



The Middle East & North Africa
"Gender and Development E-Brief"
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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-Civicus: www.civicus.org, Eldis: www.eldis.org, ESCWA: www.escwa.org.lb, GDB: www.developmentex.com, Global Knowledge Partnership: www.globalknowledge.org, IGTN: www.IGTN.org, ILO: www.ilo.org One World: www.oneworld.net, Siyanda: www.siyanda.org, The Daily Star: www.dailystar.com.lb, The Drum Beat: www.comminit.com, The Soul Beat: www.comminit.com, The World Bank: www.worldbank.org, UNDP: www.undp.org, Wicejilist: www.wicej.addr.com, WLP: www.learningpartnership.org; WIDE: www.wide-network.org; IRIN News: www.irinnews.org, Women’s UN Report Network: www.wunrn.com, Women Living Under Muslim Laws: www.wluml.org

NEWS & ARTICLES

GENDER ACTIVISM

BLC launches program to fund ventures owned by women

Despite women owning 30 percent of the country’s small and medium enterprises, in Lebanon only 3 percent of loans are granted to female entrepreneurs, said stakeholders behind a newly launched initiative aimed at bridging Lebanon’s persistent gender gap.

The International Finance Corporation, the World Bank’s private sector investment arm, and BLC Bank have partnered on the project which primarily seeks to improve women’s access to finance and ultimately help bring a needed boost to the country’s economy.

“The initiative will make it easier for these enterprises to access the capital they need to expand, create jobs and spur development in Lebanon,” highlighted a statement issued by the IFC. According to the statement, the initiative will develop a host of new banking products and financial services tailor-made to help small businesses owned by women.

“Increasing the participation of women in the economy can spur economic growth,” said Toyin Adeniji head of the IFC Women in Business initiative, adding: “This partnership will demonstrate that developing products targeting women-owned businesses is a viable market strategy.” Read more:

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/Business/Lebanon/2012/Mar-21/167406-blc-launches-program-to-fund-ventures-owned-by-women.ashx#ixzz1pxEPd8Y1>



Hundreds of women call for Islamic governance

Hundreds of Muslim women gathered near Tunis Saturday to call for the return of the caliphate, the defunct Islamic system of governance which they said was the only means of guaranteeing their rights.

The members of the Hizb ut-Tahrir party came from Islamic countries including Arab states, Indonesia and Turkey, as well as from Europe to debate the benefits of the system that disappeared



nearly 90 years ago.

"This conference raises questions about the secular liberal way of life and asks whether it is a system that has succeeded in securing the dignity and rights of women," chief spokeswoman Nasrin Nawaaz of the British branch of the party told AFP.

"Muslim women are gathering together saying that we no longer want to live under secular liberal democratic systems," she added. "We want a new system, we want the khalifa system that historically has been tried and has succeeded in securing the rights of women."

Read more: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2012/Mar-11/166243-hundreds-of-women-call-for-islamic-governance.ashx#ixzz1pxK0XEAO>

Women's Rights Must Be Integrated in Post-Revolution Egypt

Despite the promise of the early political changes in Egypt, which inspired the belief that a newly democratic country would include women as full social and political partners, Egyptian women rather fear further deterioration of their rights. Marching in Cairo on International Women's Day, 8 March, they are calling again for implementation of the Egyptian Women's Charter, drawn up last year by more than 3,000 women and endorsed by half a million Egyptian citizens, both men and women. Equality Now supports the continuing efforts of Egypt's women to hold Egyptian authorities accountable for the promotion and protection of their human rights. Since June 2011, women have lost seats in Parliament and presently there are only three women in the Cabinet.

http://www.wunrn.com/news/2012/03_12/03_05/030512_egypt.htm



Beirut March stresses need to protect women from domestic violence

Around 100 people marched from Sassine Square, Ashrafieh, to Parliament in Downtown Beirut calling for increased protection for women from domestic violence.

To honor the memory of female victims of domestic violence in Lebanon, estimated at around one person a month, participants, wearing black and carrying mock coffins, held their march in silence. One sign read, "Every month, a woman dies due to domestic violence. Read the law for the protection of women now."

"We live in a patriarchal society. I fear if this issue is not confronted now, it will be forgotten,"

Melissa Ajamian, 25, an American University of Beirut graduate student told The Daily Star, as she walked alongside fellow protesters in the march organized NGOs Kafa and Nasawiya. "This is not only a women's cause," said Joseph Daher, a 27-year-old Syrian PhD student based in Beirut, as he walked toward the Grand Serail. "It's a cause for every human being to strive for equal rights. The march was the fifth in a series of protests following a series of leaks from Parliament which has been reviewing a domestic violence draft law submitted by Kafa in April 2010. Central to the proposed legislation is the establishment of legal penalties for men who physically or sexually abuse their wives. Currently no such legislation exists. Matters of family and personal status law are controlled by religious courts that usually rule in favor of men. Read more:

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Local-News/2012/Mar-10/166201-beirut-march-stresses-need-to-protect-women-from-domestic-violence.ashx#ixzz1pxKSzS24>



Syrian women on the frontlines, determined not to be sidelined

In the face of the most prolonged government crackdown in the Arab Spring, Syrian women are protesting alongside men, showing the world

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they will not be silenced -- whether by their government or by fears of an Islamist alternative. "The Arab Spring is a call for dignity, justice and freedom. None of the three can be achieved if women are left behind," asserts Diala Haidar, a Beirut-based activist who started the Facebook page "The uprising of women in the Arab world" in October to raise awareness of women's issues in the region.

"We think it is our right moment in this region, and we have to be fully aware of this opportunity that the Arab Spring has revealed to us."

In fact, from the very beginning of the Syrian uprising, the contributions of women activists have been indispensable in sustaining the protest movement.

"Women have played an incredibly active role, even though they're not as visible as men," observes Rafif Jouejati, a spokesperson for Syria's Local Coordination Committees, an umbrella organization coordinating protests and relief aid among the country's towns and provinces. A management consultant based in Washington, DC, Jouejati says she became an activist after hearing the news of children in Daraa being detained and tortured for writing anti-government graffiti on school walls, with no retribution to the security officials who perpetrated the outrage. Read more: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2012/Mar-08/165976-syrian-women-on-the-frontlines-determined-not-to-be-sidelined.ashx#ixzz1pxQdEqC2>

Topless protest of domestic violence in Turkey

Ukrainian women's rights activists have staged a topless demonstration to protest domestic violence against women in Turkey, just hours after a man shot dead a female relative after she left home following an argument with her husband. Four members of the Femen group, wearing bruise-like makeup, chanted slogans and displayed banners in the one-minute protest in Istanbul to mark International Women's Day on Thursday. They were immediately dragged into a police vehicle and driven away. Police say an allegedly mentally unstable man killed a 40-year-old mother of three in Istanbul earlier Thursday. The Parliament is working on legislation to introduce stiffer punishment for those mistreating and abusing women in the largely patriarchal society. Read more: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2012/Mar-08/165967-topless-protest-of-domestic-violence-in-turkey.ashx#ixzz1pxQufKsR>



Women's groups angry over Alphabet Day date

The Education and Culture ministries confirmed Tuesday that the country would begin celebrating Alphabet Day annually on March 8, despite activists' ire that the date coincides with International Women's Day.

A special committee was set up to organize activities in cooperation with schools, municipalities and civil society associations in time for next year. But there was backlash against the timing of the celebration from women's right associations, who held a sit-in Monday and submitted an open letter to Parliament, demanding officials affirm March 8 as International Women's Day. "We recognize the significance of the

alphabet to Lebanon, but the significance will be recognized more when authorities provide equal rights for women," the statement said. Read more: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Local-News/2012/Mar-07/165785-womens-groups-angry-over-alphabet-day-date.ashx#ixzz1pxRhrTer>



GENDER & HUMAN RIGHTS

Egypt Court Acquits Army Doctor Accused of VirginitY Tests



An Egyptian court has acquitted an army doctor accused of forcibly administering virginity tests on female detainees, state-run Nile TV said Sunday.

The court acquitted the doctor because of contradictory testimony from witnesses, the government-run website EgyNews reported.

The issue came to light last year after several women alleged they were subjected to such examinations following a March 2011 protest in

Cairo's Tahrir Square.

Samira Ibrahim took Egypt's military-led government to court in August, alleging she was among those subjected to the test after her arrest during the March 9, 2011, protest. She said she faced death threats after bringing the case.

On Sunday, the 25-year-old marketing manager said the ruling devastated her.

"This is rape, and I fainted when I heard the verdict in court," she said. "God knows the truth, and it will always be a black spot in Egypt's history."

Adel Ramadan, an attorney represented Ibrahim, said he planned to take the case to authorities outside Egypt, such as the International Criminal Court.

"Internal judiciary options have let us down, and we don't think there is judicial independence," he said. To read http://edition.cnn.com/2012/03/11/world/meast/egypt-virginity-tests/?hpt=hp_t3

Lebanon 79th in terms of women's opportunity

The Economist Intelligence Unit's 2012 Women's Economic Opportunity Index ranked Lebanon in 79th place among 128 countries globally, Byblos Bank reported in its weekly newsletter. On the regional level, Lebanon was ranked in sixth place among 15 countries in the Middle East and North Africa region. The index is based on five indicators - labor policy and practice, access to finance, education and training, women's legal and social status, and the general business environment. It rates countries on a scale of zero to 100, with 100 representing the most favorable economic and business environment for women.

Read more: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/Business/Lebanon/2012/Mar-19/167106-lebanon-79th-in-terms-of-womens-opportunity.ashx#ixzz1pxl6j500>

MENA: 'The Uprisings will be Gendered'



Women's rights and the regulation of gender and sex norms in the Arab world have long been put under the spotlight by local and international activists in addition to local and international politicians and NGOs. This year, the ongoing uprisings in the Arab world have brought into focus some dominant ways that sexual and bodily rights are framed, gendered, and politicized. These can be grouped under three loose themes, each of which deserves further study: One is the equation of gender with women and/or sexual and gender minorities. Two is the fear of Islamists. Three, is the use of gendered and sexed violence

to discourage or discredit protests and revolutionaries. Such a selective focus on sexual and

bodily rights obfuscates power dynamics and contexts that are always also at play when discussing a particular political, historical, or economic issue.

It is an old complaint that the study of “gender” is in fact the study of people who are “white” (ie not racialized) hetero-normative men. Such an equation hides that gender is not something one can be outside of. It is not an analytic lens that can be withheld and deployed according to the genitalia and/or sexual practices of the group or topic under study. Thus we have seen journalists and academics write about “protestors” without mentioning gender until they get to the “female protestors.” The same deployment of gender is used to talk about citizenship more generally, where the “citizen” appears as an unmarked and universal category until studies of “female” and/or “LGBTQ” citizens (and non-citizens, by the way) disturb this chimera. When we read of these “female protestors” are we to assume that all previous analysis of “protestors” has been about men? If so, why does this not factor into analysis? Are men not gendered? Is citizenship an ungendered and undifferentiated category except when talking about female citizens? If we believe that an attention to gender is important to understanding how women live their lives, then why not extend the same courtesy to men? What power dynamics and hegemonic discourses are being reproduced with every selective deployment of “gender” in the media and in every syllabus on “politics” or “citizenship” that includes one or two weeks (yay!) about “women” or “gender?” The equation of gender with non-hetero-normative males is as old as the genesis of “gender studies” itself. We are seeing this equation play out again in coverage and analysis of the Arab uprisings, where a study of “gender” has become a synonym for the study of women and LGBTQ Arabs. <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/4506/the-uprisings-will-be-gendered>

How not to study gender in the Middle East

Gender is not the study of what is evident, it is an analysis of how what is evident came to be.

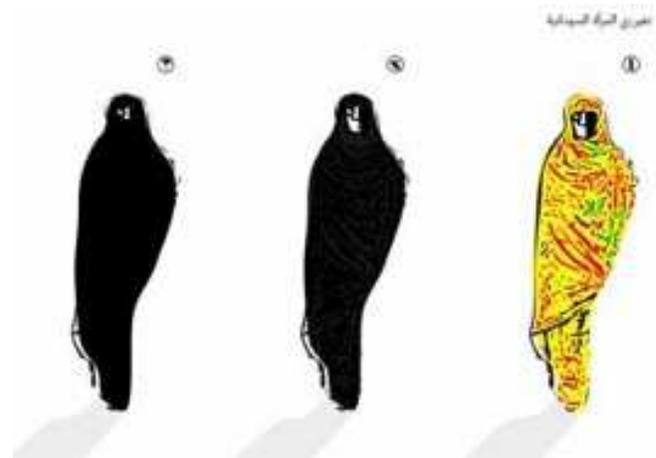
Two: Before resolving to write about gender, sexuality, or any other practice or aspect of subjectivity in the Middle East, one must first define what exactly the object of study is. Be specific. What country, region, and time period forms the background picture of your study? Furthermore, the terms “Middle East,” “the Islamic World” and the “Arab world” do not refer to the same place, peoples, or histories, but the linkages between them are crucial. Moreover, the “state” is a relatively new phenomenon in the Middle East. In order to study gendered political economy in Syria, for example, one must be aware of the Ottoman and regional history that has produced this gendered political economy in the area that we now call “Syria.”

Three: A study of gender must take into account sexuality. Likewise studies of sexuality cannot be disarticulated from gender analysis. To do so would be akin to studying the politics and history of the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) without reference to the role of ideology or the socio-economic policies of the Iraqi state.

Four: Gender is one aspect of individual and group subjectivity. It is also just one technology of governmentality—the production and regulation of ties between the individual body, populations, and structures of power and quantification. Moreover, studies of politics, history, and law must take into account gender and sex, just as such studies must be attentive to class, race, political economy and—crucially—how all of these factors interact.

To continue reading the article please follow the link

<http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/4775/how-not-to-study-gender-in-the-middle-east>



Role of women in politics is crucial

On the occasion of International Women's Day Thursday, First Lady Wafaa Sleiman said that Lebanese women are still far from assuming a tangible role in politics, a step which would help to achieve peace.



"Women in my country are still far from being actual partners in decision-making in politics," Sleiman said.

"Despite the fact that Lebanon was the first Arab country allowing women to vote and run for elections in 1952 ... their presence in decision-making is still limited, whether in successive Cabinets, Parliament or administrative appointments," said Sleiman, who heads the National Commission for Lebanese Women. Sleiman's remarks came during a ceremony in Tyre to honor women participating in the U.N. Interim Forces in Lebanon and the

launching of the National Campaign for Supporting Women in Decision and Peacemaking. Sleiman said that women's limited role in politics was behind the commission's decision to launch the national campaign. The other main inspiration, Sleiman added, was to enhance women's role in achieving long-lasting peace, which would result from their enhanced role in political life. "The woman who raises [children] on the values and principles of tolerance and cooperation should not be deprived from taking part in making these moral principles a trend in politics," she added. "There is no peace without enhancing women's presence in decision-making, and we cannot have a strong presence without having socio-economic and legal conditions improved."

Read more: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Local-News/2012/Mar-09/166057-first-lady-role-of-women-in-politics-is-crucial.ashx#ixzz1pxPBzplV>

Women call for greater equality on rights day

UN women leaders on Thursday called for greater equality between the sexes on the occasion of International Women's Day amid demonstrations and marches for female rights.

"No country can claim to be entirely free from gender based discrimination," Michele Bachelet, a former president of Chile who now heads the agency UN Women, told AFP in Rabat. "This inequality can be seen in persistent wage gaps and unequal opportunities... in forced child marriage and also in continuing violence against women in all of its forms," she added. She also called for greater equality, especially in the countryside where inequality between men and women is "most marked". "One person in four worldwide is a woman or girl living in the countryside, and working long hours for low wages or no wages," said Bachelet who was appointed last year to head the newly-created United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. Despite their work, these women "face the worst of inequalities when it comes to access to social services and land ownership," Bachelet said.



Read more: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/International/2012/Mar-08/166001-women-call-for-greater-equality-on-rights-day.ashx#ixzz1pxPXpaeP>

Women struggle to reach new heights in Lebanon



Turn on Lebanese television, open a newspaper or news website and you can be sure of one thing: It won't be long before you see a man in a suit, whether he's talking about politics, the economy, or just the weather. But in among them are many Lebanese women, excelling in their careers, often against the expectations of those around them. On the occasion of International Women's Day, The Daily Star talked to three women who have worked their way to the top of their professions. "I was 100 percent aware of the male dominance in politics when I went in," says Ghinwa

Jalloul, a former Beirut MP, of her experience running for office in the 2000 elections. "Beirut had never been represented by a woman and that made it a bigger challenge for me." Running on Rafik Hariri's list against then-Prime Minister Salim Hoss, Jalloul faced down critics who said she was a token candidate.

"People used to say 'you're put there to lose so they can say at least a woman has tried,'" she says. "But while they were discussing this in interviews, I was out seeing the people and telling them why they should vote for me." She won the election and went on to be an MP for nine years.

For Mayada Baydas, the executive director of EMKAN, a company that provides microfinance loans, developing her career outside the country, in the West and developing countries, allowed her to bypass many of the constraints she sees other professional women face in Lebanon.

"Women don't predominate boards, they don't predominate management positions," she says. "I came back to Lebanon being an executive ... so I did not face what the working women of Lebanon who develop for maybe 10 years in Lebanon do face." Read more:

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Local-News/2012/Mar-08/165912-women-struggle-to-reach-new-heights-in-lebanon.ashx#ixzz1pxRFceyp>

Challenges for Women's Political Leadership in Iraq

It will take decades before Iraq sees a female prime minister, and the lack of women in top government posts is disappointing, the country's women's minister has said in an interview.

Ibtihal al-Zaidi said authorities had earmarked at least 30% of new jobs this year for women, and insisted that women in Iraq had more rights than during the rule of now-executed dictator Saddam Hussain. She also defended remarks made in recent weeks that men held a superior position in society to women, but said they had been misinterpreted. "We need a long period of time and more elections to reach the level where we have an iconic female leader," Zaidi said in her small office in Baghdad's heavily fortified Green Zone,



ahead of International Women's Day on March 8. "We hope that such a woman will take the post of deputy prime minister and, some years after that, to become prime minister, but I think it will take decades for that." The 47-year-old lamented the fact that she was the only woman in Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki's 33-member cabinet, despite the fact that Iraq's 325-member parliament is required to allot 25% of its seats to women. "The reality is that the number of women in the government is disappointing, and it is not at the level we want it," she said, adding that her ministry of state, which has only around 20 employees, was working to draft a law to set a women's quota for the cabinet as well. To read the entire article follow the link

http://www.wunrn.com/news/2012/03_12/03_05/030512_iraq.htm

GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

Saudi police break up protest at women's campus

Saudi authorities have ordered a probe after more than 50 women students were hurt when security forces dispersed a campus protest this week, media and a local official said on Friday.

On Wednesday members of the religious police and law enforcement officers used water cannons to break up a sit-in by women students at the Abha University in the south of Saudi Arabia, the Sebaq news website reported. The students had staged a sit-in to protest against what they said was a pile-up or rubbish on the campus and a break down in hygienic conditions, Sebaq said. The religious police, in a statement carried by the Al-Watan newspaper, confirmed that it had intervened at the university but denied that its men had attacked the women. The university meanwhile issued a statement saying it had asked police to intervene on Wednesday after "female students gathered on the campus and began shouting in a way that contradicts" campus regulations. It also accused one of the students' parents of having triggered the problem by sacking refuse collectors, which caused the rubbish to pile up. The sexes are strictly segregated outside the home in ultra-conservative Saudi Arabia. Prince Faisal bin Khaled, emir of the Assir region where Abha University is located, has ordered an investigation into the incident, media reported.

Read more: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2012/Mar-09/166112-saudi-police-break-up-protest-at-womens-campus-report.ashx#ixzz1pxKLTnhm>

Stoning & the Iran Penal Code - Analysis & Cautions

The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran in his latest report, published on March 7th, welcomed the omission of stoning as a punishment in the newly ratified Islamic Penal Code, but expressed his concern that severe punishments may still be issued at a judge's discretion in accordance with sharia law or *fatwas*.

Iran has finally overcome one of the big predicaments with the international community in terms of human rights, though in the Islamic Republic's style. About two weeks ago, Iran's Judiciary spokesman announced that stoning no longer exists in the new penal code. However those of us familiar with the complex working and implementation of the Iranian legal system who have studied the "revised" code in detail have to say while on the surface both of these claims may appear correct; in reality they are false. There is a nuance that has been lost in western media reports that have heralded these announcements as a victory and major advancement for human rights in Iran such as [Financial Times](#) and the [Telegraph](#).

Human Rights Council
Nineteenth session
Agenda item 4
Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran"

Summary

The present report, the first to be submitted to the Human Rights Council, is submitted pursuant to Council resolution 16/9 and covers the human rights developments since the commencement of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on 1 August 2011. The Special Rapporteur presented his first interim report to the General Assembly (A/66/374) in October 2011.

The present report outlines the Special Rapporteur's proposed methodology and highlights the recent trends in the human rights situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran. While listing some of the most recent human rights concerns, the Special Rapporteur focuses on some of the cases that emerged during post-election unrest in 2009. Although the report does not cover all the violations of human rights in the country, it provides a picture of the prevailing situation in that regard. It is envisaged that a number of important issues not covered in the present report will be addressed in the Special Rapporteur's future reports to the Assembly and the Council.

In comparison to the previous penal code, stoning has been removed from the section of the code dealing with penalties for 'adultery.' However, sexual relation outside of marriage remains a crime.

Furthermore, the word 'stoning' appears twice in articles 172 and 198 of the new penal code, although details about its implementation, such as the appropriate size of stones to be used, wrapping the convicted person in a white shroud (*kafan*) and burying the male adulterer in

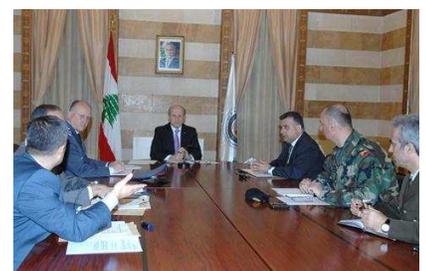
the soil up his waist and a female up to her shoulders, are all gone. But the omission of the implementation process is hardly reason to celebrate 'the end' of the practice. To read the full analyze please follow the link

http://www.wunrn.com/news/2012/03_12/03_12/031212_iran.htm

Women in the ISF are not allowed to wear the hijab

Neither veils nor any other religious symbol are allowed to be worn with the uniform of security personnel in all state institutions, Interior Minister Marwan Charbel told The Daily Star after women who wear the hijab were accepted by the Internal Security Forces. "We have fought against

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wearing religious symbols in security institutions even before the 1970s, and we now have a uniform for every security institution; it's ridiculous to discuss this issue nowadays," said Charbel.

When the Internal Security Forces opened its doors for new recruits this year, hundreds of men and women sat for an exam to join the national police force. Several hundred women passed the exam and started their first training session earlier this week.

Among the women who passed the exam were 39 who wear the hijab.

According to Charbel, the Lebanese Army, General Security, Judicial Police and the ISF all have similar codes of conduct with regard to the sanctity of the uniform.

"It is inappropriate to have the military uniform mix with outside accessories," he says. "Imagine security personnel wears a white beret and another wears a blue one or imagine someone who wants to keep a beard." To read more please follow the link

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Politics/2012/Mar-23/167669-charbel-women-in-the-isf-are-not-allowed-to-wear-the-hijab.ashx#axzz1qDQsdW2e>

Lebanon: Stop Abuse of Domestic Workers

Lebanese authorities should act quickly to reform restrictive visa regulations and adopt a labor law on domestic work to address high levels of abuse and deaths among migrant domestic workers, a group of eight concerned civil society groups said today. The government should also announce publicly the outcome of the investigation into the recent abuse and subsequent suicide of Alem Dechasa-Desisa, an Ethiopian domestic worker. The eight groups are Human Rights Watch, Caritas Lebanon Migrant Center, KAFA (enough) Violence & Exploitation, Anti Racism Movement, Amel Association International, Insan, Danish Refugee Council, and Nasawiya. On March 8, 2012, Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation International (LBCI), a Lebanese television network, released a [video](#) filmed on February 24 by an anonymous bystander in which a labor recruiter physically abused Dechasa-Desisa outside the Ethiopian consulate in Beirut. As she protests, he and another man drag her into a car. LBCI later identified the man beating Dechasa-Desisa as Ali Mahfouz, the brother of the head of the recruiting agency that brought her to Lebanon. Mahfouz agreed to be interviewed on television and alleged that his brother's agency had been trying to return her to her home country because she had mental health problems. <http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/03/23/lebanon-stop-abuse-domestic-workers>



'Tussle over gender violence law' in Lebanon:

Proposed amendments to a draft law on gender violence in Lebanon have sparked demands from civil society organizations that parliament uphold an original draft criminalizing "honor crimes", marital rape and other abuses.

"The version that we came up with at first was fine," said Maya al-Amman, an activist with the organization KAFA, [Enough Violence and Exploitation]. "Now it is not good at all."

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report/95033/LEBANON-Tussle-over-gender-violence-law>



Kuwait a Male Dominated Society with Challenges for Women in Politics

The 2012 Parliament is without any woman MP. This is a disappointment for most people, especially as the last Parliament had four women MPs, which was a historical record in Kuwait. Women only got their political rights in 2005. To discuss the reason behind the failure of women in the last elections, the Women's Cultural Society held a symposium on Wednesday titled 'Who is Behind the Woman's Absence in the 2012 Parliament'.

Dr Rana Abdulrazzaq expressed her disappointment at not having even one women candidate pass the elections. "If we compare the performance of male MPs and female MPs, the women were much more productive. They were attending committees in Parliament, they proposed law drafts, their dialogue was more polite, and they carried out many projects. Women MPs participated in passing a law in favor of women, especially the housing care law," she stated. She spoke about the reasons that women failed from her point of view. "Although some female candidates were competing with male candidates and achieved a good number of votes, none of them passed. This is due to the general atmosphere of the elections. Women candidates did not participate in the tribal or sect coalitions. They did not use impolite dialogue and shouting like the men did. We witnessed some new young candidates who won, and this was due to their coalition with the Salafi faction," added Dr Rana.

Ibraheem Al-Mulaifi said any analysis after resolving Parliament is not accurate. "We need psychological analyses more than election analyses in this issue. The change is not only in Parliament but in the Government as well, as there are no women ministers. At the end, their failure was the choice of the people and we respect the opinion of voters who have chosen their candidates," he said.

To read more <http://new.kuwaittimes.net/2012/02/25/kuwaiti-society-still-male-dominated-womens-society-holds-symposium/>



Suicide of Girl Forced to Marry Rapist Spurs Outrage In Morocco

The suicide of a Moroccan teenager who reportedly had been forced to marry her rapist has spurred calls from around the world to change criminal laws long lamented by Moroccan feminists.

Human rights groups complain that Moroccan law has been interpreted to allow someone who rapes a minor to escape punishment if he marries the victim. Moroccan media reported that was what happened to Amina Filali, a 16-year-old who reportedly swallowed rat poison Saturday. "It is unfortunately a recurring phenomenon," Fouzia Assouli, the president of the Democratic League for Women's Rights, told the Associated Press. "We have been asking for years for the cancellation of Article 475 of the penal code, which allows the rapist to escape justice." The Moroccan government has argued that the law applies only if the victim agrees to marry, but activists say young women can be pressured into marriage to protect family honor. Her father told a Moroccan news website that the courts had pushed the idea, the Associated Press reported.

Activists took to Twitter to spread news of the reported suicide using the hashtag #RIP Amina. "The tragedy of Amina is a disgrace to humanity," Emirati political commentator Mishaal Al



Gergawi wrote. To read more about this story:

http://www.wunrn.com/news/2012/03_12/03_12/031212_morocco.htm

Syria Conflict - Pain & Anguish of Women & Girls

Saturday, March 10, 2012 photo, Hana, 12, flashes the victory sign next to her sister Eva, 13, as they recover from severe injuries after the Syrian Army shelled their house in Idlib, north Syria. Their father and two siblings were killed after their home was shelled. (AP Photo/Rodrigo Abd) To watch more photos <http://blogs.denverpost.com/captured/2012/03/12/photos-crisis-syria/5256/>



CITIZENSHIP RIGHTS

Lebanese Foreign Affairs Minister says more time needed for women to pass citizenship to children

Foreign Affairs Minister Adnan Mansour said Thursday legislators need more time to reach an agreement over the proposed law to allow Lebanese women to pass on citizenship to their children.

"The issue requires time for all the parties to reach agreement on the law," Mansour told Voice of Lebanon Radio Station. During Wednesday's Cabinet session, the Cabinet failed to reach any decision on a draft law proposed by Interior Ministry Marwan Charbel to give Lebanese women married to foreigners the right to pass on citizenship to their children.

The Cabinet decided to send the proposal to a committee for further study.

Mansour said the reservations about Lebanese women married to Palestinian men granting their children nationality "rests on the idea of helping [Palestinians] not give up on their right to return to their country." Opponents of previous proposed amendments argued that the introduction of the law would lead to the naturalization of Palestinian refugees married to Lebanese women which would destabilize the country's sectarian balance.

First Lady Wafaa Sleiman and the National Committee for Women's Affairs are studying a draft law that would exclude women married to Palestinian men. Read more:

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Politics/2012/Mar-22/167569-mansour-says-more-time-needed-for-women-to-pass-citizenship-to-children.ashx#ixzz1pxDCBob5>



RESOURCES & CALLS

ANNOUNCEMENTS and EVENTS

Middle East Women Photographers Exhibit

"Today we can declare that globalization is the hidden power for women, and it therefore has become clear that she is more capable of shattering the fetters to cope with the necessities of the rapid change in our country. [...] My dear women! you have revolted from all over the country of Yemen, Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Syria in order to construct a dignified life and a better future. Therefore, there is no way that we should bend down or go back. [...] I do believe that the prosperous future is for women, and it is we who make the dreams come



true and a better future. It is she who creates dignity and liberty. Thus, whatever that has accomplished was a collaboration between men and women alike. One of the necessities of partnership is for the woman to obtain her full rights. No dignity and no liberty for a nation which oppresses women and take away their rights."

Tawakkol Karman, Noble Peace Prize Laureate, 2011.

Fourteen sharp, courageous, talented, passionate and inspirational women photographers from the Middle East take center stage in Women on the Verge, an expansive group show held concurrent with Art Dubai and Art Week; to know more about the exhibition please follow the link http://www.wunrn.com/news/2012/03_12/03_12/031212_middle.htm

Hariri, Wafa Sleiman speak out on Mother's Day

On the occasion of Mother's Day, former Prime Minister Saad Hariri vowed to work for Lebanese women's rights, particularly the right to grant their children nationality, and highlighted the role of mothers in the Syrian uprising. "On this occasion, I reiterate my determination to continue striving to achieve all the rights of Lebanese mothers, especially their ultimate right to give their nationality to their children," Hariri said in a statement. First Lady Wafa Sleiman called the Lebanese mother "a woman who has sacrificed and toiled with patience but also the woman who will fight for peace and values in her country." Sleiman said her message is "one of love to all mothers. Regardless of their circumstances, I tell them I adopt their burdens and hopes. This is what pushes me to always support women and to adopt their causes so that no injustice or discrimination stands in their path."



Read more: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Local-News/2012/Mar-22/167544-hariri-wafa-sleiman-speak-out-on-mothers-day.ashx#ixzz1pxDqQQOL>

International Conference on "The Implementation of the Family Code and the Issue of Underage Girls' Marriage" In Fès, Morocco - 5-6 May 2012

The Isis Center for Women and Development is organizing in partnership with The South North Center for Intercultural Dialogue an international conference on «The Implementation of the Family Code and the Issue of Underage Girls' Marriage» on 5-6 May 2012.

The Family Code, which came into force in 2004, much more advanced than the previous version, laying strict conditions for polygamy and repudiation, and fixing the legal age of marriage at 18 years instead of 15 for women and men - except in exceptional cases subject to the discretion of the judge - places the family under "joint responsibility" of both spouses. Underage girls' marriage in Morocco has been on the rise since 2008; according to official statistics, some 30,685 minors were married in 2008 against 33,253 in 2009, and nearly 34,000 in 2010, figures that challenge us all," stated Monday Nouzha Skalli, the ex- Moroccan Minister of Family and Solidarity.



Thus, actions have to be multiplied by the government and civil society for the promotion of children's rights, among which education. Within this context, the major goal of this conference is to help implement the family law adequately and to participate in awareness raising. The conference also seeks to reduce the frequency of single mothers and street children, to influence the policy-makers, and make a change in the procedure and enforcement of the law that specifies that the legal age of marriage for girls is 18. The conference will be geared to sensitize parents, schools, youth associations, NGOs, judges, lawyers, members of parliament, government officials and decision-makers about the urgency of implementing the family code

adequately and of eradicating the widespread phenomenon of minors' marriage among poor families. The conference will discuss the following sub-themes:

- Underage marriages and violence against women and girls
 - A review of the Family Code (Mudawana)
 - Problems with the implementation of the Mudawana
 - Lobbying for an adequate implementation of the Mudawana
 - Causes and consequences of underage marriages
 - Ways to combat underage marriages
 - The role of judges and lawyers
 - The role of the media and of education
 - The role of women's and youth organisations to have more information about the conference
- please follow the link http://www.wunrn.com/news/2012/03_12/03_12/031212_morocco2.htm

BOOKS and REPORTS

Mapping Stoning in Muslim Contexts

Sexual relationships outside of marriage, along with same-sex relations regardless of marital status, are criminalized in most codified interpretations of Islamic law, or *Shari'a*. Any sexual relationship outside a legal marriage is considered a crime punishable according to the individual's relationship status: 100 lashes if unmarried and death by stoning if married. Over the past few decades, human rights and women rights activists have worked hard to challenge this perspective and bring an end to such cruel and brutal punishments.

Execution by stoning¹ is still carried out in various parts of the Muslim world (either by state or non-state actors) as a punishment for *zina* (adultery and fornication), even though there is no direct reference to this form of punishment in the Quran. According to the Shafii, Hanbali, Hanafi and Shia schools of Islamic jurisprudence, the proof required to convict an adulterer is so stringent³ that the smallest doubt or lack of evidence should prevent a stoning sentence from taking effect. Although several countries have codified laws on stoning, the punishment remains a point of disagreement between Islamic scholars.

Laws that rendered stoning as a legal punishment emerged with the revival of political Islam during the late 20th and early 21st centuries. However, stoning also occurs in contexts where there is no legal precedent for the practice. For example, in Iran, *zina* "crimes" and punishments are outlined in the Penal Code; in Afghanistan, on the other hand, stoning occurs extra-judicially - it is more of a "cultural" or "traditional" punishment that members of the community implement themselves. Although there are few documented instances of stoning, this form of punishment is still a serious threat to both women and men living in Muslim contexts. This report identifies the countries where stoning is still in practice - either through judicial (codified as law) or extrajudicial (outside the law) methods - and describes some of the specific cases that have been publicized over the past decade. Each country study begins with a short introduction and at least one reference to an act of stoning (initial or final court verdict, practice or general consensus) where applicable. The cases will be presented in reverse chronological order, starting from the most recent and ending with the earliest. All the cases presented here were reported by human rights organizations and/or accredited news outlets. This report is part of a study on stoning commissioned by Justice for Iran in collaboration with the Violence is Not Our Culture Campaign. To read the full report please follow the link

<http://justiceforiran.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Mapping-Stoning-in-Muslim-Contexts.pdf>

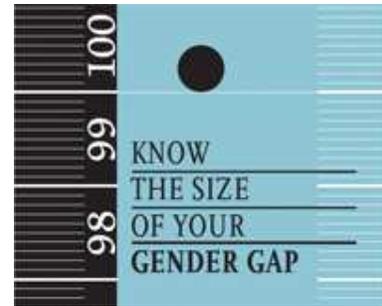


Gender Equity Index 2012 - Gender Gap - Inequalities

The achievements made by women all over the world towards equity in education are still very far from making an impact on their having a fair share in the economy or in political power. This can be concluded from the updated figures of the Gender Equity Index (GEI) 2012, published by Social Watch on the eve of Women's International Day, March 8. None of the 154 countries considered in the study has narrowed the gender gap to an "acceptable" level.

The GEI prepared annually by Social Watch measures the gap between women and men in education, economy and political empowerment. The index is an average of the inequalities in the three dimensions. In literacy, it examines the gender gap in enrolment at all levels; economic participation computes the gaps in income and employment; empowerment measures the gaps in highly qualified jobs, parliament and senior executive positions. To know more please follow the link

http://www.wunrn.com/news/2012/03_12/03_05/030512_gender2.htm



Women & The Arab Spring: Taking Their Place?

On the occasion of International Women's Day, FIDH launches a report on the role of women in protests, revolutions and transitions in the Arab world and proposes 20 measures for equality. Women, alongside men, participated in the protest movements that shook the Arab world in 2011, demanding freedom, equality, justice and democracy.

"Women, as well as men, paid and continue to pay a high price for their struggles. Today women must be able to play their full part in building the futures of their countries," declared Souhayr Belhassen, FIDH President.

"Women's participation in public and political life, on an equal basis with men, is an essential condition for democracy and social justice, values at the heart of the Arab spring", she added. The full report is available here:

<http://arabwomenspring.fidh.net>



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