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NEWS & ARTICLES

GENDER ACTIVISM

Iran - Women's Magazine Zanan-e Emruz (Today's Women) Makes Comeback

After being shut down by hardliners in 2008 the May 29 revival of this 16-year-old feminist publication is an event to celebrate as a defining moment for the resurgence of women's rights in the post-Ahmadinejad era.



Pages from the new issue of the Iranian magazine Zanan-e Emruz

Shahla Sherkat, the award-winning journalist and one of the pioneers of the women's rights movement in Iran, re-launched on May 29 her feminist magazine shut down by hardliners in 2008 after 16 years in operation. The magazine reopens under the banner Zanan-e Emruz or "Today's Women," available in print and online.

This unveiling comes at a most critical juncture, emblematic of an era of political in-fighting and ideological schisms in a leadership structure split between hardliners who continue to cling to antiquated notions and moderate factions who appear more amenable to granting more social freedoms.

The magazine is reviving at a time when a myriad of free-flowing photographs are being posted online by hijab-free women in Iran as part of the "Stealthy Freedoms of Iranian Women" campaign.

Read more:

http://www.wunrn.com/news/2014/05_14/05_26/052614_iran.htm

Women 'leading The Elections': ECWR

Egyptian women participated in large numbers during the first day of the presidential election Monday, in some cases even heading to voting stations at 7 a.m., two hours before polls were due to open.

The Egyptian Center for Women's Rights (ECWR), a local organization monitoring the elections, said Monday that women were "leading the elections", as 24 million women are entitled to vote—nearly half of all 53,909,306 eligible voters.

Also, the Lawyers Syndicate, which is monitoring elections, said it had tracked a high turnout of women voters, especially in rural areas. This has proven "their awareness and willingness to participate in choosing their next president," said syndicate member Tarek Ibrahim in a press statement reported by El-Badil news website Monday.

"Women's turnout was surprising in Cairo and Giza, as it is usually expected to be higher in other governorates," ECWR Chairwoman Nehad Abo el-Komsan told Al-Nahar channel.

Additionally, the National Council for Women's Rights (NCWR) posted pictures of women casting their votes, as well as celebrities and several posters with slogans encouraging women to vote and hotline numbers to file complaints with the NCWR.

Read more:

<http://www.awid.org/News-Analysis/Women-s-Rights-in-the-News2/Women-leading-the-elections-ECWR>

IDWF: A domestic worker's federation is born



The International Domestic Workers' Network has transformed itself into the first global union organization run by women: the International Domestic Workers' Federation (IDWF).

The transformation occurred at a founding congress in Montevideo, Uruguay, October 26-28, 2013. On the final day, delegates from domestic workers' organizations around the world agreed that their organization should take this step. The IDWF Constitution was unanimously accepted in a vote. In this Global Labour Column article "Yes we did it!" WIEGO's Chris Bonner, Barbro Budin and Karin Pape capture how this was achieved, and the jubilation that accompanied it.

Historically, domestic workers who work in others' homes have been invisible—overlooked as workers and denied basic rights. They made great strides, however, in recent years. In 2011 they were victorious in having governments, employers and workers adopt the Convention (C189) and accompanying Recommendation on Decent Work for Domestic Workers at the International Labour Conference. By October 2013, 13 countries had ratified C189.

Read more:

<http://wiego.org/informal-economy/idwf-domestic-workers%E2%80%99-federation-born>

Traffic stops as activists protest against absence of women in Cabinet



Traffic stalled and offices stood still for five minutes Tuesday as women's rights activists protested against the exclusion of female ministers in the new Cabinet.

Positioning themselves as roadblocks in Downtown, Hamra and Sassine Square, the groups of several dozen demonstrators, part of the Lebanese Women's Movement, held banners saying "A Cabinet without women is going backward."

They also handed out flyers to passersby and waiting vehicles, asking them to "stop working, stop your cars and honk your horns for five minutes ... for not appointing female ministers in the Cabinet," as motorists split between those honking in support and those beeping in annoyance.

"It's a disgrace that we see no women ministers in the new Cabinet. It sends a bad message," said Zeina, a stalled driver who applauded the protests but did not want to give her last name.

As part Interior Ministry-approved strike, employees in the ministry, several leading banks and hospitals, as well as some universities, halted work for five minutes in support of the cause, organizers said.

Read more:

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2011/Jun-29/142403-traffic-stops-as-activists-protest-against-absence-of-women-in-cabinet.ashx#axzz34LWesSEN>

Advocates Release Report on Violations of Women's Human Rights in Syria

MADRE and a coalition of international and Syrian women's human rights groups have released a report on women's human rights violations in Syria before and during the current war. These violations include sexual violence, torture and forced marriage, as well as women's exclusion from peace negotiations and domestic political processes.

To generate the report's findings, Syrian women's rights activists and their international allies conducted research and interviews over the past year. The findings are further centered upon personal testimonies, gathered during a series of fact-finding trips to the region, carried out by MADRE.

Today, Syria is also holding its presidential election, in the midst of a three-year war that has displaced over nine million people or over 40% of its citizens. The vote, already widely disputed, is projected to result in the re-election of President Bashar al-Assad.

"If this election were truly democratic, presidential candidates like Bashar al-Assad would be compelled to grapple with the issues presented here," said Lisa Davis, MADRE Human Rights Advocacy Director and professor of law. "Our report reveals that women have been specific targets of violence in this brutal war, including rape deployed as a weapon to target individuals and terrorize communities. It also underscores that women already faced violence and discrimination long before the war and that sustainable peace will depend on undoing women's systemic political exclusion."

Read more:

http://www.wunrn.com/news/2014/06_02/06_02/060214_syria.htm

For a direct link to report:

http://www.madre.org/images/uploads/misc/1401805514_Seeking%20Accountability%20and%20Demanding%20Change%20-%20MADRE%20Report%20-%20Syria.pdf

There is only one future for Europe

The future of Europe can only be grounded in guaranteeing and implementing the fundamental human rights for women and men

The European Feminist Initiative IFE-EFI calls to vote on the 25th of May for candidates, lists and parties who promote the following:

- Ø REAL EQUALITY between women and men as a founding principle for Europe, the adoption of measures and policies to reach this goal in both the public and private spheres and the promotion of gender equality on all agendas.
- Ø REAL DEMOCRACY that enables women and men to take full part of the decisions that shape their life and the future of their countries.
- Ø Radical CHANGE of the European policies based on profit and wealth accumulation, into policies focused on human development.
- Ø STRICT non-interference of religious structures into State affairs, instituting women's rights as UNIVERSAL human rights and rejecting any violation of those rights in the name of culture, tradition or religion.
- Ø CRIMINALIZATION of VIOLENCE against women, abolition of prostitution and recognition of the right of women to decide over their own body.

Read more:

http://www.wunrn.com/news/2014/05_14/05_19/051914_eu.htm

Marketable skills set young women on path to prosperity in Nepal



Ek Maya Rai (L) took a mobile phone repair training last year. Babita Nepali (R) sections aluminum blocks to fashion door and window frames and received aluminum work training through the Adolescent Girls' Employment Initiative as well

Twenty three-year-old Ek Maya Rai is busy working at a mobile repair shop in Mahendra Pul, a busy area in Pokhara, Western Nepal. Ek Maya's formal education ended at fifth grade, when her parents lost interest in sending her to school. After that, she stayed at home and helped her family with housework, with no prospects of a future to look forward to.

A year ago, she heard about a three-month long training on repairing mobile phones at the nearby Panchakanya Technical Institute. In this course, she saw potential for her to do something productive with her life, and enrolled. The training is part of the World Bank's Adolescent Girls' Employment Initiative (AGEI), which equips young girls aged 16-24 with the skills required to find employment and become independent adults.

"It was very difficult at first, because I had to take notes, but I hadn't read or written anything for 10 years," says Ek Maya. "Other trainees in the program helped me overcome this hurdle." Immediately after the training, Ek Maya's job in a mobile repair shop was secured through the job placement program.

Read more:

<http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2014/06/09/marketable-skills-set-young-girls-on-path-to-prosperity-in-nepal>

MENA GAD EBRIEF / Issue 145 - June 2014

What would a feminist internet look like?

The Association for Progressive Communications (APC) held a global meeting on gender, sexuality and the internet, in Malaysia between 12 and 17 April, to explore and develop the collective understanding of what a feminist internet looks like. AWID interviewed Nadine Moawad[i] about the meeting, and APC's EROTICS project.

The APC is a virtual, non-profit organization and international network working towards the realization of an Internet that is not only affordable and accessible, but improves lives and creates a more just world. Their pioneering EROTICS study carried out in Brazil, India, Lebanon, South Africa and USA between June 2008-2011, examined "how the internet plays host to critical information about sex education, health, fighting sex discrimination and defining one's own sexuality, debunking the commonly-held view that sexuality online is just about pornography."

Stemming from the results of this initial research - which is published as a report: EROTICS: Sex, rights and the internet - the next phase of the EROTICS project aims to "narrow the gap between political assumptions and a better understanding of content and "harm" based on women's real experience of sexuality online... looking at the impact of regulatory frameworks and control mechanisms on the actual lived practices, experiences and concerns of internet users in the exercise of their sexual rights".

Read more:

<http://www.awid.org/News-Analysis/Friday-Files/What-Would-a-Feminist-Internet-Look-Like>

GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

Collaborative Statement Condemns Security Forces Raid on the ECSR

The undersigned organizations condemn the security forces storming of the Egyptian Center for Economic and Social Rights, Alexandria Branch, and note that such attack is an expected escalation, amidst the growing incitement in the media, and defamation campaigns, which have been targeting human rights organizations and human rights defenders in Egypt.

Egyptian security forces, alongside security personnel dressed in civilian attire, raided the Alexandria Branch of The Egyptian Center for Economic and Social Rights, arresting 15, including two minors, and two ECSR staff, and confiscating several computers and documents. The arrested were taken to the Alexandria Security Department where they were held, until released hours later.

Security forces raided ECSR's office while a press conference was being held in solidarity with imprisoned labor activist Mahinour Al-Massry, who was sentenced to two years in prison on charges of protesting. Al-Massry's appeal was recently rejected, and her sentence was reaffirmed. The press conference came in solidarity with imprisoned activist Al-Massry, who was taking part in a protest demanding justice for martyr 'Khaled Said', tortured to death by security forces in 2010, the latter incident is considered a driving force of the Egyptian Revolution in January 2011.

Read more:

http://www.wunrn.com/news/2014/05_14/05_19/0519_14_egypt.htm

Egypt criminalizes sexual harassment for first time



Volunteers form a safe zone between men and women to prevent sexual harassment during a protest in Tahrir Square in Cairo, Egypt.

Egypt has criminalised sexual harassment for the first time, in a move that campaigners say is just the first step towards ending an endemic problem.

Egypt's outgoing president, Adly Mansour, issued a decree that categorised sexual harassment as a crime punishable by a minimum six-month jail term and a fine worth 3,000 Egyptian pounds – with increased penalties for employers and repeat offenders.

Sexual harassers have been prosecuted on rare occasions in the past in Egypt – but only on vaguer charges of physical assault, and even then the defendants have often been found innocent.

UN research from 2013 suggested that 99.3% of Egyptian women had experienced sexual harassment – but it is often the victims who are blamed for their experience, rather than the harassers.

Campaigners welcomed the law, but warned that it remained to be seen whether it would be enforced by police.

Read more:

<http://www.wluml.org/news/egypt-criminalises-sexual-harassment-first-time>

CII endorses underage marriage



Maulana Mohammad Khan Sheerani, chairman of the Council of Islamic Ideology

ISLAMABAD: Amid criticism from various quarters, including some of its own members, the Council of Islamic Ideology (CII), on Wednesday endorsed its earlier ruling that girls as young as nine years old were eligible to be married, "if the signs of puberty are visible".

The CII meeting, chaired by Maulana Mohammad Khan Sheerani of the Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F), also said that most of the clauses of the existing Muslim Marriage Law, 1961, were un-Islamic.

Talking to reporters after the conclusion of a two-day CII meeting, Sheerani criticised the Sindh Assembly, the media and 'some other segments of society' for not taking the council's decisions seriously.

On March 31, the Sindh Assembly passed a resolution demanding dissolution of the CII and on April 28, the Sindh Child Marriage Restraint Bill, 2013, was enacted, which stipulates strict penalties for all parties that compel underage individuals to enter into marriage.

Read more:

http://www.dawn.com/news/1107849?utm_source=CM+in+the+News+-+Update+to+members&utm_campaign=8afeeeba09-Child+marriage+in+the+news+5+June+2014+5+2014&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_c21d02558c-8afeeeba09-382382477

Emirati women to raise voice against sexual violence in conflicts



Alan Duncan, Minister of State for International Development of UK and Paul Fox, Charge d'Affaires, British Embassy, Abu Dhabi are seen during their press conference at the Embassy premises on Wednesday on the occasion of the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict that is being held in London between 10 and 13 June

Emirati women will join global efforts to end sexual violence in conflicts as part of a three-day summit in London that ends on Thursday.

Two Emirati women will join other young activists in a tweet-up organised by the British Embassy in Dubai to raise awareness on the issue in the UAE digital community, senior British officials said here on Wednesday.

Lubna Qassim, a legal professional working in the banking sector, and Muna Al Gurg, Retail Director at Al Gurg Group and Chairperson of Young Arab Leaders in the UAE, will join Bridgitte Mountain, Director of Transforming Lives Consulting in Dubai, in the debate hosted by Edward Hobart, the British Consul-General in Dubai.

They will join the tweet-up from the British Embassy in Dubai between 10.30am and 11.30am on Thursday. The public can observe the debate by following UKinUAE#TimetoAct.

Read more:

<http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/uae/general/emirati-women-to-raise-voice-against-sexual-violence-in-conflicts-1.1346054>

GENDER & HUMAN RIGHTS

Saudi Arabia – Special Council to resolve family disputes proposed

The Saudi Arabia Ministry of Justice has proposed setting up a special council to resolve family disputes, including cases involving divorce, drug abuse and other social problems.

The council would oversee dispute resolution across all government departments, the ministry said in its annual report submitted recently to the Shoura Council.

The ministry has sent its proposal to the Royal Court for approval.

The ministry also wants to employ 350 women at the council to deal with issues affecting women.

The ministry said in its report that it had studied family councils in neighboring countries. It discovered that these councils played a significant role in reducing divorces and resolving a range of other family disputes including drug abuse cases.

The ministry also found that these councils reduced the backlog of family cases at the courts of these countries.

A source said the ministry's main objective is to establish a nationwide benchmark for dealing with family related issues and negative social phenomena that threaten the fabric of Saudi society.

Read more:

http://www.wunrn.com/news/2014/05_14/05_19/051914_saudi.htm

Sudanese woman on death row needs appeals court's intervention to be released



The lawyers for Meriam Yehya Ibrahim Ishag (right) are fighting a court ruling that she be hanged for apostasy after marrying a Christian man.

The husband of Meriam Yehya Ibrahim, 27, says only the court can reverse the decision to release his wife, despite conflicting news reports that she would be released by the Sudan government.

The fate of an imprisoned Sudanese woman — who refused to forsake her Christian faith — is geared toward execution, despite news reports heralding her imminent release.

There is no plan to release Meriam Yehya Ibrahim, said Abu-Bakr Al-Siddiq, a spokesman for Sudan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but an appeal has been filed by lawyers on her behalf, according to her husband.

The 27-year-old woman is sentenced to 100 lashes and then death by hanging for renouncing the Islamic religion after she married a U.S. citizen, who is also Christian.

Ibrahim gave birth to a baby girl named Maya on May 26 while on death row at a Khartoum women's prison, where her two children, including her 20-month-old son, Martin, are also staying.

Read more:

<http://www.nydailynews.com/news/world/woman-court-intervention-escape-death-row-article-1.1813307#ixzz33V6HjOmS>

Supreme leader's edict wants Iranians to have more kids

Iran's supreme leader has called for a population increase in an edict likely to restrict access to contraception that critics fear could damage women's rights and public health.

In his 14-point decree, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said increasing Iran's 76 million-strong population would strengthen national identity and counter undesirable aspects of western lifestyles. "Given the importance of population size in sovereign might and economic progress ... firm, quick and efficient steps must be taken to offset the steep fall in birth rate of recent years," he wrote on his website.

Khamenei's order, which must be applied by all three branches of government, replaces the "fewer kids, better life" motto adopted in the late 1980s when contraception was made widely available.

Since then the birth rate has fallen from 3.2 percent in 1986 to 1.2 percent, according to the CIA World Factbook. At current fertility rates, Iran's median age is expected to increase from 28 in 2013 to 40 by 2030, according to UN data.

But many Iranians are concerned about policy shifts to boost the population, something proposed for years by conservatives, including the former president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who favoured nearly doubling the population to 120 million, encouraging women to stay home and devote their time to child-rearing.

Read more:

http://www.gulfintimedia.com/index.php?m=politics&id=702979&lim=&lang=en&tblpost=2014_06

Zimbabwe's women farmers on the rise



Women account for about 20 percent of farmers tilling their own land in Zimbabwe

The spike in women managing their own agricultural land following Zimbabwe's 2000 land reform programme catapulted the country to high up in the African league of female farmers tilling their own farms, although accurate data for gendered land ownership on the continent remains a grey and contested area.

Women provide the majority of sub-Saharan Africa's agricultural muscle and produce up to 80 percent of the regions basic foodstuffs, according to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

Prior to Zimbabwe's land redistribution, which saw about 4,500 white-owned farms - accounting for more than a quarter of the country - handed to an estimated 245,000 black farmers, fewer than 5 percent of Zimbabwe's women had land registered in their name. But in the wake of land reform, women now comprise about 20 percent of landowners and leaseholders.

Read more:

<http://www.irinnews.org/report/100135/zimbabwe-s-women-farmers-on-the-rise>

Arab Women Confront a Tide of Injustice



When a series of uprisings erupted throughout the Arab region three years ago, few of the women protesting for freedom and justice in Tunis, Cairo, Manama, Tripoli, Sanaa, Damascus, and elsewhere imagined they would still be fighting for their basic rights today.

Even though many Arab constitutions stipulate equality between men and women as a general principle, individual laws often limit women's opportunities for full participation. Personal status codes circumscribe their rights further and fail to provide adequate legal protection. As in other regions women are often victims of violence, but lack proper access to justice or effective psychosocial remedies. Women's participation in the labor force, estimated at 28 percent for the region, is the lowest in the world.

Historically, Arab consciousness has perceived women as symbolizing the "honor" of the family, the homeland, the nation's dignity, and everything that the society treasures. Violating this symbol means violating the dignity of the individual and the collective.

Read more:

<http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/voices/arab-women-confront-tide-injustice>

World Bank Group president brings hopeful message to the Middle East



Jim Yong Kim brings a message of optimism to Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, and Jordan in his first visit to those countries as World Bank Group president. The World Bank Group is helping Jordan and Lebanon cope with the impact of millions of refugees escaping ongoing conflict in Syria, but the international community needs to provide more help to the countries.

The World Bank Group also is committed to scaling up support for countries undergoing political transition in the region.

Read more:

<http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2014/06/01/president-brings-hopeful-message-to-middle-east>

Iranians demand the authorities to enforce the hijab

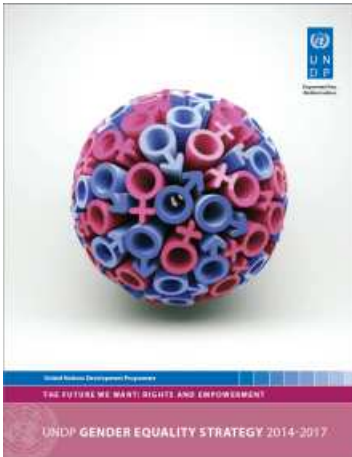
TEHRAN: Around 1,000 Iranians staged a rally on Friday to demand that the government fully enforce obligatory rules that women be veiled in public. The demonstrators, both men and women, protested in central Tehran, carrying placards and chanting that the authorities "must stop the spread of vice" and enforce the hijab.

A dedicated "morality police" has long handed out fines, verbal notices or even arrested women it considers are not observing the rules properly. "In some parts of the city, the veils are coming off right now and the full violation of hijab can be witnessed," Hojjatoleslam Kazem Sediqi said in a Friday prayers speech at Tehran University, shortly before the rally

Read more:

<http://www.arabnews.com/news/572081>

Gender Equality Strategy 2014 - 2017



Gender equality and the empowerment of women are at the heart of UNDP's development mandate. First and foremost, gender equality is a matter of human rights. It is also a driver of development progress. Unless women and girls are able to fully realize their rights in all spheres of life, human development will not be advanced.

For a direct link to report:

<http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/womens-empowerment/gender-equality-strategy-2014-2017/>

Addressing Sexual Violence in and Beyond the 'Warzone'

Conflict-related sexual violence remains pervasive across the globe, and its widespread use has been reported in Rwanda, Liberia, Northern Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, Iraq, Libya and Syria.

As world leaders prepare to gather in London for the Global Summit on Ending Sexual Violence in Conflict, it is important that they focus their attention on the multiple forms of sexual violence that occur in all conflict and conflict-

affected settings, not just on its use as a 'weapon of war'. This will be critical to ensuring that access to care and support for all survivors of sexual violence is improved and that these essential resources are delivered across state, humanitarian and development agencies, avoiding the creation of parallel and hierarchical support systems.

For a direct link to report:

<http://www.eldis.org/go/topics/resource-guides/gender/monthly-collections/sexual-violence-in-conflict&id=68387&type=Document#.U5XyynKSySp>

Maternity protection makes headway amid vast global gaps

Despite progress in maternity benefits and a trend supporting paternity leave, an ILO report finds most women around the world are still not protected at work.

Most countries have adopted maternity protection provisions since 1919, when the ILO adopted the first Maternity Protection Convention, yet at least 830 million women workers still don't have adequate protection, the International Labour Organization (ILO) said in a new report.

In its report, *Maternity and Paternity at Work: Law and practice across the world*, the ILO said 66 countries out of 185 countries and territories have committed to at least one of three maternity protection Conventions adopted in 1919, 1952 and in 2000.

Read more:

http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_242325/lang-en/index.htm

For a direct link to report:

http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_242615.pdf

Gender paradoxes of the arab spring – editor's preface

The idea for this collected volume came out of an urgent need to focus on how women are impacting and being impacted by the on-going transformations in the Arab Spring geography. The events in Tunisia, Egypt, Morocco, Libya, Algeria and across the region have been permeated by struggles related to women's rights: gender politics (legislation, constitutional articles and transitional justice) and gender-based violence. However, serious discussions about gender equity have been sidelined by louder and on-going complications of transitional democracy, constitution drafting, elections and protracted questions of transitional justice. All of these aspects of democratic transition in North Africa have gender-related dimensions, yet these dimensions have been marginalised or recuperated by political agendas. As most of the contributors in this volume point out in their essays, gender-

sensitive legislations (quotas, personal status codes, justice for female victims of state violence, etc.) have been discussed in ideological ways through the 'state feminist' discourses of the previous regimes as well as the governments that rose to power after the Arab Spring. The aim of the volume is to propose new lenses for thinking about gender, given the contemporary context, to provide a theoretical understanding of events that have occurred to women, and to make sense of the gender-political debates since the Arab Spring. The authors of this volume have tracked, measured and theorised women's involvement in protest, debates about citizenship, constitution-writing and electoralism throughout the historic events of 2011–13 across North Africa.

Read more:

http://www.wunrn.com/news/2014/05_14/05_12/051214_gender2.htm

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