning out in Madrid and demonstrators in Istanbul greeted by tear gas.

Hundreds of women gathered in Istanbul's Tunel Square to march on the city's main pedestrian Istiklal Avenue. Dozens of police formed a barricade and prevented the group from marching, saying their demonstration was not permitted. Police fired several rounds of tear gas to stop the group.

The activists instead continued their demonstration in the square with a sit-in. They chanted slogans and dispersed peacefully.

Rights groups say violence against women is widespread in Turkey, and an online database called the Monument Counter says at least 337 women were killed by domestic violence in 2018.

Protests in Turkey have been especially restricted since 2013 after a wave of anti-government demonstrations, extremist attacks and a two-year state of emergency declared following a failed coup in 2016.

The women's activist group Mor Cati said Turkey is more concerned with stopping protests than "preventing male violence."

Read more:

<https://www.voanews.com/a/thousands-use-un-day-to-protest-violence-against-women/4673702.html>

Nobel peace prize shines light on rape in conflict



Congolese doctor Denis Mukwege and Yazidi activist Nadia Murad, an IS sex slave survivor, will be presented with the Nobel Peace Prize Monday, as they challenge the world to combat rape as a weapon of war.

Mukwege, dubbed "Doctor Miracle" for his work helping victims of sexual violence, and Murad, who has turned her experience into powerful advocacy for her Yazidi people, will receive the prize at a ceremony in Oslo.

The Norwegian Nobel Committee in October said the prize was for "for their efforts to end the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war and armed conflict".

The laureates, who have dedicated their award to rape victims across the world, have said they hope the Nobel will raise awareness of sexual violence and make it harder for the world to ignore it.

"We cannot say that we didn't act because we didn't know. Now everyone knows. And I think now the international community has a responsibility to act," Mukwege told reporters at a news conference on Sunday.

The surgeon has spent 20 years treating the wounds and emotional trauma inflicted on women in the DR Congo's war-torn east.

"What we see during armed conflicts is that women's bodies become battlefields and this cannot be acceptable," he said.

Read more:

<https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/afp/2018/12/nobel-peace-drcongo-iraq-yazidi.html>

Indian airport protesters block woman activist's plan to enter hill temple

Thousands of protesters blocked all the exits at a southern Indian airport on Friday to stop a women's rights activist from heading to a Hindu temple to defy a centuries-old ban on the entry of women of menstruating age.

Widespread protests broke out in the tourist resort state of Kerala after the Supreme Court in September ordered authorities to lift a ban on women or girls aged between 10 and 50 from entering the temple, which draws millions of worshippers a year.

The activist, Tupti Desai, who arrived with a group of women at Kerala's biggest and busiest airport in the city of Kochi, at 4.30 a.m. (2230 GMT), has been held up for hours by the demonstrators.

Desai said police had advised her group not to leave the airport because of safety concerns, but vowed not to abandon plans to enter Sabarimala, the hill temple about 155 km (96 miles) away that is at the centre of the conflict, on Saturday.

"Protests are being held outside the airport and the police have said that we can't go outside now," she told Reuters. "We booked taxis three or four times, but drivers said they were threatened their vehicles would be vandalised if they offer us a ride."

Desai, who led the "Right to Pray" movement in the western state of Maharashtra, had successfully fought to earn women the right to enter the inner sanctums of three temples there.

"We won't return until we have darshan," Desai said, referring to the opportunity to view the image of a deity.

"This kind of bullying and hooliganism are unacceptable."

Read more:

<https://in.reuters.com/article/india-court-temple/indian-airport-protesters-block-woman-activists-plan-to-enter-hill-temple-idINL4N1XQ47Q>

Despite challenges, Afghan female entrepreneurs reach global markets



Naziya Basharmal set up a small tailoring facility at her home in Kandahar province, one of the most conservative parts of Afghanistan, with less than \$800 in assets almost two years ago.

Since then, she has made more than \$12,000 in profit, equivalent to at least two decades' worth of income for the average civil servant in Afghanistan.

Encouraged by the income, she expanded her business and now has an army of 50 female tailors.

She sends the fabrics to their homes since many women who can forge world-famous embroidery cannot run their own shops due to cultural restrictions.

"You have to be confident when you take on this type of work. It looks tough at the beginning, but you'll soon yield results," Basharmal, who is in her mid-30s, told Arab News at the first National Women Entrepreneurs' Summit in Kabul.

The summit named 12 prominent businesswomen to watch in 2018, and gave these entrepreneurs a platform to share their experiences and the challenges they face, in addition to exploring ways to facilitate trade for women in a male-dominated society that has suffered decades of war.

Read more:

<http://www.arabnews.com/node/1410591/world>

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Women to get equal representation on UAE advisory council



United Arab Emirates President Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al-Nahyan has decided that women should make up half of its semi-elected advisory body when it is renewed next year, state-run WAM news agency reported on Saturday.

This will increase the number of women on the UAE council, which expresses opinion about public issues including bills and government budgets, from nine to 20 next year.

The 40-member Federal National Council is currently chaired by a woman, Amal Al-Qubaisi. Half of its members are elected for a four-year term, while the others are appointed by the rulers of the seven emirates making up the federation. The last vote for the elected part was held in 2015.

Sheikh Mohammad Bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, Abu Dhabi Crown Prince and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, congratulated Emirati women on this momentous occasion.

"We congratulate Emirati women for increasing their representation in the Federal National Council. An additional step to enhance its role and contribution to national decision-making," he tweeted.

Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid, Vice President and Ruler of Dubai, said the decision "gives a great push to the legislative, legal and parliamentary role of women in our (country's) development."

Read more:

<http://saudigazette.com.sa/article/549782/World/Mena/Women-to-get-equal-representation-on-UAE-advisory-council>

GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

Yazidi mothers of children by Daesh face heartbreaking choices



The 26-year-old Yazidi mother faces a heartbreaking choice.

Her family is preparing to emigrate from Iraq to Australia and start a new life after the suffering Daesh wreaked on their small religious minority. She is desperate to go with them, but there is also someone she can't bear to leave behind: Her 2-year-old daughter, Maria, fathered by the Daesh fighter who enslaved her.

She knows her family will never allow her to bring Maria. They don't even know the girl exists. The only relative who knows is an uncle who took the girl from her mother and put her in an orphanage in Baghdad after they were freed from captivity last year.

"My heart bursts from my chest every time I think of leaving her. She is a piece of me, but I don't know what to do," she said, speaking to The Associated Press at a camp in northern Iraq for displaced Yazidis.

The woman spoke on condition she be identified only as Umm Maria, or "mother of Maria," for fear her family and community would find out.

Umm Maria's torment points to the gaping wounds suffered by Iraq's Yazidi religious minority at the hands of Daesh.

Read more:

<http://www.arabnews.com/node/1395211/middle-east>

UN Says More Than 150 Women, Girls Raped in South Sudan



The United Nations says more than 150 women and girls in South Sudan have been raped or subject to other forms of sexual violence in recent days.

The attacks were carried out "by armed men, many in uniform," near the northern city of Bentiu, according to a joint statement signed Monday by UNICEF chief Henrietta Fore, Mark Lowcock, the U.N.'s undersecretary-general for humanitarian affairs, and U.N. Population Fund Director Natalia Kanem. The trio called on all "relevant authorities to publicly denounce the attacks and ensure those responsible for these crimes face justice."

The aid group Doctors Without Borders said last week that 125 women and girls had been sexually assaulted while walking to a food distribution site in Bentiu. The group said the attackers robbed the women and girls of clothing, shoes, money and even their ration cards for food aid.

The U.N. statement said some 2,300 cases of sexual violence have been reported in South Sudan in the first half of 2018, the vast majority of the victims women and girls. More than 20 percent of the victims were children.

But the agencies say the actual number of cases is "far higher," as gender-based violence is severely under-reported.

Read more:

<https://www.voanews.com/a/un-south-sudan-sexual-violence/4685819.html>

In play, audience relives stories of rape survivors



As a child, Riham would wake up at night to her half-brother molesting her. Now she is one of seven women recounting their suffering in a play about sexual violence in Lebanon.

Recordings of the women's voices ring out as the audience moves from room to room in a house in Beirut. Women's rights group ABAAD put on the play entitled "Shame on who?" this weekend.

In one room, a girl in white tries to stand up but keeps falling. In another, a woman talks to her mother but gets no response.

"I chose the idea of a house because most of these incidents happen from someone very close to the [victims]," said Sahar Assaf, who conceived and directed the play.

"Supposedly, the safest place for a woman should be her house."

Riham, 35, recalls how she told her mother that her half-brother had abused her for 20 years since she was eight. "She said that I was a liar and that I should never speak of such a thing."

ABAAD head Ghida Anani said the play sought to empower survivors and encourage victims to report assaults.

Read more:

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2018/Nov-26/470103-in-beirut-play-audience-relives-stories-of-rape-survivors.ashx>

Catcalled in Cairo: Ending sexual harassment in Egypt



Sexual harassment towards women in Egypt is notorious.

It is almost impossible to walk down a street in Cairo without being whistled at, whispered, tooted, or catcalled, and Egyptian women, regardless of their clothes or hijab know this. And since women began uploading their experiences to YouTube, Egypt has gained an international reputation for street harassment.

But this November, Bassita, an Egyptian NGO, made history by launching a new campaign against sexual harassment on public transportation. The campaign challenges the "silent bystander" - those who see a woman harassed and do nothing about it. The video stars Egyptian actor Menna Shalabi and musician Hany Adel and is backed by the Ministry of Interior.

This campaign is urgently needed. A 2017 Reuters poll ranked Cairo the most dangerous megacity for women worldwide. The impact of such persistent sexual harassment is humiliating and intrusive. It accumulates on you; makes you shrink into yourself, and try to be invisible. It slowly but surely leeches all sense of identity and confidence from your being.

Read more:

<https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/comment/2018/12/6/catcalled-in-cairo-ending-sexual-harassment-in-egypt>

Spotlighting #HearMeToo Campaign, Secretary-General Calls for Galvanized Support to End Violence against Women, Girls, in Message Marking International Day

Following is UN Secretary-General António Guterres' message for the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, observed on 25 November:

Violence against women and girls is a global pandemic. It is a moral affront to all women and girls, a mark of shame on all our societies and a major obstacle to inclusive, equitable and sustainable development. At its core, violence against women and girls is the manifestation of a profound lack of respect - a failure by men to recognize the inherent equality and dignity of women. It is an issue of fundamental human rights.

Violence can take many forms - from domestic attacks to trafficking, from sexual violence in conflict to child marriage, genital mutilation and femicide. It harms the individual and has far-reaching consequences for families and society. This is also a deeply political issue. Violence against women is tied to broader issues of power and control in our societies. We live in a male-dominated society. Women are made vulnerable to violence through the multiple ways in which we keep them unequal.

In the past year we have seen growing attention to one manifestation of this violence. Sexual harassment is experienced by most women at some point in their lives. Increasing public disclosure by women from all regions and all walks of life is bringing the magnitude of the problem to light and demonstrating the galvanizing power of women's movements to drive the action and awareness needed to eliminate harassment and violence everywhere.

Read more:

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2018/sgsm19360.doc.htm>

What Saudi Arabia is doing to end violence against women



Saudi Arabia joins the world in marking the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women on Nov. 25, and it has taken steady steps toward protecting them under the law.

Dr. Majid Al-Eissa, executive director of the National Family Safety Program, said that around 35 percent of women in Saudi Arabia have experienced at least one type of violence in their lifetime.

"Our latest study pointed out that violence rates against women are close to 35 percent," Al-Eissa told Arab News.

"This number is in line with global figures without any significant difference, which means that the issue of violence against women exists everywhere around the world, and no society is immune."

The latest project by the National Family Safety Program is a rehabilitation program for women who have been victims of violence, which will be rolled out throughout the Kingdom from next month.

The program, which is seven weeks long, aims to help them resume a normal life after the experience they have been through. "So far, 120 women have benefited from our rehabilitation program in Riyadh alone," Al-Eissa said.

Read more:

<http://www.arabnews.com/node/1410516/saudi-arabia>

GENDER & HUMAN RIGHTS

Child bride auction in South Sudan goes viral, sparks anger



Five hundred cows, two luxury cars, \$10,000, two bikes, a boat and a few cell phones made up the final price in a heated bidding war for a child bride in South Sudan that went viral after the auction was pointed out on Facebook. It is the largest dowry ever paid in the civil war-torn country, the government said.

The highest bidder was a man three times the 17-year-old's age. At least four other men in Eastern Lakes state competed, said Philips Anyang Ngong, a human rights lawyer who tried to stop the bidding last month. Among the bidders was the state's deputy governor.

"She has been reduced to a mere commodity," Ngong told The Associated Press, calling it "the biggest test of child abuse, trafficking and auctioning of a human being." Everyone involved should be held accountable, he said.

Earlier this month, Nyalong became the man's ninth wife. Photos posted on Facebook show her sitting beside the groom, wearing a lavish dress and staring despondently at the floor. The AP is using only her first name to protect her identity. The groom did not respond to requests for comment.

South Sudan has a deeply rooted cultural practice of paying dowries for brides, usually in the form of cows.

Read more:

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2018/Nov-21/469784-child-bride-auction-in-south-sudan-goes-viral-sparks-anger.ashx>

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Egypt approves 'female Viagra' in bizarre bid to tackle high divorce rate



Egypt has approved the sale of "female Viagra" in a bid to tackle "high divorce rates" in the North African country, local media has reported.

Egypt's ministry of health has authorised the release of the drug, a pharmaceutical company is set to announce, reported the pro-government Al-Masry al-Youm newspaper.

This comes after "a study revealed that the biggest cause for divorce in Egypt is the lack of intimate relations between spouses", reads the report.

"The press conference will discuss the newest studies on the causes of divorce, which is over 50 percent in the first year of marriage, and the reasons for the breakdown of intimate relations," it added.

The drug approved by Egyptian health officials is flibanserin, which works on the brain to boost libido.

The medication, also known by its trade name Addyi or colloquially as "the pink pill", was approved by US regulators in 2015 to treat sudden and severe loss of sexual desire in women. It is effective in increasing sexually satisfying experiences by about one half over a placebo. Dizziness and nausea are common side-effects.

Read more:

<https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2018/11/27/egypt-approves-female-viagra-to-tackle-high-divorce-rate>

Egyptian Mufti Slams Tunisia's Equal Inheritance Law



On Friday, November 23, Tunisia made history when it became the first government in the Arab world to approve equality in inheritance law, allowing men and women the same share in terms of inheritance. But not everyone in the Arab world is happy with Tunisia's move.

In response to what he called "a controversial decision," Egypt's grand mufti, Dr. Shawki Allam, issued a statement on Monday, November 26, that harshly condemned the Tunisian government's stance.

Dr. Allam explained that equality in inheritance for both genders is contrary to the Qur'an's prescriptions on the matter. Sharia, the Islamic law deriving from both the Qur'an and the hadith (prophetic tradition), should not be subject to personal interpretation or reasoning (ijtihad), the Egyptian mufti said.

Sensitive topics in Islam, including inheritance, have been clearly dealt with in the Qur'an and the Islamic tradition (sunnah), the statement said. In addition to upending the Islamic tradition, pushing for equality for genders also disrupts the "transmitted consensus of scholars."

"The call for equality in inheritance between genders contradicts both the definitive rulings of Shariah Law and the successively transmitted consensus of scholars.... Therefore, they are not subject to ijtihad (interpretation) or change due to cultural contexts."

Read more:

<https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2018/11/259000/egypt-sahwki-allam-tunisia-equal-inheritance-law/>

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French 'burqa ban' violates human rights, rules UN committee



The 2010 French law banning full-face coverings in public disproportionately targets the minority of Muslim women who wear them, the UN body found. They said Paris didn't adequately explain why the ban was necessary.

In a landmark decision on Tuesday, the United Nations Human Rights Committee found that a French law banning full-face veils in public violates the religious freedom rights of Muslim women.

It is the first time the UN has ruled on full-face veil bans and could have implications for several other European countries that have implemented similar legislation.

How the committee ruled:

- The UN body concerned itself with two cases brought by French women who were fined for wearing the niqab — which is a full-body veil that has an opening for the eyes.
- They found that the ban violated the religious freedom of Muslim women who wear such veils.
- The UN body found that France's ban was "too sweeping" and that French officials hadn't adequately explained why it was necessary to ban such articles of clothing.

Read more:

<https://www.dw.com/en/french-burqa-ban-violates-human-rights-rules-un-committee/a-46007469>

Women's fight for toilets in rural Pakistan



For as long as she can remember, Ayeesha Siddiqua has fought her male relatives for access to toilets – but a sanitation drive by new premier Imran Khan could make life easier for women in patriarchal Pakistan.

“I told them: ‘You can go where you want, but me, my movements are restricted!’,” said Siddiqua, who is in her 60s, in Basti Ameerwala, a small agricultural village in central Punjab province where residents have been relieving themselves in the open for generations.

Women in the village have long been forced to hide their bodily functions from the conservative, deeply patriarchal society, Siddiqua and other female residents told AFP.

Restraining themselves over long days working in the fields, they wait for night and the cover of darkness – braving snakes, dogs, or even unpleasant encounters with strange men, Siddiqua’s daughter-in-law Tahira Bibi said, her face hidden by a brown veil.

“I would limit my consumption of water and eat less just to avoid going to the bathroom in the daytime,” the 35-year-old said, describing a ploy used by all the women interviewed by AFP in the region.

For the last month and a half, however, Tahira Bibi has not had to wait. A small red-brick cottage housing a pastel green squat toilet has been erected in front of her house.

Read more:

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1853379/1-womens-fight-toilets-rural-pakistan/>

Ethiopia’s change is a bold chance for gender reform in Pakistan



When Ethiopia recently appointed its first ever female president, a cabinet with more than 50 percent of women, including a female Minister of Defence, and a female Head of Justice, it was a clarion call for Pakistan’s missed opportunity.

Ethiopia is not the only country to set such a bold example. Rwanda has long emerged as a success story of women empowerment by having the most women in Parliament and recently announcing it would give more than 50 percent of ministerial posts to women.

When Pakistan voted in a new Pakistan Tehreek Insaaf (PTI) government in July this year, led by the Oxford-educated charismatic former cricketer Imran Khan under the slogan of “reform”, many hoped that it signaled a time of change.

More than 50 percent of the population of Pakistan is female. However, the representation of women in the PTI cabinet is dismal. Out of 62 available cabinet seats, the PTI coalition government has appointed only four women as ministers—three at the federal level and one in Punjab.

Punjab is Pakistan’s biggest and most progressive province, yet there is only one female out of 23 ministers. In the North Western province of KPK, which has been ruled by Mr. Khan’s party for the past five years, there is not a single woman in a 15 member Cabinet.

Read more:

<http://news.trust.org/item/20181204115517-zmnwe/>

RESOURCES & CALLS

BOOKS & REPORTS

Amnesty International Report 2017/18: The State of the World's Human Rights



Throughout 2017, millions across the world experienced the bitter fruits of a rising politics of demonization. Its ultimate consequences were laid bare in the horrific military campaign of ethnic cleansing against the Rohingya people in Myanmar. This caused an exodus of some 655,000 people into neighbouring Bangladesh in a matter of weeks, the fastest-growing refugee crisis of 2017. At the end of the year, their prospects for the future remained very unclear, and the enduring failure of world leaders to provide real solutions for refugees left little reason for optimism.

This episode will stand in history as yet another testament to the world's catastrophic failure to address conditions that provide fertile ground for mass atrocity crimes. The warning signs in Myanmar had long been visible: massive discrimination and segregation had become normalized within a regime that amounted to apartheid, and for long years the Rohingya people were routinely demonized and stripped of the basic conditions needed to live in dignity. The transformation of discrimination and demonization into mass violence is tragically familiar, and its ruinous consequences cannot be easily undone.

For a direct link to publication:

<https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/POL1067002018ENGLISH.PDF>

Sexual Violence Against Rohingya Men and Boys



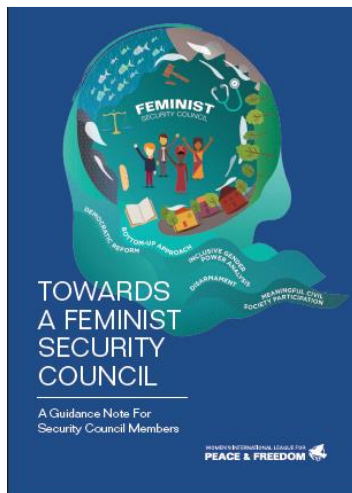
The Women's Refugee Commission is undertaking a three-country exploratory study on sexual violence against refugee men and boys, including those with diverse sexual orientation and gender identity and expression. In July 2018, two researchers traveled to Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, to explore sexual violence perpetrated against Rohingya men and boys in Myanmar and Bangladesh. We conducted 21 focus groups with 109 Rohingya men, women, and adolescents in four sections of Kutupalong Camp and interviewed 45 humanitarian aid workers and human rights experts.

The findings and recommendations in this report aim to help international and national humanitarian agencies improve protection mechanisms and strengthen services for at-risk men and boys and male sexual violence survivors in Cox's Bazar.

Read more:

<https://www.womensrefugeecommission.org/gbv/resources/1664-its-happening-to-our-men-as-well>

Towards A Feminist Security Council for Feminist Peace



During our more than 100 years working for peace, we have organised dialogues between women across the globe, supported women mobilising to oppose war and conflict, and brought women to the multilateral bodies to speak truth to power and share their real experiences and concerns on the happenings on the ground.

We believe in the power of women. In the collective power of women.

In 2000, we finally succeeded. Working closely with others to get the UN Security Council to recognise women's integral role in international peace and security, the UN Security Council adopted its landmark resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS).

But it is not working.

Today, the UN Security Council's work is guided by "business as usual" and real impact is stopped by the use of veto, a top-down approach, arms proliferation, gender-blind analysis, and ongoing obstacles to civil society inclusion.

Read more:

<https://wunrn.com/2018/11/towards-a-feminist-security-council-for-feminist-peace/>

For a direct link to publication:

https://www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/WILPF_Feminist%20Security%20Council%20Guide_Print.pdf

Older Women Spend Twice as Much Time on Unpaid Work as Do Older Men – Research in 31 Countries



Older women spend twice as much time as older men on unpaid work, research has found. A report by the Overseas Development Institute covering 31 countries shows that women over 60 spend an average of four hours a day on work that goes unrewarded and largely unrecognised.

Researchers who examined employment patterns across developed and developing countries found the disproportionate amount of unpaid domestic and care work performed by women persists into older age regardless of geography. In Ghana, older women spend just over two hours a day doing unpaid work, a figure that rose to almost four hours in British households. In Cape Verde, meanwhile, women spend seven hours a day on such tasks.

At the same time, and particularly in poorer countries, older women are juggling large amounts of mostly informal and highly precarious paid work too, according to the report.

Read more:

<https://wunrn.com/2018/11/older-women-spend-twice-as-much-time-on-unpaid-work-as-do-older-men-research-in-31-countries/>

For a direct link to publication:

<https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/12509.pdf>

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