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NEWS & ARTICLES

GENDER ACTIVISM

Saudi women strive to bring male guardians to a Twitter end



Women in Saudi Arabia are riding a “Twitter wave” of activism that they hope will lead to the abolition of a legal guardianship system that gives men authority over their lives.

There has been an “explosion of advocacy” on Twitter over the past two years, say the authors of a report – the first of its kind produced by Saudi women – documenting how women in the kingdom have been fighting for their rights since 1990.

The move to social media has been spearheaded by younger women who, emboldened by the Arab spring and the crown prince’s vision for the country, have embraced the medium as an increasingly important tool for change.

“Twitter exploded in 2016, mostly through anonymously created accounts,” said Monera al Nahedh, an independent researcher and consultant who co-authored the report, published by the Center for Women’s Global Leadership at Rutgers University.

“Twitter is doing a great deal to create awareness about women ... and we know that our leaders monitor Twitter for political activities, and hear the voices of people.”

Read more:

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2018/mar/28/saudi-arabia-women-strive-to-bring-male-guardians-to-a-twitter-end>

Record 111 female Parliament candidates



As registration for the elections closed just days before International Women’s Day, Lebanon had the largest number of women register as candidates in its history. Of the 976 candidates registered to run in the upcoming May 6 elections, a record number of 111 were women. EU Ambassador to Lebanon Christina Lassen took to Twitter to voice her excitement saying, “We are crossing fingers for the 111 female candidates in the parliamentary elections! Break the glass ceiling!”?

Of the LL7,808,000,000 (\$5,153,280) in registration fees collected by the state Treasury, female candidates contributed LL896,000,000 (\$591,360).

Acting U.N. Special Coordinator for Lebanon Pernille Dahler Kardel said she was “very pleased to see 111 women submitted their candidacies compared to 12 women in 2009.”

British Ambassador Hugo Shorter said: “It’s great to see a large number of women candidates for the upcoming parliamentary elections. I believe this is a new national record. This is a real momentum for change. But it is only the start: I hope we will see a record number of women parliamentarians two months from now. Political leaders need to get on the right side of history by putting strong female candidates on their lists and backing them to win.”

Read more:

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2018/Mar-08/440683-record-111-female-parliament-candidates.ashx>

Hundreds march for gender equality in Tunis



Hundreds of women protested in Tunis on Saturday to demand equal inheritance rights as men, which is not the norm across the Arab region.

The demonstrators - mostly women but also some men - carried signs reading "in a civil state I take exactly what you take," a nod to scrapping Islamic inheritance laws that typically give men double the amount.

Compared to other Arab countries, Tunisia grants women more rights.

In August, Tunisia's President Beji Caïd Essad established a committee to advance women's rights.

Last year, Muslim women were permitted to marry non-Muslim men for the first time in Tunisia. Legislators also passed a comprehensive violence against women law that included measures such as criminalizing sexual harassment.

However, men and women are not entitled to equal inheritance in Tunisia, an issue that protesters demanded on Saturday be changed.

"It is true that Tunisian women have more rights compared to other Arab women but we want to be compared with European women," Kaouther Boulila, an activist, told Reuters.

Read more:

<https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2018/3/10/hundreds-march-for-gender-equality-in-tunis>

Arab women refuse to be silenced after 'animals are kind, except women' sexist hashtag



A new Arabic hashtag has created a new wave of outrage at the crisis of misogyny in the region.

The hashtag, which translates to "all animals are kind except women" has been the subject of anger among females, but also saw men a large agreeing with it, and even blaming women for the hashtag.

While it is not uncommon for such misogynistic hashtags to appear in the Arab Twittersphere, they are taken seriously by women, who are quick to hit back at them because rather than it being a joke, or an attention seeking mechanism, these hashtags reflect a reality that Arab women are forced to live under.

A recent report showed that unemployment among women in the Middle East is twice that of men, pointing to a belief among some that a woman's place is in the home.

About 16 percent of women in Arab states are unemployed, compared to a global average of six percent, the UN's International Labour Organisation (ILO) said.

"The incentive for women to work in the Middle East is not there," said Emanuela Pozzan, a gender specialist with the ILO, pointing to poor maternity provisions and costly childcare."

Read more:

<https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/blog/2018/3/31/animals-are-kind-except-women-urges-sexist-arabic-hashtag>

45 European MPs Call on EU Foreign Policy Chief to Support Iranian Women's Anti-Compulsory-Hijab Protest

Forty-five members of the European Parliament (MEPs) have sent an open letter to EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini urging her to call on Iranian officials to immediately release the women who have been arrested for participating in the recent anti-compulsory-hijab protests in Iran.

"We now ask you to publicly support the women who have been arrested by the Iranian authorities, by joining us in calling on Iranian officials to immediately and unconditionally release these women," said the letter signed by the MEPs that was sent by the office of Dutch MEP Marietje Schaake on February 28, 2018.

Mogherini represented the EU in the negotiations between Iran and the UN Security Council members known as the P5+1 (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States; plus Germany) from 2014-15. A final agreement was reached between the parties in July 2015 and since then various EU delegations have traveled to Iran.

"Urging the Iranian authorities to respect human rights is not analogous to demonizing Iran," said Hadi Ghaemi, the executive director of the Center for Human Rights in Iran (CHRI). "When countries with leverage on Iran are silent on the issue, they are not only failing the Iranian people, they are endangering European citizens who travel to Iran."

"Marietje Schaake and the other 44 MEPs are holding the torch by letting Iran know that business cannot carry on as usual while human rights are sidelined in the country," he added.

Read more:

<https://www.iranhumanrights.org/2018/02/45-european-mps-call-on-eu-foreign-policy-chief-to-support-iranian-womens-anti-compulsory-hijab-protest/>

GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

Systematic sexual abuse perpetrated in Syria



Rape, sexual abuse and other kinds of gender-based violence form a widespread component of modern asymmetrical warfare. The belligerents often employ systematic rape, mostly against women and girls, as a weapon of war to force the targeted community into submission.

Modern history is replete with systematic sexual abuse against women and girls, including rape, employed not only to dismantle a dissenting community's will to fight but also towards the overall goal of total genocide. This was the case during conflicts in Bosnia, Rwanda, Kashmir, and now Syria.

The war in Syria recently entered its eighth year. According to some reports, more than half-a-million Syrians have been killed throughout the course of the conflict, while millions remain displaced, some internally and others as refugees in neighboring countries.

As the Assad regime, with the support of Russia and Iran, crawls back into regaining control of territories from a plethora of armed groups, many other regional and international states are scrambling to secure their diverse interests in the country.

Read more:

<https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/indepth/2018/3/27/systematic-sexual-abuse-perpetrated-in-syria>

Scores arrested as Turkish police break up women's rallies



Women's rights rallies and protests against the military campaign in Syria resulted in scuffles with police across Turkey. Tear gas was deployed and at least 15 people were arrested in Ankara.

On Sunday, women took to the streets in cities throughout the country, including Ankara and Istanbul, to rally for their rights ahead of International Women's Day. The demonstrations were spearheaded by NGO Ankara Women's Platform and held under the motto: "We fight against war, state of emergency [OHAL], sexism, for our identity and our freedom."

The movement also blames the government for neglecting the rights of women and children, legitimizing male abuse, and fanning the violence inside and outside the country with military operations against Kurds. Such operations include an ongoing army offensive in the Kurdish-controlled enclave of Afrin in Syria, according to local media, citing the text of the platform.

As demonstrators in Ankara started marching in the Cankaya municipality, officers reportedly told them that they were prohibited to hold a rally there. Police deployed tear gas against the protesters after they refused to disperse, AFP reported.

Read more:

<https://www.rt.com/news/420539-turkey-women-march-protest-afrin/>

Women's day in Iran: dancing not allowed



Iran's top legal authority wants to prosecute organisers of a party arranged by Tehran City Hall commemorating Iranian Women's Day, the semi-official ISNA news agency reported.

A video of Tuesday's event, during which young girls danced in front of a mixed audience in the Iranian capital, was widely broadcast on social media networks and criticised by conservatives.

It shows a group of girls dressed in tight jeans and a type of tutu performing a choreographed dance set to music played by a traditional orchestra and a choir composed mostly of women.

Among the men in attendance at the event largely dominated by women wearing the all-encompassing black chador was Tehran's reformist mayor, Mohammad Ali Najafi.

According to ISNA, Iran's attorney general Mohammad Jafar Montazeri felt the event had included "acts against public morality" and Islamic tradition.

Montazeri ordered Tehran's prosecutor to "quickly examine the issue and launch legal proceedings against those responsible".

Islamic law in Iran prohibits public dancing. Similarly, women are forbidden from singing in front of men if their voices are not covered by male voices.

Read more:

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/afp/article-5474285/Womens-day-Iran-dancing-not-allowed.html>

Women's 'Conscience Convoy' masses on Syria border



Thousands of women from around the globe amassed on a Turkish city located on the Syrian border in a united call for the release of all women subjected to brutal conditions in Syria's jails.

The call came on Thursday, International Women's Day, as the Conscience Convoy For The Women arrived in Hatay amid a flurry of flags, banners and a chorus of chants, following its two-day journey which began in Istanbul.

Around 10,000 women from 55 different countries mobilised to draw attention to the atrocities faced by female prisoners who usually have no idea why they have been arrested. Since the beginning of the war in Syria in 2011, the women have been subjected to torture, rape and execution.

Yvonne Ridley, Scottish journalist and women's rights campaigner, as well as spokeswoman for the event, was among a number of women who addressed the crowd at the convoy's final destination.

"Ten thousand women from across the world stand here today to voice our support and solidarity with the thousands of women on the other side of the border who are being held as hostages and tortured, just because they are women. The time is now," she said.

Read more:

<https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/indepth/2018/3/13/womens-conscience-convoy-masses-on-syria-border>

GENDER & HUMAN RIGHTS

Banned from Watching Soccer, the Women of Iran are Being Failed by FIFA



With the World Cup in Russia less than 100 days away now, excitement is escalating for obsessive fans around the world. Even in places that have long excluded women from watching sports events in person, the ground is shifting; in January, Saudi Arabia lifted its long-standing ban on women in stadiums.

But in Iran, women who are enthusiastic soccer and volleyball fans are still barred from even watching matches in stadiums—and are detained by police when they try.

This month, global soccer's top official, FIFA president Gianni Infantino, had a chance to side with Iran's women and insist they be allowed into Azadi Stadium when he was in Tehran to preside over a match between top teams Esteghlal and Persepolis.

Instead, he joined a public event that excluded women entirely—in a stadium that seats 100,000.

"When Mr. Infantino was enjoying a football match in men-only stadium, Iranian female football fans were under arrest," wrote at OpenStadiums, an Iranian women's advocacy group on Twitter.

Read more:

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/03/08/banned-watching-soccer-women-iran-are-being-failed-fifa>

Woman Who Removed Headscarf in Public Sentenced to Prison as Supreme Leader Tries to Diminish Hijab Protests



Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei has described recent demonstrations in Iran against the country's compulsory hijab rule as "small and insignificant," which raises the question of why people are being sentenced to prison for engaging in the peaceful protest.

"My gift on Women's Day, March 8: A preliminary court sentenced me to 24 months in prison, 21 months of which has been suspended for five years," tweeted Narges Hosseini.

"Before I was arrested, I expected such a sentence," she added. "But after my trial, I thought the most I would get was a monetary fine. I was always too naive and optimistic."

Without mentioning her by name, Tehran Prosecutor Abbas Jafari Dowlatatabadi announced that Hosseini had been convicted of "encouraging people to engage in corruption by removing the hijab in public" and "committing a forbidden act in a public space."

Hosseini, 32, was detained on January 29, 2018, for removing her head scarf while standing on a utility platform on a busy street in Tehran and waving it on a stick like a flag.

Read more:

<https://www.iranhumanrights.org/2018/03/woman-who-removed-headscarf-in-public-sentenced-to-prison-as-supreme-leader-tries-to-diminish-hijab-protests/>

Saudi women should have choice whether to wear abaya robe: crown prince



Women in Saudi Arabia need not wear headcover or the black abaya - the loose-fitting, full-length robes symbolic of Islamic piety - as long as their attire is "decent and respectful", the kingdom's reform-minded crown prince said.

With the ascent to power of young Prince Mohammad bin Salman, the kingdom has seen an expansion in women's rights including a decision to allow women to attend mixed public sporting events and the right to drive cars from this summer.

The changes have been hailed as proof of a new progressive trend toward modernization in the deeply conservative Muslim kingdom, although the gender-segregated nation continues to be criticized for its continued constraints on women.

"The laws are very clear and stipulated in the laws of sharia (Islamic law): that women wear decent, respectful clothing, like men," Prince Mohammed said in an interview with CBS television aired late on Sunday.

"This, however, does not particularly specify a black abaya or a black head cover. The decision is entirely left for women to decide what type of decent and respectful attire she chooses to wear."

Read more:

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-saudi-women/saudi-women-should-have-choice-whether-to-wear-abaya-robe-crown-prince-idUSKBN1GV190>

Austria proposes hijab ban for girls under 10 'to protect culture from Islamic influences'



Austria's right-wing government on Wednesday revealed plans to ban Muslim girls under 10 from wearing the hijab.

It said prohibiting the headscarf from being worn in kindergarten and primary school aims to combat what it sees as a threat to Austrian mainstream culture from some Muslims.

"Our goal is to confront any development of parallel societies in Austria," Chancellor Sebastian Kurz told ORF radio.

"Girls wearing a headscarf in kindergarten or primary school is of course part of that."

If it became law, the ban would apply to girls of up to around the age of 10 years. However many Muslims believe Islam requires girls to wear a headscarf from puberty and headscarves are rarely worn at a younger age.

Speaking at a news conference alongside Vice Chancellor Heinz-Christian Strache of coalition-partner FPÖ, Kurz said: "A few decades ago we did not have this in Austria and now it occurs primarily in Islamic kindergartens but also here and there in public establishments of Vienna and other cities." However he failed to produce evidence of the "growing phenomenon" in schools.

Read more:

<https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2018/4/5/austria-proposes-hijab-ban-for-girls-under-10>

Palestinian women celebrate legal win with eye toward greater victories



Women warmly welcomed the government's declaration of a "package of decisions and measures to [address] laws that are unfair to women," March 5 in advance of International Women's Day. But they want more.

The government called on President Mahmoud Abbas March 5 to issue a decision to amend Penal Code No. 16 of 1960 by adding a fifth paragraph to Article 99 excluding honor crimes against women from their customary consideration of extenuating circumstances. The government also called for abolishing Article 308 of the Penal Code, which exempts a perpetrator of rape from prosecution and punishment if he marries his victim.

There were also changes to the regulations governing child custody and measures to fight discrimination against women. Women gained the right to obtain passports for their children, open bank accounts for them and transfer them between schools.

Activist Nahed Abo Tueima, who played a significant personal and professional role in demanding these legislative measures, described the amendments as incomplete. She told Al-Monitor that more action was required for the amendments to be complete and to ensure women's independence and interests.

Read more:

<https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/03/honor-crimes-law-amended-extenuating-circumstances-palestine.html>

RESOURCES & CALLS

BOOKS & REPORTS

The Condemned: Women and Children Isolated, Trapped and Exploited in Iraq



Iraqi women and children with perceived ties to the Islamic State armed group are being denied humanitarian aid and prevented from returning to their homes, with an alarming number of women subjected to sexual violence, Amnesty International said in a new report.

The 53-page report, *The Condemned: Women and Children Isolated, Trapped and Exploited in Iraq*, reveals women are being sexually exploited by security forces, members of camp administrations and local authorities, who believe these women are connected to ISIS.

Amnesty established that sexual exploitation was occurring in each of the eight camps for internally displaced people (IDPs) that researchers visited.

The report was based on interviews with 92 women in eight IDP camps in Ninewa and Salah al-Din governorates. Researchers also interviewed 30 local and international NGO workers, 11 members of camp administrations and nine current and former UN officials.

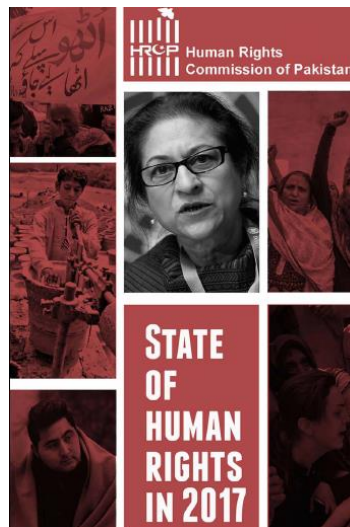
Read more:

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/iraq-women-ties-islamic-state-being-sexually-exploited-displacement-camps-new-report>

For a direct link to publication:

<https://amnesty.app.box.com/s/g0rvkr1y2fmfdab14rm4ajud5ap85964/file/287974978822>

State of Human Rights in 2017



This was the year Pakistan was elected as one of the 47 member states on the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council, an inter-governmental body within the UN system that is 'responsible for the promotion and protection of all human rights around the globe.' Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the UN hailed it as a 'diplomatic success' and 'a manifestation of the international community's trust in Pakistan.'

It was also the third time Pakistan went through its Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and faced a raft of observations and recommendations from Member States. In 2008, Pakistan accepted 43 recommendations and rejected eight. In 2012, Pakistan accepted 126 recommendations, 'noted' 34 and rejected seven.

In these earlier reviews, the rejected recommendations referred to decriminalization of defamation and non-marital sexual relations; repeal of blasphemy laws; legal reforms to ensure punishments in 'honour' killings, abolition of the death penalty, and ending the ongoing military operation in Balochistan.

Read more:

<http://hrqp-web.org/hrqpweb/7909-2/>

For a direct link to publication:

<http://hrqp-web.org/publication/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/State-of-Human-Rights-in-2017.pdf>

Violence against women and girls (VAW) is a global phenomenon that affects all societies and cuts across boundaries of age, socioeconomic status, education and geography.

The 2016 Human Development Report “Human Development for Everyone” (2016 HDR) sheds light on two important issues: power relations and lack of data.

<http://wunrn.com/2018/01/violence-against-women-unacceptable-unmeasured/>

<http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/violence-against-women-unacceptable-and-unmeasured>

[illegible]

Government forces and associated militias have perpetrated rape and sexual abuse of women and girls and occasionally men during ground operations, house raids to arrest protestors and perceived opposition supporters, and at checkpoints. In detention, women and girls were subjected to invasive and humiliating searches and raped, sometimes gang-raped, while male detainees were most commonly raped with objects and sometimes subjected to genital mutilation. Rape of women and girls was documented in 20 Government political and military intelligence branches, and rape of men and boys was documented in 15 branches.

<https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/i-lost-my-dignity-sexual-and-gender-based-violence-syrian-arab-republic>

<https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/A-HRC-37-CRP-3.pdf>

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