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## NEWS & ARTICLES

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### GENDER ACTIVISM

#### Hundreds march in Beirut for women's rights

Up to a thousand women, youth and civil society activists marched to demand gender equality, better representation in the country and the passage of new civil personal status laws. The march began at UNESCO Palace in Corniche al-Mazraa in Beirut and concluded at



the door of the Interior Ministry in Sanayeh. The demonstrators called for new civil personal status laws, which would allow women to be able to pass on their nationality to their children, and for Palestinian women to be granted civil and economic rights. They also demanded that Lebanese women be given a 35 percent quota in Parliament and in other elected government bodies. Gender equality provisions should be implemented in the taxation and social security

laws, protesters said, and Parliament should adopt the draft law protecting women against domestic violence. "It's been another dark year filled with disappointments thanks to those who boast that Lebanon is more advanced than the rest of the world and exaggerate their adoption of human rights and who say that Lebanon was one of the countries that wrote down the International Declaration of Human Rights," prominent women's rights activist Linda Matar said in her speech. "In fact you are dragging us back. We are in the year 2013 and the state still gives men the right to pass his nationality to his wife and children and deprives women of the same right, shuns women's demands to participate in decision-making bodies, and refuses women the right to equal pay in the work place." "We dream of equality and rightful laws, and the Palestinian and other Arab women share [with the Lebanese] the injustice and discrimination committed against them," Matar said. "We will not accept being treated like second-class citizens; we want equality in all fields and decision-making positions in politics and the economy." Read more: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Local-News/2013/Mar-11/209573-hundreds-march-in-beirut-for-womens-rights.ashx#ixzz2ODoam7mG>

#### Lebanese mothers warn politicians

Mother's Day: a day to celebrate mothers, a day of gifts and flowers, of warm hugs and kisses, a day to honor the maternal bonds and to thank mothers for their contributions. Unfortunately in Lebanon, it is also a day in which mothers are reminded of the civil rights violations that continue to impair their interest and the well-being of their families. Last year, as a token gift to Lebanese women on Mother's Day, Prime Minister Najib Miqati declared his support for the reformation of the nationality law and to thus recognize Lebanese mothers' right to pass their nationality onto their children. The cabinet, which for

the first time in history promised activists to lend support to their cause, have since failed to do so, and in a statement of dismay, Lebanese mothers are vowing to deny these politicians their votes during the upcoming elections. “We are here today to urge every candidate for parliamentary elections in June to publicly take a stand on supporting or opposing the draft law which grants Lebanese women the right to pass their nationality onto their spouses and children,” said Ghada Kaakani, amid the crowd of women who protested in front of Beirut’s Grand Serail on Thursday.

“Should a candidate oppose the law,” Kaakani emphasized, “we will lobby voters not to elect him or her.”

Ghada Kaakani, a Lebanese woman now 60 years old, has become a personification of Lebanese women’s struggles for their right to nationality.

At the age of 20, Kaakani married a Palestinian refugee and went on to have four children unaware of the challenges she and her family would face. “It has been 40 years now, and I have not been granted my right as a Lebanese woman to pass on my nationality to my children and my husband. My two daughters are citizens now; they have married Lebanese men and have therefore gained the citizenship. But my sons have not, they remain refugees in their own country,” said Kaakani. For over 13 years, Kaakani has been at the forefront of the campaign entitled ‘My nationality is a right for me and my family,’ whose proponents have been active in both Lebanon and the region. While most Arab countries have granted women the right to pass nationality to children, Lebanon remains among the few holdouts. Despite Miqati and his cabinet’s landmark expression of support last year, activists tell NOW that the only results of this declaration have been recommendations and a set of services. Lina Abou Habib, the executive director of the Beirut-based Collective for Research and Training on Development-Action (CRTDA), points out that the ministerial recommendations set a dangerous precedent for both women and civil rights in Lebanon. To continue reading follow the link <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/reportsfeatures/lebanese-mothers-warn-politicians>



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### **Call to action: end stoning now!**

At the 57th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, we call on States where stoning still exists in law and in practice to abide by their international human rights obligations, banning stoning through legislative measures and holding perpetrators accountable to law.

We also call on all Member States of the United Nations to heed this urgent call and explicitly denounce the practice of executions by stoning as one of the most brutal forms of violence against women.

Stoning is a flagrant violation of human rights, and a most cruel form of torture intended to cause grievous pain before death. It is being meted out discriminately upon women, and is most often preceded by unfair judicial processes whereby those sentenced to execution suffer numerous other human, civil and political rights violations while in detention.

Women are disproportionately being sentenced to stoning, due to misogynist and discriminatory interpretations of religious laws and cultural mores which become the basis of social policies governing sexual relationships and the family. Women's rights cannot be sacrificed to such interpretations, especially when women have the right to freely participate in and adhere to their own beliefs, yet are being silenced by violent actions against them. Such cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment cannot be tolerated, and the universality of human rights must be upheld.

## Background

Execution by stoning is still carried out in various parts of the world (either by State or non-state actors) as a punishment for 'adultery', homosexuality, and fornication. Stoning as a form of punishment predates Islam although today, it is often associated with Islam. Even though there is no direct reference to this form of punishment in the Quran, stoning is often claimed to be part of "Islamic Law". There is absolutely no consensus amongst the global Muslim community over the validity of the practice as "Islamic Law", and many clerics, scholars and Muslim-majority States have prohibited stoning, as a violation of human rights.

To read the entire statement, follow the link:

[http://www.wunrn.com/news/2013/03\\_13/03\\_04/030413\\_stoning2\\_files/Stoning-Call%20to%20Action%20to%20End%20Stoning-CSW%2057.pdf](http://www.wunrn.com/news/2013/03_13/03_04/030413_stoning2_files/Stoning-Call%20to%20Action%20to%20End%20Stoning-CSW%2057.pdf)

**The African Commission on Human and People's Rights holds the state of Egypt accountable for neglecting to protect women from violence!**

The African Commission on Human and People's Rights has handed down a decision in a case concerning violence against four women journalists during a protest. The Commission found that the state of Egypt failed to protect four women journalists from violence and in doing so violated their human rights including rights to



African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights

### AN URGENT CALL TO ACTION: END STONING NOW!

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Execution by stoning is sanctioned by the penal codes of Iran and Mauritania – two member States currently sitting on the UN Commission on the Status of Women – as well as North Sudan, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. In some States, stoning is condoned through local or tribal and religious-based laws or courts, although in several instances, these laws remain unimplemented or are deemed unconstitutional.

Stoning is a grave violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and of subsequent international human rights covenants, the foremost of which are the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the Convention Against Torture (CAT), the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

States have the responsibility to act with due diligence to protect all citizens from such brutal, inhuman and degrading violence, and prevent its occurrence. Whether carried out by State or non-state actors, perpetrators must be held accountable and prosecuted.



For more information and resources on stoning, contact [info@violenceagainstculture.org](mailto:info@violenceagainstculture.org) and [whml@whml.org](mailto:whml@whml.org).

equal ity and non-discrimination, right to dignity and protection from cruel inhuman and degrading treatment and their right to express and disseminate opinions within the law.

In an environment where sexual violence continues to go unpunished in most member states of the African Union, this decision makes a valuable contribution ensuring states are held to account when they fail to protect women from violence. Hossam Bahgat, Executive Director of the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights who worked on the case said “the decision is a victory for women who face sexual violence and other forms of political and social impediments while exercising their right to participate in public life”. Sibongile Ndashe, a lawyer from Interights who worked on the case hailed the decision as significant given that “for the first time in its 25 year history, the Commission has handed down a decision on the duty of states to protect women from violence”.

The facts : On 25 May 2005, the four women applicants in the case, Shaimaa Abou Al-Kheir, Nawal Ali Mohammed Ahmed, Abir al-Askari and Iman Taha Kamel were present at demonstrations organized by opposition movements to protest against constitutional amendments that consolidated the authoritarian rule of ousted President Mubarak. Sadly, Nawal Ali Mohammend Ahmed passed away in 2009. The four women were all journalists. Some were attending the demonstration in their professional capacity to report on events, others as concerned citizens exercising their right to attend a demonstration. One applicant was only in the area by coincidence as she was attending a language class. Police forces and thugs operating in full view of the police clamped down on the protesters, sexually assaulting the four women as well as other female protesters, tearing their clothes, molesting and verbally abusing them. The women testified that they were called ‘sluts’ and ‘whores’ as well as being touched inappropriately on their breasts and private parts. The assailers warned the women not to participate in similar political events.

Attempts to seek domestic justice proved to be futile. The women lodged formal complaints with the Public Prosecutor’s Office, which refused to take the testimony of several eyewitnesses and failed to conduct thorough independent investigation. The women were later threatened, both by unidentified individuals as well as, given the sexual nature of the violations the women suffered, people within their social circles, to withdraw their complaints. At the end of 2005, the Public Prosecutor’s Office announced its decision not to prosecute.

In May 2006, having been unable to secure redress for what had happened to them, the women submitted a complaint to the African Commission. The women were represented by the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, together with international human rights group Interights.

The Commission found that the State had failed to protect the women from violence. It found that the attacks were gender-specific and were therefore discriminatory. In its decision, the Commission took into consideration that the attacks were systematic and targeted at women, aiming to ‘keep women in their place’ by denying them space to protest and express their political opinions. In its decision, the Commission acknowledged that “the perpetrators of the assaults seemed to be aware of the context of the Egyptian society; an Arab Muslim society where a woman’s virtue is measured by keeping herself physically and sexually unexposed...”

The State had argued that the women had failed to provide the authorities with required information and that their statements contained inconsistencies. The Commission found that the violations perpetrated were palpable physically as well as medically proven; the State did not need further information to proceed with the investigations that should have brought the perpetrators to justice. The Commission urged Egypt to hold an investigation

and punish those found responsible as well as to amend their laws to bring them in line with the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, which Egypt ratified in 1984. The Commission also called for each of the women to be compensated in the sum of EP 57,000 (\$US 8,000) for the physical and emotional damage they suffered. The Commission urged Egypt to ratify the Women's Protocol to the African charter.

The decision comes at a very opportune moment. Egyptian women fighting for their rights for participation in public and political life continue to suffer from sexual violence by state and non-state actors. Egyptian authorities have continuously failed to take necessary steps to address sexual violence and discrimination against women which has so far led to an atmosphere of impunity for perpetrators. In September 2012, EIPR and Interights submitted a further complaint to the African Commission on military abuses against female protesters, including the carrying out of "virginity tests" in a military prison. For more information, please see:

[http://eipr.org/sites/default/files/pressreleases/pdf/text\\_of\\_the\\_afriocan\\_commission\\_decision-english.pdf](http://eipr.org/sites/default/files/pressreleases/pdf/text_of_the_afriocan_commission_decision-english.pdf)

### Statement by the Muslim Brotherhood about The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

In the name of God the Merciful

Statement of the Muslim Brotherhood about The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) which violates all principles of the Islamic Sharia and the Islamic community.

The Commission on the Status of Women holds a conference in the period from the 4th to the 15th of March 2013 to approve a document titled (The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women), a deceptive

headline that includes items collide with the principles of Islam and its basic unanimous elements of Quran and Sunnah, destroy Islamic ethics, and seek to demolish the institution of the family, which the Egyptian constitution confirmed it is the building block of the society, and hence achieve the dismantling of the community, and end to the last step of the intellectual and cultural invasion, and eliminate the privacy that preserve elements of Islamic societies and its cohesion.

It is enough to give a closer reading at these items to realize what is meant to us, and these items are:



1. Grant girls their complete sexual freedom, as well as the freedom to choose their sex and the freedom to choose their sex partners (i.e., choose to have a normal sexual relationship or atypical) with rising the age of marriage.
2. Provide contraception for adolescent girls and train them on how to use it with the legalization of abortion to abort undesirable pregnancy under the name of sexual and reproduction rights.
3. Equality between an adulterous and a wife, and equality between adultery children (outside of marriage children) and legitimate sons in all rights.
4. Granting homosexuals all their rights, protection and respect, and grant protection for women in prostitution.
5. Grant wives all the right to sue their husbands with charges of rape or harassment, and the competent authorities should grant same penalties similar to raping or harassing a stranger.
6. Equality in inheritance.
7. Replace guardianship with partnership, and fully share the roles within the family between men and women such as: spending, child care, home affairs.
8. Equal access to the marriage legislations such as: Stop polygamy, Iddah, mandate, and the dowry, and stop obligatory spending of man on the family, and to allow Muslim women to marry a non-Muslim and others.
9. Withdraw the authority of divorce from husbands and authorize it to judiciary and share property after divorce.
10. Cancel the obligatory authorization of the husband in: travel, work or going out or use contraception.

These are the destructive means of the institution of the family and community that calls for the return of the first medieval period.

The Muslim Brotherhood call upon rulers of Islamic countries and Foreign Ministers and their representatives in the United Nations to reject this document, and also we invite this organization to live up to the level of the pure family relations prescribed by Islam.

Also Muslim Brotherhood calls al-Azhar to act according to its leading role and to condemn this document and declare the position of Islam towards its articles, as it is the reference for Muslims.

As well we call other Islamic groups and associations to take a decisive stand against this document and the like.

We also call for women's organizations to adhere to their religion and the morals of their communities and the elements of our social life and not to be seduced by the deceptive, misleading and destructive calls for urbanization.

The Muslim Brotherhood

To know more about the issue follow the link :

<https://www.facebook.com/notes/jee-paules/statement-of-the-muslim-brotherhood-about-the-convention-on-the-elimination-of-a/621216977892300>

### **Afghanistan - Women March Against Violence**

Dozens of Afghan activists and supporters marked Valentine's Day by marching in Kabul on Thursday to denounce violence against women amid reports that domestic abuse is on the rise.

Afghan women have made great strides in education and official circles since the days under Taliban rule, when they had to wear all-encompassing burqas and were not allowed to go to

school or leave their homes without a male relative as an escort. But they still face widespread domestic violence, forced marriages and other problems.

"Violence against women has to be eliminated or at least reduced in Afghanistan," rights activist Humaira Rasouli said after walking from the landmark Darul Aman Palace just outside Kabul to an area in the city near parliament. "Unfortunately ... the violence against women rate is increasing day to day."

Organizers said some 200 people, men and women, participated in the march, which was planned by several Afghan rights groups as part of a global domestic violence awareness campaign called One Billion Rising.

Past protests supporting women's rights have been attacked by hecklers and men throwing stones, and riot police with helmets and shields stood guard on Thursday.

Underscoring the security concerns, protesters had badges and the public was not invited to join. But the march remained peaceful and many women welcomed the support of men along the way.



"It was very successful because usually protests don't get so many people," said Manizha Wafeq, one of the organizers.

In August 2009, Afghanistan enacted an Elimination of Violence Against Women law that criminalized child marriage, selling and buying women to settle disputes, assault and other acts of violence against women.

But a U.N. report issued late last year found that Afghan women still face frequent abuse despite an increase in the prosecution of abusers. Violence against women also remains largely under-reported because of cultural taboos, social norms and religious beliefs in the conservative Muslim society.

Examples cited in the report included a woman strangled by her husband because she gave birth to girls instead of boys and a 15-year-old girl who filed a complaint about repeated beatings by her husband and father-in-law only to be told by prosecutors to withdraw it or risk imprisonment herself.

In July, some 50 women and men also took to the streets of Kabul to protest the public killing of an Afghan woman accused of adultery. A video of her gruesome, execution-style killing showed the woman being shot multiple times in Parwan province, north of the Afghan capital, as people stood nearby, smiling and cheering.

The Afghanistan Independent Human Rights commission also recorded more than 4,000 cases of violence against women from March 21 to Oct. 21 last year, but most were not reported to police.

"Women don't have a bright future and the government isn't doing enough to protect them," said Faryaa Hashimi, a 20-year-old student at the march. "We are calling on the international community and Afghan government to protect the women. For more information follow the link

[http://www.wunrn.com/news/2013/03\\_13/03\\_04/030413\\_afghanistan.htm](http://www.wunrn.com/news/2013/03_13/03_04/030413_afghanistan.htm)

## **GENDER BASED VIOLENCE**

### **Decade of Occupation for Iraqi Women**

A decade after the US invasion of Iraq, only one of the straw-man arguments for going to war remains standing: "We did it for democracy and women's rights."

And yet we hear the same thing again and again from women in the shelters we operate

throughout Iraq:

"Why are we living in these violent times?"

They don't mourn the fall of Saddam, but women here have suffered 10 years of spiraling abuse, including

a spike in 'honor killings,' forced veiling, and a growing tolerance for beating women into subordination.

If you talk to women in war zones anywhere, they'll tell you that domestic violence increases in war-time. But in Iraq, violence against women has also been systematic. And unknown to most Americans, it has been orchestrated by some of the very forces that the US boosted to power.

Like religious fundamentalists everywhere, these sectarian militias and clerics have a social vision for their country that depends on subjugating women. But because the US wagered that they could deliver stability, these men were cultivated as allies in Iraq. As we now know, they never even got the stability they traded women's rights for.

The dynamic was clearly at work in the drafting of Iraq's constitution, heavily brokered by the US. To pass it, the US needed support from Islamist parties. They got it by trading away women's rights. In fact, the current constitution is a huge step backwards for Iraqi women. It replaces one of the Middle East's most expansive laws on the status of women, dating from 1959, with separate and unequal laws on the basis of sex. They subjected Iraqi women to a newly introduced Sharia law promoted in an article in the new constitution.

When Yusra\* arrived at one of our shelters, she told a harrowing story of brutal abuse at the hands of her husband and her father. The shelter was the one place she could turn. Under



the new constitution, she knew she wouldn't get justice from the religious courts, where her testimony is worth half of her husband's and where the laws allow the husband to "discipline" his wife.

At our shelter, Yusra bonded with other women, who had also escaped violence. They shared their dream of living in a country that guarantees them equal rights. And they began organizing to demand those rights.

Like women and men throughout the region, Yusra and her friends have filled the public square in Baghdad every Friday for two years now, demanding the freedom to assemble peacefully, and calling for equal protection under the law. These women are fighting for the same democratic principles we all believe in. They know from hard experience that there is no democracy without women's rights and that women's rights will not be delivered by foreign troops.

For women in Iraq, the past 10 years have been filled with war and violence. They want to move beyond mere survival and build the country they dream of. Help us build that dream. And let's remember what strong-willed people can accomplish in the face of injustice and impunity. For more information follow the link:

<http://www.commondreams.org/view/2013/03/19-6>

### **Iran: Za'feran Mohamaadi Murdered by her Family Members, Witnessed by Bystanders**

On March 8<sup>th</sup>, Za'feran Mohamaadi, from a Marivan County Village, Kurdistan Province of Iran, was murdered by a shut gun in the public and in front of her villagers. Although honor killing in itself is not an all-together rare occurrence, her killing on this symbolic day and with a government licensed firearm is highly controvertible.

Za'feran at a young age got married and mothered five children. She lived a deprived life both financially and emotionally. Her husband suspected infidelity and developed an immense sense of distrust and suspicion towards her. Consequently he imposed an unbearable control over her to the point that she was no longer permitted to leave her house; not even to visit her own family. The extreme psychological and physical pressure that she was subjected to left her with no choice but to pursue divorce from her husband.

A while after the divorce, she decided to remarry another man who was abruptly rejected by Za'feran's father and brothers; not stopping short of threatening both her and her future husband. After a while, Za'feran and her future husband escaped to the village of Seyf Sofla (Marivan County). One week after settling in Seyf Sofla, her family traced and found them. According to eyewitnesses, the man escaped the scene but Za'feran was captured and forced to return to her village.

Za'feran's family is in possession of a firearm licensed by the government. Upon her arrival to her village, she was promptly shot dead in public and in front of the bystanders.

Reportedly, the villagers felt unable to intervene as Za'feran's Family had threatened to kill anyone who tried to prevent the killing. In view of the fact that the family works for the state, their legal possession of firearm and hence the intricate consequences of intervention in a government agent's act, they felt frightened and evaded intervention.

No Funeral was held:

According to Firat News, the Islamic burial rituals were not held for Za'feran and her corpse was buried, without bathing and shrouding and in a disrespectful, disgraceful and immoral manner. There was neither any funeral service held for her.

As until 13.03.2013 there has been no official investigation on the subject of her murder. More disturbingly, it is widely suspected that due to Za'feran's family close ties with the

Islamic government of Iran's elements, her death will go unrecorded and uninvestigated indefinitely. To read more about the issue follow the link

<http://www.wluml.org/news/iran-za%E2%80%99feran-mohamaadi-murdered-her-family-members-witnessed-bystanders>

### **Woman Teacher of Quranic Studies explains Conflict and Pain in Syria**

*"I am looking for a job, for a house, for freedom in my home, Syria."* Married at the age of 18, I moved from Damascus to Hama in 1976. Religious freedom was in the city of Hama on its height, which encouraged me to start my work in my house, and actually began educating girls and interpreting Quran for them. Because of the bloody massacre and incidents of deadly violence that occurred in Hama in 1982, all religious activities stopped in mosques, all the lessons, and I stopped working for years.

After a while I went back to meet girls again, and because of this I was imprisoned for 12 hours and I was asked to stop my activities in homes. Due to this and to the increase in the number of students, I decided to get an official permission from the government for opening a licensed Institute.

In those days the city was still suffering from the effects of the massacre, which reflected badly on the people of the city and on the religion and the preachers.

In fact, the reason that helped me to have an institute in such difficult circumstances is that I'm not from the city of Hama originally, and I am a schoolgirl to Sheikh Ahmad Kufaro, who was a friend of power, and who taught us always not to interfere in politics.

Before the revolution, I had a hard time with the regime and I had to be questioned monthly by the FBI. Finally, I was fired from the institute because of my extra activities and dialogues I held in the institute. And during the revolution, Al-Andaluse Institute for Islamic Studies has been burnt.

At the beginning of the revolution, I incited the protesters to march peacefully to claim their rights. I was thinking

it is time to change the years of oppression and suppression but in a non-violent way. Violence will only generate greater violence. Also, I had the chance to reach greater audiences at international conferences; I tried to get the opportunity to speak and to collect donations, but in a very careful and secret way.

The donations were distributed with the help of my students whose families, relatives, and



neighbors had suffered a lot from the negative effects of the revolution, which turned to be a bloody one. Donations were allocated to buy the basic needs for the families whose living supporters were arrested or even killed. Also, some of the donations were spent to buy medicine and to help in private home hospitals.

The image of the suffering girls in my country inspired me to write this poem:

What bothers me ... a voice ringing in my ears!

On the threshold of her demolished home

A Syrian girl cries..... I hear her words:

Oh! My wound is bleeding  
Where are you, my mum?  
Mum ... I am glad you are dead  
Glad you did not know,  
About my four brothers...Scattered...Dead  
About fire fragments that distorted my soft cheeks ...  
About the bloody head of my father on my shoulder's rest  
I will stay here...and will not run away...  
Because  
My ground is Here  
My nation is Here  
My home is Here  
My doll is Here  
And one day victory will be Here...

Building of Al Andalus Institute for Islamic Studies in Hama, Syria

The pain in my heart emerged in words of a provocative song that can be watched.

During the last Ramadan I had been to Egypt with my son as I have TV recording program on Iqraa Channel. However, we were not able to go back home because my son (28 years old) was wanted to join the Syrian Military forces. We could not go back as my son will be taken from the airport to join the Syrian forces to help in the battle of killing Syrian people.

In Egypt I get the chance to speak on different satellite channels about the brutality of the regime; I tried to uncover the truth about the Syrian media lies and about the brutality and violence going on Syria led by the Syrian forces.

Now I am in Qatar with my two sons. The eldest son's wife and three children are still in Damascus with no means to bring them here. I am looking for a job, for a house, for freedom in my home, Syria. For more information follow the link

[http://www.wunrn.com/news/2013/03\\_13/03\\_04/030413\\_syria.htm](http://www.wunrn.com/news/2013/03_13/03_04/030413_syria.htm)

### **Stoning - Sudan Legal Perspective - Interview**

In 2012, two women in Sudan were sentenced to death by stoning. Layla Ibrahim Issa, who had a six-month old infant, was sentenced to stoning under Article 146 of the Sudanese Criminal Code. Our legal centre worked on Layla's case. Layla's husband placed a complaint against her, saying that she bore a child from another man in his absence. Initially she had no lawyer, and was not assigned one by the judge. Luckily, lawyers from the centre met with Layla, represented her, and drafted an appeal which was accepted and resulted in her release.

Stoning is applied in cases where women and men commit adultery, however it is always the women that are convicted, and men escape it.

In general, we find that stoning is not accepted widely, due to its savagery. There is a tacit agreement that this practice is not acceptable, but there are also those who neither support nor oppose it. Most women activists through their feminist and human rights work do not perceive this as an 'Islamic punishment' because it is not mentioned in the Quran, because it is inhumane, and because it is in contradiction to international conventions. Of course, there remain proponents of stoning.

There is a huge debate about stoning and attempt to reform all *hudud* laws under the current regime. However, all efforts to abolish or reform laws have been unwelcome. The congress of the Sudan's People Liberation Movement proposed an initiative to reform/abolish the stoning punishment on the premise that it is not part of the Islamic

jurisprudence, but this proposal was rejected by ministers. Sheikh Hassan al-Turabi also issued a fatwa via the press saying that stoning is not mentioned in the Qur'an.

This law, along with other gender-discriminatory laws, are violent against women. They make them prisoners to a cycle of fear, pushing them away from the productive realm, from work, and away from independence that enables women to be decision-makers. The patriarchal system intimidates women and works to guarantee their restriction. The common thread between all these laws is the hegemonic patriarchal system.

There are many strong positions against all forms of discrimination and violence against women in Sudan. Several civil society organizations are making institutional efforts to reform the laws. Numerous male and female lawyers offer legal assistance, which has massively contributed to assisting victims that lack the awareness and money to defend themselves.

However, strategies need to be devised to launch large campaigns to expose these punishments and discuss Sudan's role as a signatory of the international conventions. There needs to be an activation of the mechanisms through the African Commission.

Finally, internationally, HR organizations can play a helpful role through documentation of these HR violations through writing, reports, and putting pressure on governments, and participating in campaigns and revealing the cases to the international community.

For more information please follow the link:

[http://www.wunrn.com/news/2013/03\\_13/03\\_04/030413\\_stoning.htm](http://www.wunrn.com/news/2013/03_13/03_04/030413_stoning.htm)

## **GENDER & HUMAN RIGHTS**

### **Women's group laments nationality law failure in Lebanon**

The National Commission for Lebanese Women expressed its disappointment over a ministerial committee's

refusal to amend the current nationality law.

The commission stressed that the Constitution guarantees women

married to a foreigner the right to pass her nationality to her children.



A statement issued by the group urged civil society organizations to assist in passing a nationality law that doesn't discriminate against women.

The commission also requested the implementation of an electoral law that adopts a quota for women and the adoption of a law that protects women from domestic violence.

Read more: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Local-News/2013/Mar-15/210166-womens-group-laments-nationality-law-failure.ashx#ixzz2ODp25y6g>

## For Lebanese women, the biggest battles are still ahead

In a country where hearing the word “yes” with respect to amending women’s legal rights is rare, Rita Chemaly has reason to be excited: Three parliamentary commissions have accepted changes to grant female employees 10 weeks maternity leave subject to a parliamentary vote.

As these seemingly tiny amendments have come a long way, it is appropriate that the National Commission for Lebanese Women, for whom Chemaly is a consultant, has called their national campaign to amend provisions in legislation that discriminate against women “The Long Road Ahead.” Lebanon was once considered a pioneer of women’s rights after the country achieved important



milestones to establish gender equality. These included granting political rights to women in 1953, giving married women the right to choose their citizenship in 1960, allowing women to be elected in local councils in 1963, establishing equal social security benefits in 1984 and driving back honor crimes in 2011. However, Lebanon certainly has a long road ahead to becoming the regional champion of equal rights, as women have not been granted fully equal citizenship, despite the existence of constitutional guarantees and U.N. treaties pertaining to human rights that bear Lebanon’s signature. The NCLW secured other small victories in 2012, including allowing employed females to grant social security coverage to their unemployed male spouses, winning mothers the right to claim family abatement allowance for their children and protecting female heirs’ exemption rights from duty fees under the inheritance law. However, any sign of progress with respect to the so-called “big laws” over the past year has come to an effective stalemate. The nationality law still prohibits Lebanese women married to foreigners from granting their nationality to their husband and children. The inherent discrimination in the law stems from the country’s reliance on religious personal status laws that women’s rights groups have argued place women at a disadvantage. After a ministerial committee rejected amending the nationality law in January on the grounds that it would disrupt the country’s demographic balance by potentially naturalizing Palestinians, NCLW responded with a detailed riposte. “For example, on the issue of the Palestinians, we wrote that we would ensure they don’t become citizens after the age of 18,” Chemaly said. “This was a condition we made to make sure the law would pass.” Chemaly maintained that the absence of legal protection from domestic violence was one of the most dangerous barriers to women’s rights, as “the MPs are not taking a stand,” and Parliament has yet to vote on a bill. “The fact is, Lebanese women are not considered full citizens and this is total discrimination,” Chemaly said. While the subject of women’s rights is replete with legal hindrances, some women are making headway in the private sector, with a few even claiming they have never had to deal with inequality issues. Arabianbusiness.com recently compiled a list of the 100 most powerful Arab women. Among them were 12 Lebanese, including No. 15-ranked Christine Sfeir, who runs the successful restaurant empires Dunkin Donuts Lebanon and Semsom. “I think it’s an issue of choice,” Sfeir said when asked about the disadvantages women face in the private sector. “There is no difference between men and women in the workplace; it is really about character and how much people want to work.” Sfeir, however, said that in order for

women to strike a healthy balance between work life and home life, “you need to have a supportive husband.” “In the legal system and public sector this is where there is an issue [for women’s rights], in the private sector it is about making choices and having a support system, because there are only 24 hours in a day,” said Sfeir. “Ideally, for there to be equality, both men and women should also work inside the home,” said Dima Dabbous-Sensenig, director at the Institute for Women’s Studies in the Arab World. “If the husband doesn’t pitch in, as is the case in a lot of Arab countries, then the working mother is doing more than her fair share of duties at home.” Men are still men in the traditional sense, she added, and approve of women working because the household usually needs the extra income. According to Dabbous-Sensenig, what is needed most to propel women’s issues to the fore are role models in the public sphere and women who hold positions of power, especially in the government. To read the entire article follow the link Read more: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Politics/2013/Mar-08/209295-for-lebanese-women-the-biggest-battles-are-still-ahead.ashx#ixzz2ODpoheHC>

### **UN commission on the status of women 57 draft agreed conclusions**

At the conclusion of the 57th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, UN Women welcomes the outcome of the meeting. The Agreed Conclusions are a testimony to the commitment of Member States to do the right thing, to prevent and eliminate violence against women and girls. In the last two weeks during the meeting in New York, and in the lead-up to this session, we witnessed global engagement and mobilization, high-profile advocacy by civil society, and determined leadership by many Member States. Expectations of the world’s women and girls were extremely high for this session of the Commission.

Violence against women is a universal problem that requires, and has now received, a universal response. Violence occurs in multiple forms in all countries and settings; it harms women and their families and communities, impedes development, and costs countries billions of dollars annually in healthcare costs and lost productivity. In 2003, when the Commission took up violence against women and human rights, Member States were unable to reach agreement. Thus I am particularly heartened that agreement was reached this year to end violence against women and girls. This agreement comes in unison with rising voices worldwide saying enough is enough.

The document adopted by the Commission condemns in the strongest terms the pervasive violence against women and girls, and calls for increased attention and accelerated action for prevention and response. UN Women welcomes the important focus on prevention, including through education and awareness-raising, and addressing gender inequalities in the political, economic and social spheres. The best way to end violence against women is to stop it from happening in the first place.

The document highlights the importance of putting in place multi-sectoral services for survivors of violence, including for health, psychological support and counseling, social support in the short and long term. It draws attention to the need for services to protect the right to sexual and reproductive health. Punishment of perpetrators is also highlighted as a critical measure to end impunity, as is the need to improve the evidence base and availability of data to inform an effective response.

By adopting this document, governments have made clear that discrimination and violence against women and girls has no place in the 21st century. They have reaffirmed their commitment and responsibility to undertake concrete action to end violence against women and girls and promote and protect women’s human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The agreement is one step more for realizing the rights and dignity of women and girls. But we cannot stop here. We need to do so much more. Words now need to be matched with

deeds, with action. Now is the time for implementation and accountability. We must continue moving forward with courage, conviction and commitment.

UN Women, together with our partners in the UN system, will continue to advance the rights of women and girls through strong and coordinated support. We will work with Member States to turn the Agreed Conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women into concrete results for women and girls.

We will move forward and build on the basis of the international agreements on women's rights reached over many years, as articulated in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action, the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, and other agreements and treaties.

There is no turning back. We will keep moving forward to the day when women and girls can live free of fear, violence and discrimination. The 21st century is the century of inclusion and women's full and equal rights and participation. The link to the website: <http://www.unwomen.org/2013/03/un-women-welcomes-agreed-conclusions-at-the-commission-on-status-of-women/>

### **Saudi Arabia - Challenges but Strong Commitment for Rights, Empowerment**

International Women's Day is celebrated this year with the UN theme: "A promise is a promise." It calls on all governments, civil society, women's organizations, the private sector, the media and all men and women to unite to end violence and discrimination against women.

This year Arab women commemorate the day with greater commitment to confront the wave of violence and unrest that is threatening the region and endangering the lives of their children and loved ones. The Arab Spring has been hijacked by irresponsible elements that have spread chaos and enraged the public especially the vast majority of the youth. Social development and economic prosperity seem very difficult to achieve in the absence of strong leadership that could guide the troubled Arab countries of Iraq, Egypt, Tunisia, Sudan and war-torn Syria to a better future.

The role of women in these countries has been further marginalized because of violence and instability. However, they remain determined to continue their efforts in supporting the uprising and in calling for justice, and are committed to bringing back stability and economic prosperity more than ever before. This is evident in the bold attitude of women activists, human rights advocates, social scientists, media personalities and many professionals who are openly vocal in the media and are very critical when they take part in major public and international events.

However, women in Saudi Arabia celebrate the day with more optimism and are inspired by a new era of opportunities in leadership positions. Saudi women have not been affected by the Arab Spring because of the reforms that were initiated by Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah before unrest destroyed the peace and stability of some Arab countries. Women in Saudi Arabia are beginning to achieve recognition and have been strongly supported by the King. Their integration into the workforce and the business community, new professional opportunities and their membership in the consultative and municipal councils are promising signs that make a lot of Saudi women optimistic about the future. Having said that, we also need to recognize the many challenges facing the empowerment of women in this country. While we celebrate this auspicious day, we need to create a consensus in the Arab world to support the empowerment of women. It is



important to recognize the role of women in bringing peace, stability and harmony to the region. Women are challenged to come up with innovative solutions that will rally the support of Arab citizens to boost their role in leadership positions.

Celebrating the empowerment of women is crucial in the region for many reasons. Progressive and educated women could influence opinions and change the hostile mindset. An alliance between Arab civil society and the international business community could support much needed development in the region. A partnership between Arab and Western women could have an impact in addressing common challenges, discrimination, poverty, domestic abuse, unemployment, the protection of the environment, drug abuse and other issues that need immediate attention.

Social scientists believe that women tend to identify more with the social needs of the community and they unite for the common good. The concerns of healthcare, education, the environment and the economy are everyday issues that affect all women in the Arab world. Women should strive to gain more experience to help them address their challenges efficiently and influence policies that affect their lives.

Women in the Arab world celebrate this day with a commitment to promote world peace and global understanding. The Muslim world has unanimously condemned terrorism and yet the West does not recognize this condemnation and still applies the principle of collective guilt to all. Women wear their hijab proudly out of conviction and not as a religious symbol or a political statement. Islamophobia, the hijab, extremism, the threat of terrorism, the condition of Arabs and Muslims in the West and their integration into Western societies are all issues that need to be addressed to clear up the misconceptions that have harmed relations between the Arab world and the West. Cooperation with women leaders in the West can introduce a spirit of friendship and love between the two worlds.

The presence of women in the Shoura Council can result in changes being made and in new policies which can radically improve the status of women in our society. The women Shoura members can now address discrimination policies which include the reluctance to support women in leadership positions; the “legal guardianship” rule; the strict culture of segregation in society; discriminatory policies and the opposition to women driving.

Saudi women today celebrate the fact that they represent 60 percent of the nation’s university graduates. They also celebrate their success in the King Abdullah scholarship program which has made it possible for 60,000 women to study in universities abroad. Young women continue to contribute greatly to the country’s national development.

On this special day we should also recognize the role of women in the Jeddah Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Khadija Bint Khuwailed Business Center who have been instrumental in encouraging other women to explore new business opportunities and to foster trade relations between Saudi Arabia and the rest of the world. These women have been the major driving force lobbying for new laws and regulations to support working women as well as to protect the interests of women in the business community.

The empowerment of women lawyers also calls for greater celebration. The increasing number of law graduates has pressured the government to lift the ban and allow them to practice their profession. The lawyers celebrate the opportunity to address the negative effects of divorce and to raise the efficiency of justice in marital and family cases. They are keen to promote the culture of human rights in family issues.

International Women’s Day celebrations are a source of energy and support which encourages all women to stand up for their rights and to continue their struggle against discrimination. Arab women are always energized by the support of the international community and Saudi women remain inspired by the heroic and active role of women in the region. Saudi Arabia joins in the universal celebrations with greater commitment and a

more positive attitude to make this world a better place. To read more about the issue follow the link

<http://www.saudigazette.com.sa/index.cfm?method=home.regcon&contentid=20130309156062>

## RESOURCES & CALLS

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### BOOKS & REPORTS

#### Report about women challenges in Palestine-Gaza

“In Gaza we don’t lead normal lives, we just cope, and adapt to our abnormal lives under siege and occupation,” says Dr. Mona El-Farra, a physician and a long-time human rights and women’s rights activist in the Gaza Strip. On International Women’s Day, when many of the world’s women are fighting for workplace equality and an end to domestic violence, Farra and the majority of Gaza’s women fight for the most basic of rights.

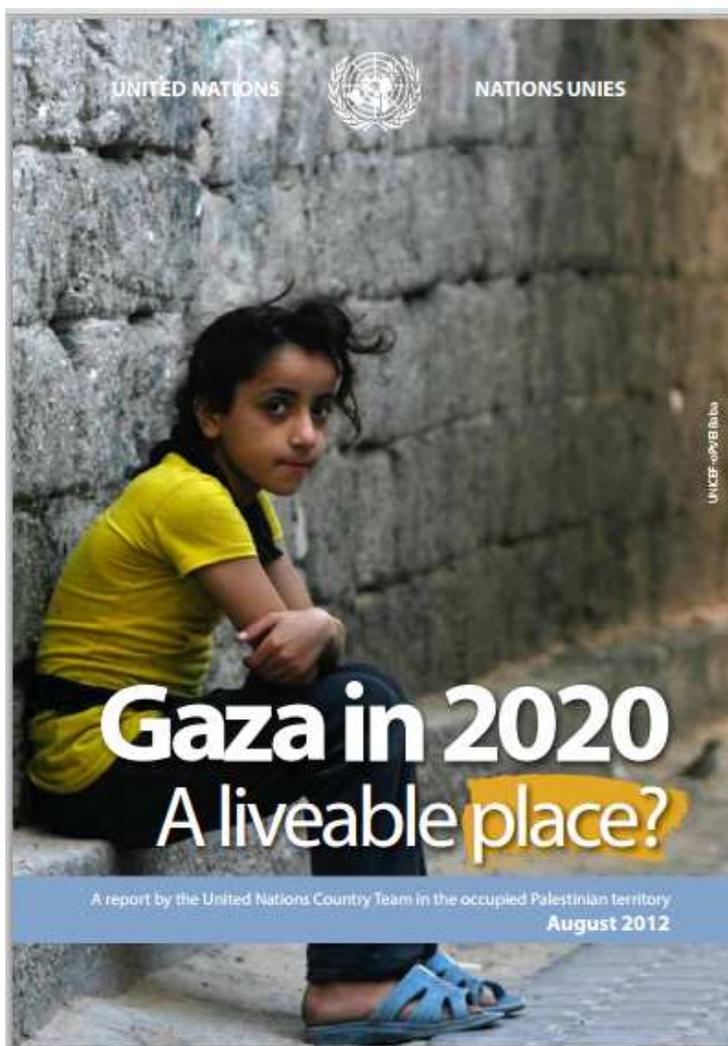
“It is difficult to live in this small piece of land, where basic needs like clean water, regular electricity, proper sanitation and means of recreation are not met.

Women in Gaza are particularly traumatised by the continuous Israeli military attacks,” says Farra.

A 2009 Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR) report highlights the suffering of Palestinian women under the illegal Israeli-led siege imposed on Gaza for the past seven years, and under the 23 days of Israeli attacks in 2008-2009 which killed over 1,400 Palestinians, including 112 women. The report, ‘Through Women’s Eyes’, notes Gazan women’s continued struggle “as they attempt to come to terms with their grief and their injuries; with the loss of their children, their husbands, their relatives, their homes, and their livelihoods.”

For Hiba an-Nabaheen, 24, a media studies graduate from Gaza’s Palestine University, the biggest issues facing women in Gaza are the poverty and unemployment that result from the siege.

“How can a woman whose husband has died or been imprisoned continue to take care of her children? The deadly Israeli wars we endure don’t compare to the growing poverty we face. I’m a university graduate and can’t find work, and many graduates like me face the same problem, including those with exceptionally high marks.”



From a family of ten, Nabaheen is the only child to have yet gotten a degree. “My father is disabled and cannot work, and my siblings are younger than me. Even my sister who has a 98 percent average in high school won’t find any work when she finishes university.” Um Oday, 30, would love to work. “I have three young children to care for, but my husband is very supportive of me working, if I found work. In addition to my university education, I’ve taken different training courses in the hope that I’ll find work. But in Gaza, there is none.”

Tagreed Jumah, director of Gaza City’s Union of Palestinian Women Committees (UPWC), agrees that the siege is the main oppressor.

“The siege affects us all, but it especially affects women,” says Jumah. “In recent years, more women have been forced to become heads of the family because their husbands have been killed, are in Israeli prisons, or are unemployed as a result of the siege. But the majority of these women have no means of earning money.”

An August 2012 United Nations (UN) report, [Gaza in 2020: A liveable place?](#) cites unemployment as “higher than in the late 1990s.” The report highlights the impact on women, whose unemployment rate in early 2012 was 47 percent.

For Malaka Mohammed, 22, an English Literature graduate from Gaza’s Islamic University, and now employed at the university, higher education is both her greatest ambition and greatest obstacle.

“In Gaza, whether you are a woman or a man, you face the same consequences under the siege and the occupation. I’d like to do a Masters degree, but there is no English Masters programme here.”

For the past over ten years, Israel has banned Gazan Palestinians from studying at universities in the occupied West Bank.

“Studying abroad is very expensive, so I am searching for a scholarship, but even then I will be among thousands of people applying.”

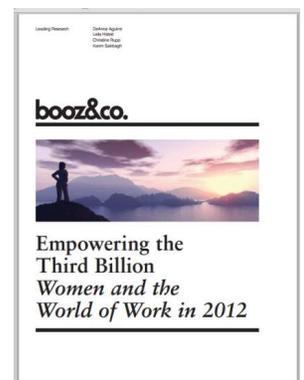
Egypt under the Mubarak regime was complicit in preventing hundreds of Palestinian students holding places and scholarships in foreign universities from leaving the Strip. Rana Baker, studying business administration at the Islamic University, and a freelance journalist, is active on numerous political issues facing Palestinians.

“To be honest, when it comes to the impact of Israel’s siege and colonial policies on the people of Gaza, indeed all of Palestine, I do not think that the experiences of men and women differ from each other,” says Baker.

“When Israel deliberately bombards schools, both males and females are affected. When talking about the limits Israel forces upon our aspirations, both genders share the same suffering. The Israeli government acts with indifference to the Palestinian population. The same lethal policies are applied to men, women and children in an indiscriminate manner.”

But women do have particular problems. The siege-manufactured poverty leading 80 percent of Gaza’s 1.7 million Palestinians to be food-aid dependent has caused increasing rates of malnutrition and anaemia in women. Direct Link to 2012 24-Page Report: <http://www.unrwa.org/userfiles/file/publications/gaza/Gaza%20in%202020.pdf>

**Empowering the Third Billion: Women and the World of Work in 2012** a publication by DeAnne Aguirre, Karim Sabbagh, Christine Rupp, and Leila Hoteit . in the publication they tackle the economic potential of the Third Billion and the multiplier effects that its members could have on the global economy are significant. “Our estimates indicate that if female employment rates were to match male rates in the United States, overall GDP would increase by 5 percent. In developing economies, the effect is even more pronounced.” The direct link to Full 84-Page 2012 Publication: [http://www.booz.com/media/uploads/BoozCo\\_Empowering-the-Third-Billion\\_Full-Report.pdf](http://www.booz.com/media/uploads/BoozCo_Empowering-the-Third-Billion_Full-Report.pdf)



## Gender Equality World Bank Report - Statistics, Social Norms, Gender Roles

The report synthesizes data collected from more than 4000 women and men in 93 communities across 20 countries.

It is the largest data set ever collected on the topic of gender and development, providing an unprecedented opportunity to examine potential patterns across communities on social norms and gender roles, pathways of empowerment, and factors that drive acute inequalities.

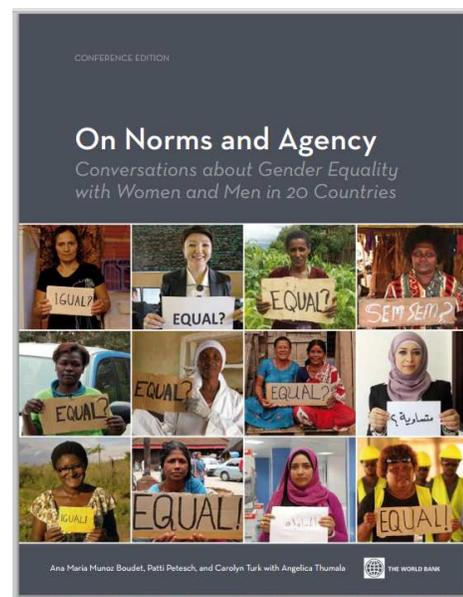
Women's agency is key to economic development and gender equality. Women and men's agency are affected by aspirations, social norms, and the set of opportunities available in the community.

Social norms on gender and gender roles are strikingly similar across countries, cultures, urban and rural settings. Women's roles tend to be rigid and closely formed around household and child care activities.

In most countries and contexts, women are gaining increased control over economic and economic decisions. Men's perceptions are that their control and well being are more stagnant.

Direct link to the full page report

<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTSOCIALDEVELOPMENT/Resources/244362-1164107274725/On-Norms-Agency-Book.pdf>



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