

Issue #183

Collective for Research and Training on Development. Action  
Middle East & North Africa Gender And Development Electronic Brief  
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## Lebanese women look for greater role in parliament elections



Lebanon is campaigning to get at least five times more women elected to parliament this spring in its first vote in nearly 10 years, the country's first women's affairs minister says.

It is a daunting task for a Middle Eastern country that may otherwise look like one of the most liberal in the region.

Despite a relatively free press, diverse religious groups and women in prominent positions in the business world and the media, Lebanon ranks surprisingly low when it comes to female representation in politics, and politicians have failed to act on a movement to institute a quota for women in parliament.

"Keeping women from public life is not only a loss for women. It is a loss for the parliament," Minister of State for Women's Affairs Jean Oghassabian told The Associated Press. "The main obstacles are mentality, a philosophy of life, and this needs time," he said.

Read more:

<http://www.arabnews.com/node/1230216/middle-east>

## Tunisian schoolgirls rebel against having to wear uniform



In Tunisian high schools, the dress code is not uniform. Actually, it is: but only for girls. Boys can wear what they like, and now the girls are up in arms.

One morning, instead of turning up for class wearing the regulation navy blue smock, a defiant group of adolescent girls came to school in white T-shirts instead, demanding an "end to discrimination".

At the elite Bizerte public school in the north, as is the case in most high schools in the North African country, pupils have to sign a school rule stipulating that wearing a uniform applies to girls only.

One day in September, supervisors reminded senior female students who did not abide by this rule that if they did not wear the smock, a loose-fitting, long gilet, they would be sent home.

Ironically, the warning was passed on during a philosophy class -- about the human body.

This "injustice" inspired many of the girls to take to social networks and vent their feelings, 18-year-old Siwar Tebourbi told AFP.

Read more:

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2017/Dec-26/431465-tunisian-schoolgirls-rebel-against-having-to-wear-uniform.ashx>

## 29 Arrested in Tehran for Public Protests against Forced Hijab



Police in Tehran have turned 29 people over to the judicial authorities for taking part in a growing campaign against forced hijab, the hardline Tasnim news agency reported on February 1, 2018. The detainees' names have not been released.

The report quoted a police statement claiming the arrested protestors had been “fooled” by the “White Wednesdays” campaign. White Wednesdays was launched by exiled journalist and civil rights activist Masih Alinejad to encourage Iranian women who oppose mandatory hijab to wear a white scarf on Wednesdays and share their images on the My Stealthy Freedom page on Facebook.

The latest protests began in late December 2017, after a photo of Vida Movahed went viral among Iranians, which showed her standing on a sidewalk platform on Revolution St. in Tehran waving her white scarf on a stick like a flag.

Since then dozens of women, as well as some men, have posted images in a similar pose on social media using the Farsi hashtag “Girls of Revolution St.”

Read more:

<https://www.iranhumanrights.org/2018/02/29-arrested-in-tehran-for-public-protests-against-forced-hijab/>

## 300 Iranian Women's Rights Advocates Voice Support for Protests, Demand Equality



More than 300 Iranian women's rights' activists have expressed support for the recent anti-government protests in Iran and demanded an end to state policies that discourage women from entering the workforce.

“As campaigners against discrimination and advocates of equality, we feel it is our duty to be part of this multi-layered movement and be present in the streets and other public spaces to demand our rights,” said a statement published on January 11, 2018, signed by prominent human rights defenders including Shirin Ebadi and Parastou Forouhar.

Continued the statement: “We believe the government should be accountable to the people's demands without resorting to intimidation, discrimination and suppression. In addition to the release of all political prisoners and prisoners of conscience, we demand the freedom to organize groups and rallies and an end to policies that force women to stay home.”

At least 25 people were killed after weeklong demonstrations broke out across dozens of Iranian cities beginning on December 28, 2017. The authorities harshly repressed the demonstrations and hundreds of people remain detained without charge.

Read more:

<https://www.iranhumanrights.org/2018/01/300-iranian-womens-rights-advocates-voice-support-for-protests-demand-equality/>



## ***GENDER BASED VIOLENCE***

### **Beirut protest after spate of violent deaths of women**



Dozens of people protested on Saturday outside the Lebanese parliament against violence against women, denouncing inaction by the authorities after eight women have been killed since early December.

The demonstration was organized by civil society groups including the feminist association Kafa, which wants legislative reforms to protect women from domestic violence.

Red wooden cut-out silhouettes representing victims including the eight were set up in the square outside parliament.

Demonstrators brandished placards bearing slogans including "Anger is no excuse" and "No funeral before justice."

Since early December, eight women have died violently in Lebanon, including a wife shot dead by her husband on Monday in Beirut.

Also among the dead were a 15-year-old who killed herself over an early marriage and British embassy employee Rebecca Dykes who was strangled by a taxi driver who tried to rape her.

Read more:

<http://www.arabnews.com/node/1234476/middle-east>

### **Pakistan considers bringing back public executions for pedophiles following the horrifying rape and murder of a six-year-old girl**



Pakistan's senate has been asked to pass a bill to re-introduce public hanging for people who rape or kidnap children under the age of 14.

It comes after the brutal killing of Zainab Ansari - whose body was left in a rubbish dump in Kasur, East Pakistan, after she was snatched while on her way to a class - unleashed a wave of revulsion around the country.

Chairman of the Standing Committee on the Interior Rehman Malik said an amendment to an existing law had already been approved by his committee and should be put before the senate.

According to Dawn News, the amendment to Section 364-A of the Pakistan Penal Code Act 1860 declares that the punishment for kidnapping or raping a child is to be public execution.

The section currently reads: 'Whoever kidnaps or abducts any person under [the age of fourteen] in order that such person may be murdered or subjected to grievous hurt... or to the lust of any person shall be punished with death.'

Read more:

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5306955/Pakistan-considers-public-executions-paedophiles.html>

## Morocco adopts law on violence against women



The Moroccan parliament on Wednesday adopted a law to combat violence against women.

"Thank God!" Hassima Hakkaoui, the minister of family affairs, women and solidarity, wrote on her Facebook page, after the law first drafted in 2013 was ratified by a vote of 112 for, 55 against and one abstention.

Her department said the law, for the first time in Morocco, criminalises "acts considered forms of harassment, aggression, sexual exploitation or ill treatment" of women.

Commentators on social media noted that the law finally passed on St Valentine's Day.

In a society divided between conservative and progressive strands, violence against women, especially in public, is often highlighted in the media and by rights groups.

It became a hot issue last August after a video was posted on the internet showing a young woman on a bus being sexually molested by a group of boys without the driver or other passengers reacting to her appeals for help.

Women's organisations said the law passed on Wednesday did not go far enough.

Read more:

<https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/society/2018/2/14/Morocco-adopts-law-on-violence-against-women>

## 'A great milestone': Somaliland adopts legislation outlawing rape



Somaliland has introduced a bill outlawing rape, the first piece of legislation to address gender-based violence in the self-declared state.

Under the Somaliland rape and other related offences bill, all forms of sexual offence would be criminalised, including rape, gang rape, sexual assault, trafficking and child marriage. Rapists who infect their victims with HIV would receive life sentences.

Nafisa Yusuf, executive director of the Nagaad Network of 45 women's organisations in Somaliland, said: "This is a great milestone achieved by Somaliland women."

The network said the legislation is particularly significant given the rise of gender-based violence in recent years. Drought in the Horn of Africa in 2017 displaced tens of thousands of people in Somaliland and throughout the wider region, leaving women and young mothers especially vulnerable to assault.

The bill has been agreed in the lower house of parliament, but still needs approval from the upper house. It is hoped the bill will be signed by the president on 1 March.

Read more:

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2018/jan/11/somaliland-adopts-legislation-outlawing-rape>

## Somaliland Fatwa Forbids FGM



Authorities in the self-declared republic of Somaliland have issued a religious fatwa banning the practice of female genital mutilation and vowed to punish violators.

The fatwa by the Ministry of Religious Affairs allows FGM victims to receive compensation. It does not say whether the compensation will be paid the government or by violators of the ban.

"It's forbidden to perform any circumcision that is contrary to the religion which involves cutting and sewing up, like the pharaoh circumcision, the ministry's fatwa reads. "Any girl who suffers from pharaoh circumcision will be eligible for compensation depending the extent of the wound and the violation caused. Any one proven to be performing the practice will receive punishment depending on the extent of the violation."

The fatwa – issued Tuesday, coinciding with the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation – did not elaborate on the type or severity of punishment.

FGM involves removing part or all of the clitoris and labia for non-medical reasons, usually as a rite of passage.

Read more:

<https://www.voanews.com/a/somaliland-fatwa-forbids-fgm/4241641.html>

## GENDER & HUMAN RIGHTS

### Saudi women can now open businesses without male permission



Women in Saudi Arabia can now open their own businesses without the consent of a husband or male relative, as the kingdom pushes to expand a fast-growing private sector.

The policy change, announced by the Saudi government on Thursday, also marks a major step away from the strict guardianship system that has ruled the country for decades.

"Women can now launch their own businesses and benefit from (governmental) e-services without having to prove consent from a guardian," the ministry of commerce and investment said on its website.

Under Saudi Arabia's guardianship system, women are required to present proof of permission from a male "guardian" -- normally the husband, father or brother -- to do any government paperwork, travel or enrol in classes.

Long dependent on crude production for economic revenue, Saudi Arabia is pushing to expand the country's private sector, including an expansion of female employment under a reform plan for a post-oil era.

Read more:

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2018/Feb-18/438410-saudi-women-can-now-open-businesses-without-male-permission.ashx>



## Tehran Police: No More Arrests for Flouting Dress Code



Police in Iran's capital say they will no longer arrest women for failing to observe the Islamic dress code imposed since the 1979 revolution.

The reformist daily Sharq on Thursday quoted Gen. Hossein Rahimi, the Tehran police chief, as saying "those who do not observe the Islamic dress code will no longer be taken to detention centers, nor will judicial cases be filed against them."

The semi-official Tasnim news agency says violators will instead be made to attend classes given by police. It says repeat offenders could still be subject to legal action.

Younger and more liberal-minded Iranian women have long pushed the boundaries of the official dress code, wearing loose headscarves that don't fully cover their hair and painting their nails, drawing the ire of conservatives.

Read more:

<https://www.voanews.com/a/tehran-police-no-more-arrest-for-flouting-dress-code/4182695.html>

## Danish government proposes ban on full-face veils



The Danish government has proposed a ban on Islamic full-face coverings in public spaces. "It is incompatible with the values in Danish society and disrespectful to the community to keep one's face hidden when meeting each other in public spaces," said the justice minister, Søren Pape Poulsen.

He added: "With a ban on covering the face we are drawing a line in the sand and underlining that in Denmark we show each other trust and respect by meeting face to face."

The proposal will be assessed by non-governmental human rights organisations and possibly rewritten to take their remarks into consideration.

The centre-right government is expected to present a bill to parliament in the spring. With the support of the country's second largest party, the anti-immigration Danish People's party, the proposed legislation is likely to be adopted.

A violation of the ban would entail a fine of 1,000 kroner (£120). Repeated violations would lead to fines of up to 10,000 kroner.

Read more:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/feb/06/danish-government-proposes-ban-on-full-face-veils>

## Move over, cabbies ... women drivers joining taxi ranks in Oman!



Oman is the latest country in the Middle East to offer female passengers access to a women-only taxi service. The news comes as part of a shake-up of the Sultanate's road regulations announced on Monday.

The new rules, taking effect from March 1, will also allow women to drive heavy goods vehicles as part of "the government's drive to give women equal business and employment rights," a statement from the Omani traffic police said.

They come with a package of transport reforms to improve conditions on Oman's roads, including stricter punishments for traffic violations, a new requirement for all passengers to wear seat belts and mandatory car seats for children under the age of four.

Women in Oman have long voiced concerns over the lack of female-driven taxis, citing safety fears, particularly when traveling alone with male drivers.

Many welcomed the move. "The decision came as a good surprise ... people had been asking when will Oman have female-driven taxis," Omani journalist Fatma Al-Arimi told Arab News.

Read more:

<http://www.arabnews.com/node/1237926/middle-east>

## Gaza police block women from attending football match



Police blocked dozens of women from attending a football match Sunday in the Gaza Strip, in what activists said they hoped would have been the first such permission under Hamas's rule.

Authorities in the Palestinian enclave run by the Hamas movement told the women they had orders not to allow them into the stadium at Nuseirat refugee camp south of Gaza City.

Some of the women instead watched the match between Al-Nuseirat and Al-Jalaa by standing outside the fence, an AFP journalist reported.

"We came here to encourage the team and youths in Nuseirat and watch the game, but we were surprised by the presence of Hamas security guards who closed the gates in our faces and did not allow us to go inside to cheer," Ayat Othman, one of the women who tried to attend, told AFP.

Female relatives of players have previously been allowed to attend matches in Gaza, but Sunday's match would have marked the first time under Hamas women could have attended on a large-scale basis, according to organizers.

Read more:

<http://www.arabnews.com/node/1234951/middle-east>



## Saudi Arabia to host Arab Fashion Week for the first time



For the first time in its history, Saudi Arabia will be hosting Arab fashion week next month. The news was announced yesterday by Princess Noura Bint Faisal, the honorary president of the Arab Fashion Council (AFC).

Speaking to a small group of industry insiders and journalists in London yesterday morning, Bint Faisal, reading from a letter from the General Entertainment Authority in Saudi Arabia, said: "Saudi Arabia's artistic community has been growing in size and in confidence for a number of years and the General Entertainment Authority believes that such an event will allow a proper platform to showcase their fashion and arts talents as the vehicle for a comprehensive range of entertainment options in Saudi Arabia."

Bint Faisal went on to say that "the General Entertainment Authority is proud to support an event that seeks to bring people together in a mutual appreciation of the power of fashion and art."

The decision to host Arab Fashion Week is said to be part of a push to support aspiring Saudi designers and to drive growth in the sector. The show, organised by the Arab Fashion Council, will take place from 26-31 March at the Apex Centre in Riyadh.

Read more:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180220-saudi-arabia-to-host-arab-fashion-week-for-the-first-time/>

## RESOURCES & CALLS

### BOOKS & REPORTS

## Europe-Africa Crisis We Don't Want To Name: Organised Sexual Exploitation of Women and Girls

As of June 2017, the number of "migrants" which in this case references all those arriving by sea to Italy, rose by 21% in comparison to the same period in 2016. These official statistics present a composite number of economic migrants, refugees, as well as the victims of trafficking in human beings. Nationals of Nigeria closely followed by Guinea account for the largest number of the "migrants" utilising the central Mediterranean route to southern Italy. Statistics would suggest that most of those arriving are young Nigerian males subjectively categorised as economic migrants escaping poverty or civil unrest within their respective nations and becoming the victims of smugglers on their way to Europe.

However, the statistics negate the sharp increase in the number of Nigerian women arriving in Italy. As of March 2017, the International Organisation for Migration estimates that there has been an almost ten-fold increase in the number of Nigerian women being trafficked to Italy and Europe into prostitution, as well as, the worst form of it, the actual sexual slavery. This is an increase from just over 1000 to over 11000 in just three years; this is a women's crisis.

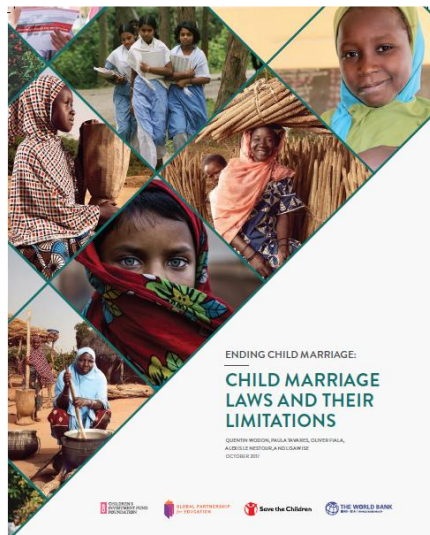
Read more:

<http://wunrn.com/2018/02/european-network-of-migrant-women-europe-africa-organized-sexual-exploitation-of-women-girls/>

For a direct link to publication:

<http://www.migrantwomennetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/ENOMW-EUROPE-AFRICA-CRISIS-FINAL-1.pdf>

## Ending Child Marriage: Child Marriage Laws and Their Limitations



Child marriage is defined as a formal or informal union before the age of 18. The practice affects mostly girls. While child marriage is especially prevalent in low and lower-middle income countries, it is also observed in other countries. It endangers the life trajectories of girls in multiple ways. Child brides are at greater risk of experiencing a range of poor health outcomes, having children at younger ages when they are not yet ready to do so, dropping out of school, earning less over their lifetimes and living in poverty compared to their peers who marry at later ages. Child brides may also be more likely to experience intimate partner violence, have restricted physical mobility, and limited decision making ability. Most fundamentally, child brides may be disempowered in ways that deprive them of their basic rights to health, education and safety.

Read more:

<http://wunrn.com/2018/01/more-than-20000-girls-married-illegally-every-day-child-marriage-laws-their-limitations/>

For a direct link to publication:

[http://www.savethechildren.org/atf/cf/%7B9def2ebe-10ae-432c-9bd0-df91d2eba74a%7D/LOWRES\\_WORLD BANK\\_ENDINGCM\\_CMLAWS-LIMITATIONS\\_PRINTREADY\\_SINGLEPAGES\\_V4.PDF](http://www.savethechildren.org/atf/cf/%7B9def2ebe-10ae-432c-9bd0-df91d2eba74a%7D/LOWRES_WORLD BANK_ENDINGCM_CMLAWS-LIMITATIONS_PRINTREADY_SINGLEPAGES_V4.PDF)

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## No Safe Place: A Lifetime of Violence for Conflict-Affected Women and Girls in South Sudan



“Women have often faced a lifetime of coercion, bullying and violence. In older age, women are often afraid to talk about what has happened to them and have learnt to accept this ‘silent’ form of punishment.” Woman, 61, UK

Older women may be subjected to violence, abuse and neglect due to a number of factors, including but not limited to their age, gender, disability, place of origin, marital status, class or sexual orientation. Commitments under the Sustainable Development Goal 5 to “achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls” saw a removal of an upper age cap from indicators on violence against women and girls. Yet women over 49 remain routinely ignored in data collection, despite accounting for nearly a quarter of the world’s female population.

This discussion paper aims to highlight the types of violence, abuse and neglect older women experience; and offers recommendations for a collaborative approach to close the data, policy and programme gaps that prevent women living lives free from violence, including in older age.

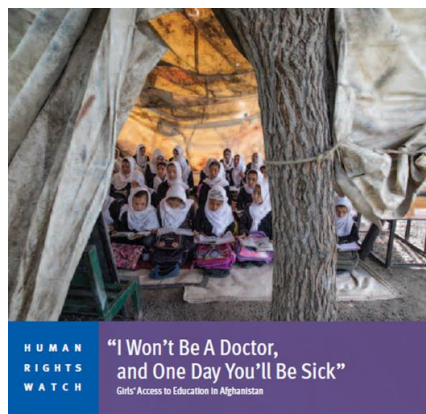
Read more:

<http://wunrn.com/2018/01/violence-against-older-women-2/>

For a direct link to publication:

<http://wunrn.com/wp-content/uploads/Violence-Against-Older-Women-HelpAge-11-2017.pdf>

## “I Won’t Be a Doctor, and One Day You’ll Be Sick” - Girls’ Access to Education in Afghanistan



This report examines the major barriers that remain in the quest to get all girls into school, and keep them there through secondary school. These include: discriminatory attitudes toward girls by both government officials and community members; child marriage; insecurity and violence stemming from both the escalating conflict and from general lawlessness, including

attacks on education, military use of schools, abduction and kidnapping, acid attacks, and sexual harassment; poverty and child labor; a lack of schools in many areas; poor infrastructure and lack of supplies in schools; poor quality of instruction in schools; costs associated with education; lack of teachers, especially female teachers; administrative barriers including requirements for identification and transfer letters, and restrictions on when children can enroll; a failure to institutionalize and make sustainable community-based education; and corruption.

Read more:

<http://wunrn.com/2018/01/afghanistan-girls-access-to-education-in-afghanistan/>

For a direct link to publication:

[https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report\\_pdf/afghanistan1017\\_web.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/afghanistan1017_web.pdf)

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