

NEWS & ARTICLES
GENDER ACTIVISM

Saudi Women demand end to absolute male authority

10 ways Syrian women are building peace and democracy

Raising awareness on Syria

France and Islamic feminism: intersectionality in the republic

Women march to Gaza – Women against the Gaza blockade

Egypt – ECWR creates media forum for accurate, timely, substantive information for journalists on women & civil society

Have we seen progress since International Women's Day 2013?

GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

Nuns-for-detainees deal infuriates regime supporters

Bahrain: Family violence law articles approved

Syria – Pregnant in war – serious women's medical crisis

GENDER & HUMAN RIGHTS

Saudi paper names first woman editor-in-chief in kingdom

Egypt: Hala Shukrallah succeeds Elbardei as head of constitution party

Tunisia – New constitution a breakthrough for women's rights

Human rights defender and pro-democracy activist Zainab Al-Kawaja has been released from prison

Women at work - where we are, where we want to be

RESOURCES & CALLS
BOOKS & REPORTS

Gender at work: A companion to the world development report on jobs

Non-partner sexual violence against women is common worldwide, study finds

Syria – Women at the heart of Syrian politics – first women inclusion strategy 2014-2018

Reclaiming & redefining right: the status of sexual & reproductive health & rights in the Middle East and North Africa - Report

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NEWS & ARTICLES

GENDER ACTIVISM

Saudi Women demand end to absolute male authority

Ten Saudi women are petitioning the Saudi Arabia consultative Shura Council to demand an end to absolute male authority over women.

Activist Aziza Yousef told AFP news agency over the weekend that the activists are demanding "measures to protect women's rights," as well as the right for women to drive, ahead of International Women's Day on March 8. They argue that the restrictions women face in Saudi Arabia, which imposes a strict interpretation of Islamic law, are not based in religious teachings.

Saudi women received the right to vote in 2011, but they are prohibited from driving and from working, travelling, and even performing certain medical procedures without a male guardian. In October, over 60 women drove in an ongoing campaign to obtain the right to drive, the lack of which limits their mobility and economic opportunities.

The Shura Council, appointed by the King, advises the monarch but cannot legislate on its own.

Read more:

<http://www.feminist.org/news/newsbyte/uswirestory.asp?id=14883>

10 ways Syrian women are building peace and democracy

They move carefully between constantly changing checkpoints, where they're often harassed. Extremists have been known to target female activists—beating them for not dressing conservatively enough. Or they may be detained. It happens frequently, especially if their activities are known to the government authorities. Even if not directly targeted, they live and work under constant shelling and deprivation, lacking food and water, and are often unable to communicate with activists a few neighborhoods away.

Yet, since the uprising began almost three years ago, Syrian women have demonstrated exceptional creativity and resilience. Despite their heroic efforts, these leaders have received too little attention from policymakers and the media and have not been fully consulted as part of the ongoing negotiations.

Here are 10 ways Syrian women are building peace and democracy in their country.

1. Organizing nonviolent protests

Women were among the first to take to the streets in March 2011. Though it's become increasingly dangerous, many have continued these efforts. For instance, young women in Qamishli campaigned for disarmament, hanging posters throughout the city and organizing support via Facebook.

As acts of civil disobedience and to draw attention to the suffering in the country, women have glued shut the doors of government buildings and put red dye into public fountains so the water resembles blood. They've held banners outside of Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) centers that say, "You're not going to change our life." Side by side with men, they've kept the revolution in touch with its nonviolent, democratic roots.

Read more:

<http://www.awid.org/News-Analysis/Issues-and-Analysis/10-Ways-Syrian-Women-Are-Building-Peace-and-Democracy>

Raising awareness on Syria

CIVICUS is supporting a new campaign to raise awareness about the ongoing crisis in Syria.



WithSyria

The 15th March marks the third year anniversary of the Syria crisis - a crisis that has been labeled one of the worst of our generation; half the country has been forced to flee their homes; over 100,000 people have been killed.

In the run up to the anniversary, Syrian groups, prominent international NGOs, former world leaders and celebrities around the world are holding vigils in over 30 countries, turning global landmarks into symbols of hope, from the Eiffel Tower to Za'atari camp, from Trafalgar Square to Dadaab camp in Kenya. The artist, Banksy, has donated the use of his iconic image of the girl with the red balloon as a motif for the campaign.

Read more:

<http://www.civicus.org/news-and-resources-127/1980-raising-awareness-on-syria>

You can see who else is part of the campaign by visiting:

www.with-syria.org

France and Islamic feminism: intersectionality in the republic

The fact is that Islamic feminists in western countries, and especially in France, struggle with identity

MENA GAD EBRIEF / Issue 142 - March 2014

affiliations and fight against multiple forms of oppression that bind them to post-colonial and anti-racist movements.

As the presidency of François Hollande commenced its third year, French society is revealing its profound division between progressive and reactionary stances on gender equality and race issues. The latest protests “Manif pour Tous”, led by Christian rightwing movements against gay marriage were followed by the unbelievable alliance of Black anti-Semitic Dieudonné with the French far-right. “Jour de Colère”, the “Anti-Hollande” protest, gathered together on January 26 the Christian right, extreme right supporters, anti-Islam and anti-Semitic groups.

In the midst of what really feels like a backlash for all feminist and anti-racist activists, the topic of Islamic feminism in French society raises issues that help us towards a deeper understanding of women’s rights and racial segregation in France.

Read more:

<http://www.wluml.org/news/france-and-islamic-feminism-intersectionality-republic-0>

Women march to Gaza – Women against the Gaza blockade



January 19, 2014 - Registration for to meet the Women of Gaza from March 5 to 13 are now closed. One hundred women in several countries, including our dear Djamilia Bouhired, therefore gather at Cairo to Gaza, hoping that the Egyptian authorities will grant them passage. But the campaign to break the silence around the blockade of Gaza by Israel for 7

years, and to show solidarity with women in Gaza who threw us a call for help is far from over!



The icon of the Algerian revolution, which was, at the age of 22, the heroine of the Battle of Algiers, decided to answer the call to rescue women from Gaza and join those who will go to their meeting on March 8, on the occasion of the International Women's Day.

Read more:

http://www.wunrn.com/news/2014/03_14/02_31/023114_women.htm

Egypt – ECWR creates media forum for accurate, timely, substantive information for journalists on women & civil society

The Egyptian Centre for Women's Rights has launched an initiative entitled 'Egyptian Women and the Media Forum' which aims to make available all information, data and statistics regarding women's issues and civil society. The initiative comes in response to observations by ECWR that journalists lack sufficient information and data concerning women's issues in Egypt.

ECWR therefore intends to facilitate access to information regarding women by making available the results of its cumulative experience analysing the status of women over the last 10 years in its annual Egyptian Women's Status Reports. These reports analyse developments in the position of women in Egyptian society by drawing on information published in local sources and in international reports, such as the Human Development Report and reports by the World Bank and the UN, in order to compare the status of women in Egypt with that of women around the world.

In addition, ECWR will release press briefings on its website summarising the important issues raised in this field today to assist journalists and media professionals in making available the information and statistics they are researching. ECWR will also put forward the names of female experts in different fields for the Egyptian media.

ECWR launched this initiative with a number of journalists supportive of the idea who have requested closer collaboration. A monthly meeting will therefore be held with opportunity before each meeting to put forward ideas on issues about which the press need additional information and would like included on that meeting's agenda.

Read more:

<http://ecwronline.org/blog/2014/03/09/egyptian-women-and-the-media-forum/>

Have we seen progress since International Women's Day 2013?

Every year, International Women's Day is celebrated around the world on 8 March. Its roots can be traced back to the 1909 New York garment workers' strike but it has now grown to become a day when people march, party, lobby, debate, create and mobilise in the name of women's rights and gender equality across the world.



This year, the United Nations has taken the theme 'Equality for women is progress for all' to emphasise 'how gender equality, empowerment of women, women's full enjoyment of human rights and the eradication of poverty are essential to economic and social development.' Gender equality and the post-2015 development framework is a major talking point as campaigners, policy makers and politicians converge on New York for the Commission on the Status of Women from Monday 10 March. As we build up to the event, the BRIDGE team has been looking back at some of the major developments for women's rights and gender equality since the last International Women's Day:

One development issue that has gained more recognition over the past year is unpaid care work, including a UN special rapporteur on unpaid care work and women's rights launched in October 2013.

In more local development news, the UK is waiting for royal ascent on a bill which forces its government to consider the impact of its international aid spending on reducing gender inequality.

Read more:

<http://www.bridge.ids.ac.uk/go/IWD2014>

GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

Nuns-for-detainees deal infuriates regime supporters



The freeing of Lebanese nuns held by Al-Qaeda-linked rebels for Syrian female detainees has enraged supporters of the Syrian regime, who are demanding that similar deals include their family and friends.

The Lebanon-Syria border crossing at Jdaidet Yabouss was overflowing with media late Sunday to cover the swap, which finally came to fruition thanks to mediation by Qatari officials, and a ransom that was reportedly paid to the rebels.

The 13 nuns and their three female helpers had been held since early December by militants from the Nusra Front, an Al-Qaeda-linked group that has been prominent in the monthslong campaign by the regime to take the Qalamoun region, north of Damascus.

The nuns were seized from their convent in Maaloula and taken to the nearby town of Yabroud, which they were then forced to leave in recent weeks when the regime offensive in the area heated up.

Read more: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2014/Mar-11/249861-nuns-for-detainees-deal-infuriates-regime-supporters.ashx#ixzz2vlwVyBqo>

Bahrain: Family violence law articles approved

BAHRAIN's top legal authority has recommended that husbands who force their wives to have sex should not be prosecuted.

It has also suggested husbands and guardians who "reasonably" discipline their wives and daughters should be above the law.

The Supreme Judicial Council made the recommendations to ensure new legislation on domestic disputes does not contradict Sharia (Islamic) principles.

However, the recommendations have yet to be voted on by the Shura Council.

"The Supreme Judicial Council has told us in writing that the law doesn't contradict Sharia and would help protect family members from violence in all its forms," Shura Council woman and child committee vice-chairwoman Dr Jihad Al Fadhel said yesterday.

"However, it has stressed that husbands and guardians should be excluded from criminal punishment if they were reasonably disciplining their wives or daughters.

"It also asked for the removal of an article that criminalises husbands who force their wives to have sex, which is their right, unless the wife is sick."

The Shura Council yesterday approved eight of 21 articles in the new law after suspending talks in January due to disagreements over government definitions of abuse and cruelty.

It also approved the establishment of a family violence directorate to operate counselling centres and shelters for victims of violence.

Read more:

<http://www.wluml.org/news/bahrain-family-violence-law-articles-approved>

Syria – Pregnant in war – serious women’s medical crisis

Marjie Middleton, a midwife working with Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF), spent several months this year on the Syria-Lebanon border. "I was there because MSF recognized that women’s health wasn’t being dealt with appropriately or not at all in the refugee situation," she said. "They sent me over to assess and open clinics for women’s health. At the time, they had seven clinics open for primary health care, but none provided pre- or postnatal care. So we opened four, dealing specifically with women’s health and pregnancy." She spoke with Syria Deeply about the mounting health problems faced by Syria’s women.



Middleton counsels Syrian women on maternal health. One 18-year-old refugee, was seven months pregnant when she crossed to Lebanon on foot while suffering from a hemorrhage. / Courtesy MSF

The trick is to try and tell you about the scope of the problem. It’s just so huge. I was completely taken aback by the complete lack of attention to women’s health. The priority is the war wounded and those who need surgery. But when a woman is pregnant, that’s also an “immediate” need.

Read more:

http://www.wunrn.com/news/2014/02_14/02_17/021714_syria.htm

GENDER & HUMAN RIGHTS

Saudi paper names first woman editor-in-chief in kingdom

Predecessor says she was hired on merit, not because of her gender

Riyadh: For the first time in Saudi Arabia, a woman has been named editor-in-chief of a daily newspaper published in the kingdom.

The English-language Saudi Gazette announced on its website that Somayya Jabarti will take the helm at the newspaper.

Her predecessor Khalid Al Maeena wrote on Sunday that Jabarti has worked with him for almost 13 years and is a determined and dedicated journalist.

He wrote on Sunday in the Saudi Gazette that “it was not a question of gender but of merit that decided and earned her this opportunity.”

Jabarti was formerly deputy editor-in-chief at the newspaper she now leads.

There are only a handful of journalism degrees offered to women in the kingdom, and many ultraconservative clerics in Saudi Arabia argue that women should not work alongside men.□

Read more:

<http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/saudi-arabia/saudi-paper-names-first-woman-editor-in-chief-in-kingdom-1.1292115>

Egypt: Hala Shukrallah succeeds Elbardei as head of constitution party

The 59 year old has become the first woman and Copt to serve as the president of a major political party

Hala Shukrallah won the liberal Constitution Party's elections on Friday to succeed Mohamed ElBaradei as the party's president.

Shukrallah won 108 out of 189 votes to become the first woman and Copt to head an Egyptian political party.

Hala Shukrallah was born in 1954. She is the director of the Development Support Center for consultancy and training, a consultancy firm providing support and assistance to civil society organizations.

Shukrallah's opponents, former TV host Gamila Ismail and physician Hossam Abdel-Ghafar - both also founding members - won 57 and 23 votes respectively. Two votes were spoilt.

ElBaradei resigned as party head when he was appointed vice president following the ouster of Mohamed Morsi on 3 July. He resigned this post to

register his objection to the violent dispersal of the pro-Morsi Rabaa Al-Adawiya protest camp which left hundreds dead.

ElBaradei posted on Twitter on Friday, encouraging the youth and calling on them to stay united against "ignorance, extremism and oppression."

Read more:

<http://www.awid.org/News-Analysis/Women-s-Rights-in-the-News2/Egypt-Hala-Shukrallah-succeeds-ElBaradei-as-head-of-Constitution-Party>

Tunisia – New constitution a breakthrough for women’s rights

Tunis - Tunisia’s new Constitution has captured international headlines. It enshrines many rights for women and is step in the right direction, according to many Tunisians.

Sana Ben Achour, women’s rights activist and law student, stresses that this Constitution is the first in the Arab world to give all Tunisians, women and men, the right to be presidential candidates. Similarly, she says that “Article 46 is proof of an impressive advance. From the outset, it safeguards the rights won by Tunisian women by referring to the Code du Statut Personnel (Personal Status Code) of 1959. Back then, the Code established a rights and freedoms panel unheard of in the Arab world.

These included the right to divorce, to marriage by mutual consent and also the banning of polygamy.”

In addition, Ms. Ben Achour said that the State will ensure that there was gender equality in the workplace and it would encourage equality, notably through affirmative action measures.

“Article 46, on equality, guarantees parity between men and women in all elected assemblies, – which is even more progressive considering this has not even been included in the constitutions of the majority of western countries,” said HÉla Skhiri, National Programme Officer for UN Women in Tunisia.

These advances are the result of many months of hard work and sustained advocacy. Led by civil society groups, with the support of UN Women and various other organizations, Article 20 guaranteeing equality of rights and responsibilities, was finally passed.

Read more:

<http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2014/2/tunisia-new-constitution>

Human rights defender and pro-democracy activist Zainab Al-Kawaja has been released from prison

Bahraini human rights defender and pro-democracy activist Zainab Al-Kawaja, imprisoned on a variety of concurrent charges since February 2013, was released from prison Sunday.

A key figure in Bahrain's protest movement, she has drawn worldwide attention to the peaceful protests in Bahrain through her Twitter postings and other online media platforms. The human rights defender has also been campaigning since April 2011 for the release of her father, Mr Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja, a prominent human rights defender and former Front Line Defenders Protection Coordinator for the Middle East and North Africa.

According to the BBC, Ms Khawaja told journalists on Sunday that, "one year in prison is nothing." Adding, "we have a cause... This will not stop us."

Read more:

<http://www.awid.org/News-Analysis/Women-s-Rights-in-the-News2/Human-rights-defender-and-pro-democracy-activist-Zainab-Al-Kawaja-has-been-released-from-prison>

Women at work - where we are, where we want to be

To mark International Women's Day, the ILO reflects on the progress that has been made and what still needs to be done to achieve gender equality in the workplace. Follow two women, an Indian CEO and a US school teacher, whose experiences shed an

interesting light on the common challenges facing women across the globe.



When the International Labour Organization was founded in 1919, most women around the world did not have the right to vote and most in paid work had little or no collective voice to advocate for their workplace rights.

Nearly a century on, female participation in the labour market has significantly increased, along with progress on their rights at work. However millions still face significant barriers in accessing equal opportunity and treatment in their jobs.

"Stubborn gaps in gender equality in the workplace still remain. We need to assess the effectiveness of existing policies so we can renew strategies and take concrete action to improve women's working lives," says ILO Director- General, Guy Ryder.

Breaking the glass ceiling

Vinita Bali is an example of a woman who has successfully broken through the 'glass ceiling' that limits women's access to top decision-making posts. She is managing director of Britannia Industries in India.

Read more:

http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/multimedia/features/WCMS_237054/lang-en/index.htm

RESOURCES & CALLS

BOOKS & REPORTS

Gender at work: A companion to the world development report on jobs

Women around the world still face huge, persistent gender gaps at work, according to a new report by the World Bank Group, which calls for bold, innovative measures to level the playing field and unleash women's economic potential.

By virtually every global measure, women are more economically excluded than men, according to Gender at Work. Trends suggest women's labor force participation worldwide has stagnated over the past 30 years, dropping from 57 to 55 percent globally, despite accumulating evidence that jobs benefit women, families, businesses, and communities.

"The reasons for this will differ from country to country, but we think that the persistence of norms—which means that women don't have as much choice over their livelihoods as men—as well as legal barriers to work are both playing important roles," said Jeni Klugman, World Bank Group Gender and Development Director.

A companion to the 2013 world development report on jobs, the report notes that since women face multiple constraints to jobs, starting early and extending throughout their lives, progressive, broad-based, and coordinated policy action is needed to close gender gaps. Common constraints include lack of mobility, time, and skills, exposure to violence, and the absence of basic legal rights.

Read more:

<http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/gender/publication/gender-at-work-companion-report-to-world-development-report-2013-jobs>

Non-partner sexual violence against women is common worldwide, study finds

One in 14 women around the world aged 15 or older has been sexually assaulted by someone other than

an intimate partner, according to a new study by an international team of researchers.

But even that disturbing number is probably a low estimate, the study points out, because sexual violence often goes unreported as a result of women's fear of being blamed and a lack of support from families and communities.

"Sexual violence against women is common worldwide, with endemic levels seen in some areas," write the study's authors.

"Our findings," they add, "indicate a pressing health and human rights concern."

Study's details

For the study, which was published Tuesday in the journal *The Lancet*, researchers from the South African Medical Research Council, the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine and the World Health Organization, examined reports and studies published from January 1998 through December 2011 that offered data on the prevalence of non-partner sexual violence against women.

Non-partners were defined as "strangers, acquaintances, friends, colleagues, peers, teachers, neighbours and family members."

Read more:

<http://www.minnpost.com/second-opinion/2014/02/non-partner-sexual-violence-against-women-common-worldwide-study-finds>

For a direct link to article:

[http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(13\)62243-6/fulltext#skipped_nav](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(13)62243-6/fulltext#skipped_nav)

Syria – Women at the heart of Syrian politics – first women inclusion strategy 2014-2018



a reproductive health consultant, were keynote speakers.

The report evaluates the progress made by a select number of countries in the region (six) towards fulfilling their commitments under the International Conference for Population and Development (1994) Programme of Action. The six countries are: Egypt, Kuwait, Yemen, Palestine, Turkey and Tunisia. The report relies on data from different United Nations bodies and the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) for the countries researched. The report also relies on a wide range of qualitative studies and human rights reports to support the quantitative statistics and data, as well as several interviews with activists and NGOs in the six countries mentioned.

Read more:

<http://eipr.org/en/pressrelease/2014/02/24/1964>

http://www.wunrn.com/news/2014/02_14/02_24/022414_syria.htm

For a direct link to report:

http://www.el-karama.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/SWFP-Strategy-Feb-2014.pdf?utm_content=mosie%40inflationline.net&utm_source=VerticalResponse&utm_medium=Email&utm_term=strategy%20to%20promote%20women%E2%80%99s%20inclusion&utm_campaign=Demanding%20Women%27s%20Voices%20are%20Heardcontent

Thirty-five years of forced hijab: the widespread and systematic violation of women's rights in Iran

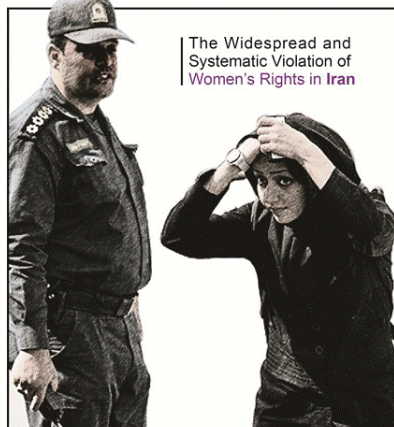
Thirty-five Years of Forced Hijab: The Widespread and Systematic Violation of Women's Rights in Iran points out over the past ten years more than 30,000 women have faced arrest throughout Iran due to hijab laws. Iran is the first country where the state forces all girls and women to observe uniform hijab laws. Without a clear definition of hijab, Islamic Republic laws consider women who lack "Islamic veil" in "public" as criminal and punishable by imprisonment and fines. The call for enforced hijab was first raised 35 years ago by Ayatollah Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic Republic, just 24 days after the revolution was declared victorious, on 7 March 1979. However, given the resistance of a considerable percentage of Iranian women, it took three years of tension and violence to enforce this law.

Reclaiming & redefining right: the status of sexual & reproductive health & rights in the Middle East and North Africa - Report

Issued on the Occasion of the 20-year ICPD (International Conference on Population and Development) Review by the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights

On Sunday February 23, 2014, the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights held an event to launch its new report, entitled "Reclaiming and Redefining Rights: ICPD+20 Status of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in Middle East and North Africa". The launch was attended by a number of UN bodies' representatives in Cairo and civil society practitioners. Dr. Nahla Abd El-Tawab, the Population Council Country officer and Dr. Hala El-Damanhoury,

Thirty-five Years of Forced Hijab



Justice For Iran
عدالت برای ایران

Read more:

http://www.wunrn.com/news/2014/03_14/02_31/023114_iran2.htm

For a direct link to report:

<http://justice4iran.org/english/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Hejab-Report-JFI-English.pdf>

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