



**The Middle East & North Africa
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The MENA Gender and Development eBrief receives material from various sources for its publication. Should you wish to refer to these sources/ sites directly, the list includes publications from: AVIVA, www.aviva.org, AWID: www.awid.org, Democracy Digest: www.freedomhouse.org, Development Gateway: www.developmentgateway.org, Dignity: www.dignity.org, e-Civics: www.civics.org, Eldis: www.eldis.org, ESCWA: www.escwa.org.lb, GDB: www.developmentex.com, Global Knowledge Partnership:

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NEWS & ARTICLES

GENDER ACTIVISM

On the "Makramah" of the naturalisation decree number 10214: What about the rights of Lebanese women to transmit nationality?



My Nationality is a Right for Me and My Family Campaign noted that the new naturalisation decree number 10214 signed by the President of the Republic and the Prime Minister was finally made public by the Assafir newspaper following numerous rumors on this matter echoed by the media.

Rather than dwelling to no avail on the why and how was such a decree issued or on the identity of those who benefited from it as well as the background and interests involved, My Nationality is a Right for Me and My Family Campaign is

ethically compelled to underline a number of conclusions on this matter:

1. This decree was in now way surprising given very frequent precedents of arbitrary and non transparent practices by decision makers in Lebanon and to which, alas, citizens, have become accustomed;
2. It is indeed shameful for the state, and notably for its two highest authorities, to grant the Lebanese nationality to foreigners, and ironically to women and men and their families, when it is denying this right to Lebanese women and their families whilst citing poorly convincing excuses;
- 3) This decree reveals the state's total disregard vis a vis its women citizens and their rights and highlights the state's false claims of being keen on upholding the rule of law and ensuring citizen's rights and equality.
- 4) What is most incomprehensible is the timing of this decree as the country is going through the most uncertain and dangerous period and when the political elite is unable to provide the minimum level of safety, well being and livelihood to its citizens and is also unable to nominate a new government to take on such responsibilities.

We conclude by saying that the release of this decree further reinforces our conviction with regards to a need for a radical change in the practice of governance in Lebanon and for embracing full and inclusive citizenship as the only entry point towards building a new state that is mindful of Citizen's rights and social justice and as an alternative to the present confederation of religious groups. To read more, follow the link:

<http://crtida.org.lb/node/14681>

Lebanon, Engaging Men to Reduce VAW

The ABAAD Men Center in Lebanon is a safe space where men can come and learn how to improve the quality of their lives and the lives of their loved ones. Trained professionals are there to work with respect, anonymity, and confidentiality. The Center is opened for any men on Lebanese territory to get confidential and free services. The Men Center envisions couples, families, and societies free from all forms of violence where resilient women and men live equally with dignity, responsibility, and care. To view more of ABAAD space, follow the link

http://www.abaadmena.org/index.php?p=our_videos_sub&s=239



Statement about the Abduction and killing of Women In Syria

We condemn in the strongest terms the human rights violations that were inflicted on the Syrian civilians in the villages of Lattakia countryside carried out by anti-Syrian regime armed groups.

Reports from that area reviled the exposition of women to all forms of human violations against hundred women including murder, torture, rape and abduction. These practices blatantly represent an explicit violation of the international humanitarian law particularly Article 3 common in all Geneva Conventions which defines the minimum standards that parties participating in non-international armed conflicts must respect specifically with regards to the protection of civilians not involved in hostilities and treating them humanely without any adverse discrimination based on race, color, belief or any other criterion. The following practices shall be prohibited at all times and places:

1. Assaults on public life and physical safety including murder, cruel treatment and torture.
2. Hostage-taking.
3. Insulting personal dignity.

Besides, targeting women is not only a violation of humanitarian law, but also of the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women which the General Assembly of the United Nations has adopted in 1993 in addition to the Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Situations of Emergency and Armed Conflicts issued by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1974. The incidents of violations against the rights of women in this gruesome way inside Lattakia villages by groups opposed to the regime are just an added suffering to the Syrian women who were exposed to all types of violations by the regime's forces.

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3. Insulting personal dignity.

Therefore, opposition parties' violations of Syrian women and civilians' rights is just a continuation of the regime's violence against the Syrian people's aspirations for freedom and human dignity. We, in the Syrian Women Forum for Peace, condemn all human rights violations against women, documented within a report we published recently, by the regime, opposition and any other party.

As we condemn these inhumane practices against the Syrian women, we urge all national forces and women organizations in Syria to denounce such practices without being justified as a reaction to the regime's violence and we stress the necessity to call for and promote protection of civilians especially women and children regardless of their political affiliations by all parties of the conflict. To read more about this statement in other languages follow the link http://www.wunrn.com/pdf/syria_kidnapping.pdf

Women cry foul after 112 people get citizenship in Lebanon

Women's rights advocates cried foul Friday after a local newspaper published a copy of a presidential decree granting Lebanese citizenship to 112 foreigners.

The individuals named in the decree hail from France, Italy, Australia, Germany, Holland, Canada, the United States, Jordan

and several other countries. The decree sparked outrage, particularly from Lebanese women barred by law from passing their citizenship to their foreign spouses and children. Decree 10214 was issued in March and first came to light several months ago in a report by Al-Jadeed television, but the text itself never surfaced and could not be found in the Official Gazette. Observers believe that it was



not published because of a legal interpretation that holds publishing it isn't obligatory, because it involved a limited number of people, implying it was not of public concern. Caretaker Interior Minister Marwan Charbel, speaking to LBCD, confirmed the decree's existence and said there were individuals who deserved to receive Lebanese citizenship. Some of the naturalized Lebanese appeared to be members of the clergy or Jordanian royalty, and local press reports indicate others were relatives of high-ranking Lebanese officials. The Individual Initiative for Human Rights called the decision a "scandal" and a "humiliation" for Lebanese women. The Collective for Research and Training on Development, which has been actively pushing for women's full citizenship rights with the Arab Women's Right to Nationality campaign, called the decree and lack of transparency surrounding it "shameful." "This decree clearly reveals Lebanese officials' disregard for Lebanese women and their rights, as well as the falseness of their claims to uphold a state based on citizenship, rights and the law," a statement issued by the group read. "It's particularly shocking that officials took a step such as this at a time when the country and its citizens are in free fall, while the current political class is unable to provide even minimum security and acceptable living conditions for the sons and daughters of this country." Lina Abou Habib, an organizer of the CRTDA campaign, slammed President Michel

Sleiman and Prime Minister Najib Mikati for signing off on the decree, adding that she had lost any faith she had left in the Lebanese state. “Do the prime minister and the president have any idea about the humiliation of these families on a daily basis?” she said. “They can’t work, go to public school, access health care ... Do they have any idea, because they decide to go and give the Lebanese nationality as a gift to wealthy people? I am outraged, absolutely outraged.” Abou Habib was similarly unimpressed with the



excuses offered by some legal experts for not publishing the decree in the Gazette, adding that if not for the leaks to the press, no one would have known. A decree issued in 1994 that granted citizenship to about 80,000 foreigners was published. “They can easily hide behind legal technicalities and maybe it is a legal justification, but nevertheless it’s really a coincidence that it also suits the purpose of hiding something that actually is wrong, is morally wrong,” she said. “They have no justification other than saying ‘we can do it.’ To read more follow the link: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2013/Sep-21/232045-women-cry-foul-after-112-people-get-citizenship.ashx#ixzz2fnxe399V>

Promoting micro-credits for women in South Lebanon

The National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW) has been actively working to promote women economic empowerment in rural areas of Lebanon.

On Tuesday September 17th 2013, the National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW) team in cooperation with a representative from FransaBank presented the "Najah " or "success" loan aiming at helping women in establishing their own business at Iqleem al Tuffah federation of municipalities .

The event assembled more than 30 women from South Lebanon. The beneficiaries showed an interest in getting micro-credits and loans such as Kafalat.

This activity comes in line within the Najah loan project launched by NCLW on 2011. This project was made possible after the decision issued by the Council of the Central Bank of Lebanon which granted NCLW permission to issue small loans through banks (micro credits). As such, NCLW has widened the scope of its economic empowerment activities, especially after succeeding in previous projects to help women through the WEPASS project and the National Campaign to amend provisions in social and economic legislation that discriminates against women "Wayn Baadna". Through those programs women in Lebanon can be trained through capacity building, get small loans, know their rights, and benefit from experts advises to succeed in their new initiatives. To know more about this initiative, follow the link <http://nclw.org.lb/ActivityDetail/94>

Saudi women call new day of defiance against driving ban

Saudi women activists have called for a new day of defiance next month of the longstanding ban on women driving in the ultra-conservative kingdom.

An online petition entitled "Oct 26th, driving for women" had on Sunday gathered more than 5,800 signatories, as activists try again to push authorities to end the unique ban.

"I will drive on October 26," activist Nasima al-Sada told AFP on Sunday, saying that some 20 women are going to take part in the campaign in the kingdom's Eastern Province.



"Many women are enthusiastic about learning to drive, or to teach other" women how to drive, she said, as many Saudi women have obtained abroad the driving licences they are denied in their homeland.

"There is not a single text in the Sharia Islamic law that prevents us (from driving). Any pretexts used to do that are based on inherited customs," said the online petition.

"Just as revered women (at the time of the prophet) rode horses and camels, it is our right to drive cars -- the mode of our modern age, unless you want us to go back to mules and horses," the petition said.

The last day of of defiance against the ban was on June, 17 2011, when few women answered a call to drive, with some stopped by police and forced to sign a pledge not to take to the wheel again.

"I can't drive because of the pledge I signed," said Najla al-Hariri, who took part in the protest in 2011, expressing strong support for the new campaign.

In addition to the driving ban, Saudi Arabia imposes other major restrictions on women, including a requirement to cover from head to toe when in public.

The 2011 call, which spread through Facebook and Twitter, was the largest mass action since November 1990, when 47 Saudi women were arrested and severely punished after demonstrating in cars. To read the entire article follow the link :

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2013/Sep-22/232141-saudi-women-call-new-day-of-defiance-against-driving-ban.ashx#ixzz2foH3mMZn>

GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

Egypt's Journalists, Still Under Siege

LOOKED on, astonished, as a man a few yards away told protesters that he would slaughter me. He spoke resolutely and enthusiastically, and seemed utterly willing to carry out his promise. The man, a leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, stood among thousands of stick-waving supporters, their beards long and their faces angry, as they chanted "God is great"

and “Down with infidels.” They watched him make the familiar and menacing gesture of tracing his finger across his throat as he said, “We will slaughter Ibrahim Essa.”

This was in March. I was in a car trying to get to the Egyptian Media Production City, a compound a half-hour’s drive west from downtown Cairo that houses many television studios, to record my daily TV program, which was critical of the Brotherhood and its political leader, President Mohamed Morsi. The group had surrounded the compound and locked its gates. They had set up tents at the front and communal toilets outside the walls. I had gotten used to threats during the long rule of President Hosni Mubarak, which dragged me before its courts about 70 times and sentenced me to prison on four occasions. But the Morsi era was different. Under Mr. Mubarak, I was threatened only with prison; under Mr. Morsi, my life was in danger.

The Morsi supporters’ siege of the Media City compound was airtight. They hung up my picture, alongside that of other commentators critical of Mr. Morsi, with nooses drawn around our necks so that we looked like wanted criminals from old Westerns. Meanwhile, they searched all those who came in and out of the studios, destroying cars and attacking some of the journalists and Morsi opponents who’d had the bad luck of being scheduled for a TV appearance.

Later, a reformist judge who looks somewhat like me told me that, after leaving a TV show where he had been a guest, some of the Brothers mistook him for me. The judge screamed that he wasn’t Ibrahim Essa, and proved it by showing them his belt. (I’ve become well known for wearing suspenders, so much so that the Brothers mockingly call me Ibrahim Abu-Suspenders.) As the judge told the story, he blinked back tears, still reeling from the fear and tension.

The night of the siege, we journalists drove down abandoned back roads in the desert to reach the studio, driving past walls of barbed wire that brought to mind images of the United States-Mexico border. My co-workers at the TV show were already heroic for coming to work despite the pressures of the siege, the threats and the constant fear, and on top of it all they had to ensure my security and daily survival.

Even today, nearly two months after a popular revolution removed Mr. Morsi in July, Media City remains under threat by the Brothers, who accuse the media of being the prime instigators of the revolt against Mr. Morsi and the Brotherhood. The power of reporters and commentators to lead a revolution would come as a surprise to my colleagues, whose open secret is a constant despair at being unable to change much of anything.

Threats, sieges and targeting of journalists are among the Brothers’ favorite tactics, and they continue to bide their time with such activities, despite the ouster of Mr. Morsi and the violent crackdown on the Brotherhood.

Just last week, the sound of bullets was so loud and close that we all rushed into the lobby of the hotel near the Media Production City. Since the imposition of an emergency curfew following the Brotherhood’s attacks on churches, journalists, government bureaucrats and ordinary citizens, the hotel has become a twin of Baghdad’s famous Rashid Hotel during the Iraq war: a place of gathering and shelter for journalists. When the bullets died down, we made sure no one had been hurt.

On my first night at the hotel, a motorcycle carrying three men tried to crash into the lobby. They fired shots into the hotel, and a police chase ensued. When two of the three

were captured, they said that they had just been lost in the desert and confused, a funny excuse for something that was not funny at all.

Remaining in the hotel with other television journalists, also living under death threats, was terribly depressing. For safety's sake, I asked a police officer to escort me back to Media City, even though my house is only 10 minutes from the compound. As the siren of the police car driving ahead of me blared its way through the curfew and I sat next to a police officer in a bulletproof vest holding an automatic rifle, I recalled the day in 1992 when I opened the door to my apartment and found an officer from the Interior Ministry, warning me that I had appeared on a militant group's list of assassination targets because of my criticism of Islamists.

At the time, I was writing against the rising tide of terrorism and extremism during a difficult phase in Egypt's history. I was also single. Looking around my small, sparsely furnished apartment in obvious distaste, the officer asked me if I wanted a moving guard (who would accompany me everywhere I went) or a fixed guard (who would just stand outside my home or workplace). I told him that I didn't own a car, and asked whether the officer would just ride the subway or the public bus with me. The officer was fed up with me and decided I would get a fixed guard.

The guard's job was to accompany me as I crossed the street, then stand by my side as I negotiated with taxi drivers to take me to work. Once I'd found my ride for the day, he would wave, then go back to his post outside my apartment building. Later, when I learned more about confessions by members of the group that had targeted me, I learned that they knew where I lived, that the sister of one of the men lived nearby, and that I had been under threat wherever I went. During this period, I learned to be brave in the face of death, and since then, I have not feared anything else. Since the start of my career, I have faced accusations of blasphemy and death threats. I have been fired; seen publications I've edited get shut down; and watched as copies of my novel "Assassination of the Big Man" were seized.

Last week, as I waited for the police car to escort me to the studio and for the fully armed officer next to me to shield me from a potential attack, I found history repeating itself on a grander, more dangerous scale. It's as if terrorism will never end, and my fate is to face death because of what I write and what I say. Sometimes, when I set out for work and say goodbye to my wife and children, I feel like a soldier waving to his family from a train as he heads toward battle.

Ibrahim Essa is co-founder and editor in chief of Al Tahrir, a daily newspaper founded in 2011, and the author, most recently, of the novel "Our Master." This essay was translated by Ghenwa Hayek from the Arabic. To read the entire article follow the link <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/27/opinion/egypts-journalists-still-under-siege.h...>

8-year-old child dies at hands of 40-year-old husband on wedding night in Yemen

An eight-year-old child bride has died in Yemen of internal bleeding sustained during her wedding night after being forced to marry a man 5 times her age, activists have claimed. The girl, identified only as Rawan, died in the tribal area of Hardh in northwestern Yemen, which borders Saudi Arabia.

Activists are now calling for the groom, who is believed to be around 40 years old, and her family to be arrested so they can face justice in the courts.

They say arrests would help put a stop to the practice of marrying young girls to older men in the impoverished region.

The practice of marrying young girls is widespread in Yemen and has attracted the attention of international rights groups seeking to pressure the government to outlaw child marriages.

Yemen's gripping poverty plays a role in hindering efforts to stamp out the practice, as poor families find themselves unable to say no to 'bride-prices' that can be hundreds of dollars for their daughters. More than a quarter of Yemen's females marry before age 15, according to a report in 2010 by the Social Affairs Ministry.



Tribal custom also plays a role, including the belief that a young bride can be shaped into an obedient wife, bear more children and be kept away from temptation.

In September 2010, a 12-year-old Yemeni child-bride died after struggling for three days in labour to give birth, a local human rights organisation said.

Yemen once set 15 as the minimum age for marriage, but parliament annulled that law in the 1990s, saying parents should decide when a daughter marries. To read more about this issue follow the link <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2415871/Yemeni-child-bride-8-dies-internal-injuries-night-forced-marriage-groom-40.html>

... and Egyptian TV series spotlights underage marriage

The MBC series, which began at the start of Ramadan, includes some realistic and shocking scenes, said Cairo University psychology professor and family relations consultant Waliyuddine Mukhtar.

It condemns the "reactionary ideas prevalent in many societies that treat females as mere commodities to be bought and sold", he told Al-Shorfa.

The practice of underage marriage is widespread in Upper Egypt and in other parts of the country, he said.

In some cases, young girls are temporarily married to wealthy older men or foreigners for a designated period of time, particularly during the summer vacation.



The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) defines child marriage as a formal marriage or informal union that takes place before the age of 18. According to a 2010 UNICEF report, 18% of the female population in the Middle East and Africa are married before this age.

Underage marriage has spread "under the guise of religion" in Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan, where it is misrepresented as an application of sharia, Mukhtar said.

Poverty and illiteracy also contribute significantly to its spread, he said.

Egypt's Ministry of Family and Population put the number of underage marriage cases in 2011 at 150,000, or 11% of all marriages in Egypt that year, Mukhtar said.

"Al-Qasirat" star Salah al-Saadani told the Middle East News Agency that the series' boldness in confronting the issue compelled him to accept the role, though he knew some might find its scenes and events shocking.

What most interested him was the realistic portrayal of the issue, he said, explaining that the series is set in an Egyptian village where a wealthy man exploits poor families in order to marry their daughters.

"Underage marriage is illegal and a crime against humanity that is being committed in the name of sharia," said Al-Azhar University sharia and law professor Sheikh Nayef Abd Rabbu, who serves as an advisor at the Ministry of Social Solidarity.

"Egyptian law, which stems from sharia, prohibits the marriage of girls under the age of 18," he said.

There is a common belief that Islam legalises child marriage, though this is an explicit distortion of religious texts and the hadith, as it is actually old customs and traditions that drive these marriages, Abd Rabbu said.

"Islam stipulates safeguarding the rights of women in marriage," he said. "In the case of minors, their rights in marriage are slim to non-existent. Sharia legislators agree that a marriage must be entered into with an intention of continuance, and that it not be a temporary contract, as it is in many of these cases."

Under Egyptian law, which prohibits exploiting children in any form, forcing a girl into marriage is a punishable offense, said Fayez Shukr of the Egyptian Ministry of Justice's department of legislative studies and research.

Additionally, he told Al-Shorfa, under a 2008 child law, "no marriage contract shall be authenticated if either party has yet to attain the full age of 18 years".

Dr. Fahim Farhan, a gynaecologist and obstetrician, said he follows the television series with interest.

It is one of the "most important works shedding light on this blight in Arab societies, and in Egypt in particular", he said.

Underage marriage exposes girls to numerous health and psychological problems, including infertility, miscarriage, preeclampsia, anaemia and premature childbirth, he said, noting that there is a rising incidence of death among these girls and their babies.

"Al-Qasirat" is directed by Magdi Abu Emera, written by Samah el-Hariri and stars al-Saadani, Dalia al-Buhairi, Yasser Galal, Menna Arafa, Malak Ahmed Zaher and May al-Gheiti. To read more follow the link

http://al-shorfa.com/en_GB/articles/meii/features/2013/07/30/feature-02

Woman In Sudan Refuses To Wear Hijab, Faces Flogging

Sudanese Amira Osman Hamed speaks with an AFP journalist during an interview in Khartoum on Sept. 8, 2013. She faces a possible whipping if convicted at a trial which could

come on Sept. 19. Under Sudanese law her hair -- and that of all women -- is supposed to be covered with a "hijab" but Hamed, 35, refuses. (Ashraf Shazly / AFP / Getty Images)

Amira Osman Hamed, a Sudanese woman, will be tried on Sept. 19 for refusing to cover her hair with a hijab, a headscarf worn by Muslim women. If convicted, the 35-year-old could be punished by flogging, according to the Agence France-Presse.

After being detained by police for refusing to wear a hijab on Aug. 27, she says she is willing to face the flogging in order to protest the law that requires her to cover her hair.

This isn't the first time Hamed's dress has provoked the ire of Sudanese authorities. In 2002, she was arrested for wearing trousers. Thanks to the help of a lawyer, she was charged only with a fine in that case.

Both of Hamed's supposed crimes have been in violation of Article 152 of the Sudanese Penal Code of 1991, which states, "Whoever does in a public place an indecent act or an act contrary to public morals or wears an obscene outfit or contrary to public morals or causing an annoyance to public feelings shall be punished with flogging which may not exceed 40 lashes or with fine or with both."

"They want us to be like Taliban women," Hamed said in an interview with the AFP, describing the restrictive nature of the law.

She's not the only one to deem the law vastly unfair. According to Tawanda Hondora, deputy director of Amnesty International's Africa program, "Women are routinely arrested, detained, tried and then, on conviction, flogged simply because a police officer disapproves of their clothing" under the enforcement of Article 152.

In 2009, Amnesty International publicly called on the Sudanese government to repeal the ordinance. The group's statement was made amid the trial of journalist Lubna Ahmed al-Hussein, who was convicted for wearing trousers in public, according to Al-Jazeera news. She was released when the Sudanese Journalist Union paid her \$200 fine. Afterward she said, "I am not happy. I told all my friends and family not to pay the fine." Like Hamed, al-Hussein had wanted to face the full punishment to protest the ordinance.

These cases are symptomatic of Sudan's harsh legal system, which is governed partially by Islamic Sharia law, allowing for brutally painful punishments that are only sporadically put into practice.

According to a Guardian article from 2012, this system "allows the government to apply punishment harshly (but inconsistently) whenever it feels the need."



Internationally, Sudan's use of punishment by flogging is banned by the Organization of African Unity's Charter on Human Rights, which prevents "cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment."

Abdullah Antepli, a Muslim chaplain at Duke University and a blogger for The Huffington Post, said he considers Hamed's criminal charges and potential punishment to be a "primitive implementation" of Sharia law which is not in line with the spirit of Islam. He also

notes that Article 152 is not commonly implemented and that many Sudanese women do not even wear a hijab.

Antepli also said he finds Mira's case to be characteristic less of Sharia law than of a Sudanese autocratic society, where "law is only applied to the poor and most vulnerable." He believes that Mira's criminal charges have "little to do with religious interpretation and a lot more to do with lack of civil liberties in society," and he considers it a "gross violation of human rights and disrespect of human dignity" to force women to wear a hijab. That said, he is hopeful that Mira's case will bring about broader conversation about these sorts of laws, which he does not believe reflect the Quranic spirit that teaches "no coercion in religion." To read the article follow the link

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/09/10/woman-sudan-hijab-flogging_n_3894950.html#slide=794482

GENDER & HUMAN RIGHTS

The New Constitution & The Headscarf - Selective Freedom in Turkey?

There has been much discussion in Turkey of under the new Constitution making it possible for female public servants to wear headscarves, Forum 18 News Service notes. But there has not been much discussion of the wider issues this move raises. These wider issues include other restrictions based on freedom of religion or belief imposed on those within the public

service, and the impact of the change on possible interferences by public servants in the rights of others - for example parents and school pupils.



Similarly, there has been little discussion of the right of all people to manifest their religion or belief in different ways, rather than the right of some people to manifest one religion or belief by wearing one symbol. Relatively little attention has also been paid to the contradiction of men wanting women to be able to wear the headscarf, and the same men also not taking steps to further women's participation in society and the public service. It is of the utmost importance to ensure that steps taken to advance freedoms in Turkey are not selective, picking and choosing which parts of freedoms are to be advanced and ignoring other aspects of human rights. To read the entire article, follow the link http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=1810

Nasrin Sotoudeh 'among freed political prisoners' in Iran

Iran is reported to have freed at least 11 political prisoners, including noted human rights lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh.

The eight women and three men are said to also include the reformist politician Mohsen Aminzadeh.

The move comes just days before Iran's new President Hassan Rouhani visits New York for the UN General Assembly.



In another development, Mr Rouhani described a recent letter sent to him by US President Barack Obama as "positive and constructive".

In an interview with US broadcaster NBC, he said he had full authority to negotiate a deal over Tehran's controversial uranium enrichment programme with the West. To read the entire story, follow the link <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-24151298>

Saudi Arabia's domestic violence law is a first step to changing attitudes

Earlier this year, a powerful image was circulated in Saudi Arabia. A woman with one black eye stared bleakly out. Underneath her niqabed face was written the simple phrase in Arabic: "And what is hidden is greater", a saying that translates as "the tip of the iceberg". This kicked off "No More Abuse", a campaign to highlight and tackle domestic violence in the country. There was some scepticism about the drive, backed by an official charity, but it seems that it has paid off, culminating in an historic move this week as Saudi Arabia's cabinet passed a legal ban on domestic violence and other forms of abuse against women for the first time in the kingdom's history.

The legislation makes sexual violence in the home and the workplace a punishable crime. Moreover, it provides for shelter for victims of abuse and places the onus on law enforcement agencies to follow up on reports of abuse. It is backed up by a jail sentence and hefty fines. While this is an encouraging move, there are too many ways in which it can be thwarted. Such legislation is only fruitful if backed up by the right attitudes. The law does not exist in a vacuum: the problem in this instance is that it is a forward step in a country where male guardianship is not only deep rooted in culture, but enshrined in the law.

The implementation of the law is quite obviously hamstrung by the fact that the ability to report incidents of domestic or sexual abuse is severely limited. There are overwhelming emotional challenges in the act of defying family and the unfamiliarity of calling the law into the home in a society where the private realm is sacrosanct. Ironically, it is probably expat women who will reap more benefit from the law, as they are less constrained by culture and extended family pressures.

Then there are the farcical practical limitations of say, actually reporting a father or husband (who make up 90% of abusers in the kingdom) to the police, when they are your guardian and would probably need to drive you there. There is a fundamental contradiction between trying to protect women, while also entrusting their fates unconditionally and entirely to their male guardians.



However, in general, these difficulties are not peculiar to Saudi society or even conservative cultures. It is challenging to report abuse for similar reasons anywhere in the

world. Emotional confusion, fear of reprisal, or social ostracism and the difficulty of producing proof can all conspire to sweep the problem under the carpet. In a way, the cases that are visible or reported even in the west are also, in their own way, "the tip of the iceberg". Perhaps we shouldn't fixate on the immediate practical implications of this new law. The hope should be that it will begin to change attitudes. Sometimes the value of a law is in allowing victims to recognise, acknowledge and challenge abusive behaviour. The [King Khalid Foundation document that resulted in the new legislation](#) goes into great detail about the unacknowledged levels of domestic and sexual abuse in the country, but goes further in classifying intimidation and emotional torment as abuse, and even outlines protection from abuse as integral to human and citizens' rights. The issue is not whether victims of abuse will seek redress in a court of law but that they are furnished with the tools and legal framework to recognise and identify all forms of abuse for what they really are. In a culture where so much is falsely justified by religion and custom, where so much self-repression masquerades as honour, such strong language is vital and welcome. To read more about this subject follow the link

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/aug/30/saudi-arabia-ban-domestic-violence>

RESOURCES & CALLS

BOOKS & REPORTS

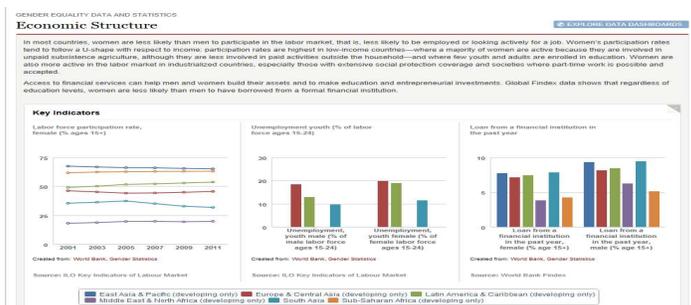
Women in National Parliaments

The data in the table below has been compiled by the Inter-Parliamentary Union on the basis of information provided by National Parliaments by 1st September 2013. 188 countries are classified by descending order of the percentage of women in the lower or single House. Comparative data on the world and regional averages as well as data concerning the two regional parliamentary assemblies elected by direct suffrage can be found on separate pages. You can use the PARLINE database to view detailed results of parliamentary elections by country. To read the latest statistic follow the link <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>

WORLD CLASSIFICATION												
Rank	Country	Lower or single House				Upper House or Senate						
		Elections	Seats*	Women	% W	Elections	Seats*	Women	% W			
1	Rwanda	9 2008	80	45	56.3%							
2	Andorra	4 2011	28	14	50.0%	9 2011	26	10	38.5%			
3	Cuba	2 2013	612	299	48.9%							
4	Sweden	9 2010	349	156	44.7%							
5	Seychelles	9 2011	32	14	43.8%							
6	Senegal	7 2012	150	64	42.7%							
7	Finland	4 2011	200	85	42.5%							
8	South Africa ¹	4 2009	400	169	42.3%	4 2009	53	17	32.1%			
9	Nicaragua	11 2011	92	37	40.2%							
10	Iceland	4 2013	63	25	39.7%							
11	Norway	9 2009	169	67	39.6%							
12	Mozambique	10 2009	250	98	39.2%							
13	Denmark	9 2011	179	70	39.1%							
14	Ecuador	2 2013	137	53	38.7%							
	Netherlands	9 2012	150	58	38.7%	5 2011	75	27	36.0%			
15	Costa Rica	2 2010	57	22	38.6%							
16	Timor-Leste	7 2012	65	25	38.5%							
17	Belgium	6 2010	150	57	38.0%	6 2010	71	29	40.8%			
18	Argentina	10 2011	257	96	37.4%	10 2011	72	28	38.9%			
19	Mexico	7 2012	500	184	36.8%	7 2012	128	42	32.8%			
20	Spain	11 2011	350	126	36.0%	11 2011	266	91	34.2%			
*	United Republic of Tanzania	10 2010	350	126	36.0%							
21	Uganda	2 2011	386	135	35.0%							
22	Angola	8 2012	220	75	34.1%							
*	The F.Y.R. of Macedonia	6 2011	123	42	34.1%							
23	Grenada	2 2013	15	5	33.3%	3 2013	13	2	15.4%			
24	Nepal	4 2008	594	197	33.2%							
*	Serbia	5 2012	250	83	33.2%							
25	Germany	9 2009	620	204	32.9%	N.A.	69	19	27.5%			
26	New Zealand	11 2011	121	39	32.2%							
*	Slovenia	12 2011	80	29	32.2%	11 2012	40	3	7.5%			

Gender Equality Data & Statistics - World Bank

The indicators below relate to five dimensions of gender equality – economic structures and access to resources; education; health and related services; public life and decision-making; and human rights of women and girl children. The data on these indicators come from the World Development Indicators and



additional sources.

Some highlights:

- See whether laws and institutions formally treat women (unmarried and married) differently than men in accessing institutions, using property, getting a job, providing incentives to work, and going to court (available under economic structures and public life of women), using data from the Women, Business, and the Law Database.
- Explore health indicators, such as use of antenatal care, by wealth quintile, from Demographic and Health Surveys and Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS).
 - Use data on women's level of acceptance of violence, available from Demographic and Health Surveys.

To access all the statistics follow the link

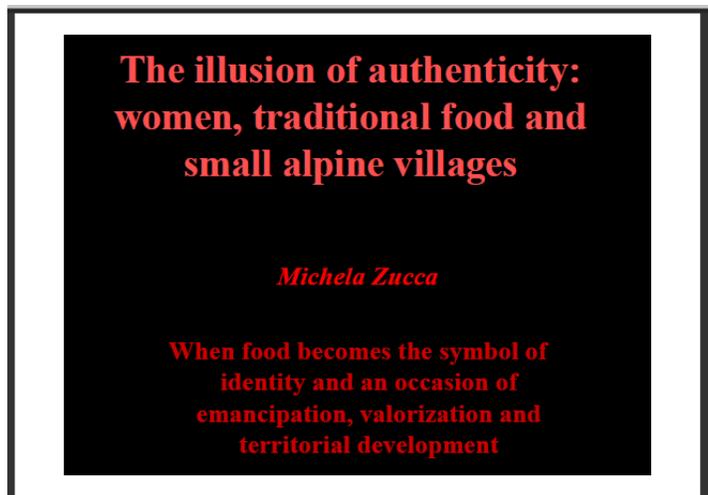
<http://datatopics.worldbank.org/gender/thematic-data#void>

Women and food: production of typical food and sustainable development in rural areas

When women more involved in production of quality food, it is an anthropological characteristic that can lead to new ways of sustainable development and economic growth. When food becomes the symbol of identity and sustainability, it is an occasion of emancipation, valorization, and territorial development.

The presentation is prepared by Michela Zucca. Michela Zucca is an Italian-European Anthropologist, has

done field work in South America, among Amazonas shamans, in Peru and Colombia. She is specialised in popular culture, gender studies, analysis of imaginary. She has worked on sustainable development in rural marginal areas, most of all Alpine and mountains regions, training, cultural identity and evaluation of territory. She is consultant in the field of training, EU projects, sustainable development for administrations, municipalities, regions, public and private bodies, training centres. She founded the International Network of Mountain Women. At the Centre of Alpine Ecology in Trento (Italy), she introduced study and practice of Human Ecology and Identity Economy. She directed the European projects Recite II - Learning Sustainability, Interreg III C South "Network of Sustainable Villages". The projects involved Trentino (Italy), Lapland (Finland), Alentejo (Portugal), Arad (Romania), and Lomza (Poland). She directed the master course in regional development for the Italian Minister of Environment. Michela Zucca is now working on a research project about mountain school with Italian Ministry of Public Education. She keeps seminars in Anthropology at the Italian Swiss University. To read the presentation follow the link http://www.wunrn.com/news/2013/09_13/09_02/090213_women3.htm



Changing gender roles among refugees in Lebanon

The conflict in Syria has created a humanitarian crisis, with almost two million people having fled to neighbouring countries in the hope of escaping the violence. Thousands of Syrian refugees continue to enter Lebanon each week, putting increasing pressure on the ability of host communities and aid agencies to provide them with support. The situation has created intense levels of stress for refugees, as in many cases they are forced to take on new responsibilities at odds with their traditional gendered social roles.

In order to understand these changing roles, Oxfam and the ABAAD-Resource Centre for Gender Equality conducted a gender situation and vulnerability assessment among Syrian refugees and Palestinian refugees from Syria now living in Lebanon. The findings are presented in this report, which aims to contribute to an improved understanding of the gendered impact of the Syrian conflict and subsequent displacement on refugees now in Lebanon. The report concludes with detailed recommendations for development and humanitarian practitioners and donor agencies, to help them design and implement gender-sensitive programming that addresses these shifting gender roles and helps to minimize stress and tensions among refugee populations (at individual, household and community levels) and between refugee and host communities. To access the report follow the link http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/shifting-sands-changing-gender-roles-among-refugees-in-lebanon-300408?cid=rdt_shiftingsands

JOINT RESEARCH REPORT SEPTEMBER 2013

SHIFTING SANDS

Changing gender roles among refugees in Lebanon



A family at a temporary shelter in an abandoned shipping centre, Tripoli, May 2013. Oxfam / Sam Farley

ROHILA EL MASRI
ABAAD-RESOURCE CENTER FOR GENDER EQUALITY
CLAIRE HARVEY and ROSA GARWOOD
OXFAM GB

The conflict in Syria has created a humanitarian crisis, with almost two million people having fled to neighbouring countries in the hope of escaping the violence. Thousands of Syrian refugees continue to enter Lebanon each week, putting increasing pressure on the ability of host communities and aid agencies to provide them with support. The situation has created intense levels of stress for refugees, as in many cases they are forced to take on new responsibilities at odds with their traditional gendered social roles. In order to understand these changing roles, Oxfam and the ABAAD-Resource Centre for Gender Equality conducted a gender situation and vulnerability assessment among Syrian refugees and Palestinian refugees from Syria now living in Lebanon. The findings are presented in this report, which aims to contribute to an improved understanding of the gendered impact of the Syrian conflict and subsequent displacement on refugees now in Lebanon. The report concludes with detailed recommendations for development and humanitarian practitioners and donor agencies, to help them design and implement gender-sensitive programming that addresses these shifting gender roles and helps to minimize stress and tensions among refugee populations (at individual, household and community levels) and between refugees and host communities.

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