

NEWS & ARTICLES

GENDER ACTIVISM

'Nobel Women' laureates urge Saudis to end blockade on Yemen

Cairo women ride in peace with first female bus driver

Iran allows women weightlifters to compete in international contests

#SheDefends: Honouring Middle Eastern activists on International Women Human Rights Defenders Day

Women's battle with Egypt's State Council continues

GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

Groups fight gender-based violence

New phone app helps Egyptian women fight sexual harassment

Thousands of women victims of violence in Morocco

Mideast campaigners confront violence against women

Women MPs from Arab Countries review efforts to end gender violence

GENDER & HUMAN RIGHTS

Iraq Child Marriage Bill Draws UN Ire

Saudi Women Riled by Robot With No Hijab, More Rights Than Them

Egyptian women get inheritance rights

After Burn Victims Denied Compensation Because They're Girls, Lawyer Says Law Must Change

Sudanese women arrested 'for wearing trousers' released

Turkish marriage law a blow to women's rights, say activists

RESOURCES & CALLS

BOOKS & REPORTS

2016 AWID Forum - Evaluation Report

Understanding Masculinities: International Men & Gender Equality Survey – Middle East and North Africa

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

Rights at Risk: The Observatory on the Universality of Rights Trends Report 2017

The MENA Gender and Development e-Brief receives material from various sources for its publication. Should you wish to refer to these sources/ sites directly, the list includes publications from: AWID: www.awid.org, Democracy Digest: www.freedomhouse.org, e-Civicus: www.civicus.org, Eldis: www.eldis.org, ESCWA: www.escwa.org.lb, GDB: www.developmentex.com, ILO: www.ilo.org, One World: www.oneworld.net, Siyanda: www.siyanda.org, The Daily Star: www.dailystar.com.lb, The World Bank: www.worldbank.org, UNDP: www.undp.org, 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

'Nobel Women' laureates urge Saudis to end blockade on Yemen

A group of Nobel Peace Laureates on Monday urged the Saudi-led coalition fighting Shiite rebels in Yemen to end their blockade on the Arab world's poorest country that has deprived it of much-needed aid and squeezed it to the brink of famine.

The Nobel Women's Initiative said in a statement said that the blockade "rendered access to humanitarian assistance impossible for the people of Yemen," and "denies millions of vulnerable and innocent civilians access to food, fuel and medical supplies."

"It further aggravates what the United Nations has called the world's 'worst humanitarian crisis' to date," they wrote, where over 20 million people lack needed life-saving humanitarian assistance in what amounts to "collective punishment."

The Saudi-led coalition went to war against the rebels, known as Houthis, in March 2015 on behalf of Yemen's internationally recognized government. But the coalition has made little progress, and the rebels still control much of northern Yemen, including the capital, Sanaa.

The U.S.-backed coalition tightened a land, sea and air blockade Nov. 6 after a missile attack by rebels on the Saudi capital Riyadh. Saudi Arabia said Monday the coalition would lift the blockade.

Read more:

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/Arts-and-Ent/Music/2017/Nov-27/428020-nobel-women-laureates-urge-saudis-to-end-blockade-on-yemen.ashx>

Cairo women ride in peace with first female bus driver



The sight of a niqab-clad woman driving a full-size bus in Cairo's congested streets during rush hour has left commuters and pedestrians in the Giza district open-mouthed. But Umm Abdalla, Egypt's first female bus driver, is unfazed by the stares of curious onlookers.

"People stare anyway, no matter what you are wearing or what you do. Some are nosy by nature, others are simply curious. I just take it in stride," she told Al-Monitor.

The 42-year-old widow and mother of five said she never intended to become a bus driver.

"It happened because I was desperate for a job and they were recruiting," she said. "They" are the private English Mass Transit Company that hired her a little over a month ago. The company, contracted by Cairo's Transport Authority (CTA) to operate buses within the CTA, had advertised openings for bus drivers in a local newspaper. By chance, the English Mass Transit Company recently introduced a female-only bus service to protect women from sexual harassment, a rampant problem in Cairo.

Read more:

<https://al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/11/egypt-first-femal-bus-driver-traffic-cairo-niqab.html>

Iran allows women weightlifters to compete in international contests



Iranian women weightlifters will be allowed to take part in international competitions for the first time, the weightlifting federation announced on Thursday.

A women's committee has been established under Iran Weightlifting Federation to back "talented female athletes", the organisation said.

"They have high capacity like men athletes, and I hope that, wearing special clothes for Muslim athletes, they will be able to take part in international championships in the near future," Ali Moradi, president of the federation said.

Women worldwide were barred from taking part in weightlifting until a change in rules in 1987. However, Iran, along with Saudi Arabia, had since upheld the ban.

The move to now allow women to compete has been applauded both internationally and inside Iran.

"This is good news, and it's very significant in Iran, where weightlifting is at the highest level for men, and zero level for women," said Attila Adamfi, director general of the International Weightlifting Federation.

Read more:

<https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/society/2017/11/26/iran-allows-women-weightlifters-to-compete-in-international-contests>

#SheDefends: Honouring Middle Eastern activists on International Women Human Rights Defenders Day



While thousands of men defend human rights, women face unique challenges for their activism. They are targeted not just because they are demanding change, but because they are women.

Driven by deep-rooted discrimination against them and stereotypes about their appropriate role in public life and politics, they are more prone to attack than men because they are seen as breaking conservative social norms.

November 29 is International Women Human Rights Defenders Day and has been marked with tributes to women worldwide who bravely fight for their rights.

Over the last few months in the Middle East there has been cause for celebration for those who have seen their fight succeed.

Leading Saudi activist Manal al-Sharif was arrested and threatened as she campaigned to get women behind the wheel. The struggle never stopped and in September, the kingdom finally lifted the ban.

Read more:

<https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/blog/2017/11/29/she-defends-honouring-the-middle-eastern-women-fighting-for-change>

Women's battle with Egypt's State Council continues

The Commissioners Authority of the Supreme Administrative Court on Nov. 11 rejected an appeal to appoint female judges to the State Council. The authority stated in its decision that the council has the freedom to appoint personnel at its discretion and that its stance does not reflect discrimination against women based on non-eligibility as such. Rather, the council's stance aims to ensure its proper functioning. The authority, which reviews cases brought before the council, concluded there is no binding provision in the Egyptian Constitution requiring the appointment of women to the State Council. The authority's decision was in response to an appeal filed in early 2017 by Omnia Gadallah, who objected to the State Council's refusal to accept her application for the position of assistant delegate, which is the first step toward being appointed a judge at the council.

Namati, a legal empowerment network, describes the State Council as “an independent judicial body that is exclusively competent to adjudicate in administrative disputes, disciplinary cases and appeals, and disputes pertaining to its decisions ... and review draft contracts to which the state or any public entity is a party.” The Commissioners Authority's rejection of Gadallah's appeal against the council has been forwarded to the Supreme Administrative Court, which has the final say. The court, which usually gives weight to the authority's ruling, is expected to issue the final decision Feb. 24.

Read more:

<https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/11/egypt-women-judges-state-council.html>

GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

Groups fight gender-based violence



Another year and the battle against gender-based violence is still being hard-fought in Lebanon. To mark the 26th global “16 days of activism against gender-based violence” campaign, local and international organizations rallied to bring the issue further to the fore.

“Based on our work ... I would say that 2017 compared to 2007 there is definitely an increase in the public awareness toward issues related to GBV,” Roula Masri, director of programs at local NGO ABAAD, told The Daily Star, pointing to increased media, social and governmental attention paid to the issue.

“Of course it’s not enough,” she added. “But it is definitely a start.”

ABAAD, which works on issues surrounding gender equality, was one of the organizations celebrating the successful results of years of campaigning to repeal of Article 522 of the Penal Code – known as the “rape law” – that allowed a rapist to escape prosecution if they married their victim. Parliament voted to abolish the controversial law in April.

Read more:

http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2017/Dec-07/429235-groups-fight-gender-based-violence.ashx?utm_source=Magnet&utm_medium=Related%20Articles%20widget&utm_campaign=Magnet%20tools

New phone app helps Egyptian women fight sexual harassment

An attempt to tackle the problem of sexual harassment of girls and women, a group of young Egyptians applied modern solutions to tackle a problem that government initiatives and laws have failed to rein in. The mobile phone app Street Pal acts as a guard to women, protecting them from harassment attempts and giving them ways of dealing with the phenomenon.

Abdul Fattah al-Sharqawi, the app's developer, said in a press statement Nov. 21 that the number of users reached 800 since the app was launched Oct. 29. He noted that they already received several calls from women telling them about their experiences with sexual harassment and seeking awareness.

The app covers the three main stages of harassment: when a woman notices someone following her in the street, when she is being harassed and in the aftermath.

In an interview with Al-Monitor, Sharqawi said the app aims to increase young women's awareness of harassment, giving them information and advice on dealing with it. The app has a five-star rating on Android, according to Sharqawi.

"We designed three example cases within the app," he explained. "The first helps women by answering specific questions, such as 'What is the person doing as he watches her? Is the area where she is walking uninhabited? Is there anyone around who can offer help if she needs it?' The app guides her step by step, helping and protecting her through the entire process," he said.

Read more:

<https://al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/11/egypt-phone-app-fight-sexual-harassment-women.html>

Thousands of women victims of violence in Morocco



Six women have been killed and a further 6,039 left with psychological difficulties in the past year as a result of gender-based violence in Morocco, according to a new report.

Compiled by the Moroccan Association for Women's Rights, the report documents distressing levels of violence perpetrated against women in the country, as well as the psychological, health and economic effects it causes for society.

The report, which was released by the association on Friday, consists of 4,603 women's testimonies given to support centres attached to Moroccan women's associations across the country.

The annual report documented 6,039 instances of psychological abuse, equivalent to forty percent of the total violent acts committed against women, of which 840 consisted of verbal abuse, 200 instances of death threats, 903 instances of threats of physical violence, and 206 cases of threats of expulsion from the marital home.

Read more:

<https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2017/12/10/shocking-new-figures-on-violence-against-women-in-morocco>

Mideast campaigners confront violence against women



A coordinated effort to bring an end to violence against women and girls gets underway this Saturday as campaigners across the world participate in the UN's 16 Days of Activism against gender-based abuse.

On Nov. 25, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, buildings and landmarks across the world will be illuminated in orange — the color of the campaign, which this year runs under the theme "Leave No One Behind: End Violence against Women and Girls."

In the Middle East, there has been some cause to celebrate in 2017, with the long-campaigned-for repeal of rape-marriage laws in Tunisia (article 227), Jordan (article 308) and Lebanon (article 522) marking an end to penal code provisions that allowed rapists to escape punishment by marrying their victims.

The decisions, which took place within the space of a few months, "heralded new change for the region" said Rothna Begum, women's rights researcher for the Middle East and North Africa at Human Rights Watch.

Read more:

<http://www.arabnews.com/node/1198566/middle-east>

Women MPs from Arab Countries review efforts to end gender violence



Representatives from 13 Arab countries, the Tunisian Ministry for Women, Family and Childhood, and the Coalition of Women MPs from Arab Countries Combating Violence Against Women gathered in Tunis for a two-day summit on 16 and 17 November.

The summit, supported by Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD), took stock of recent progress made in Tunisia and Lebanon and adopted a Tunis Declaration with legislative recommendations to help combat violence against women in the region.

Violence against women remains prevalent in the Arab world and globally, taking various forms in both the public and private sphere; as parliaments across the region are emboldened, it is necessary to develop legislative systems that secure women's rights in principle and in practice.

Read more:

<http://www.wfd.org/ending-violence-against-women-and-girls-in-mena/>

GENDER & HUMAN RIGHTS

Iraq Child Marriage Bill Draws UN Ire



A proposed law that could allow marriage for children as young as 9 years old in Iraq would rob boys and girls already scarred by war of their childhoods, top U.N. officials said Monday.

The bill, which would allow religious leaders to govern marriage contracts and wed children, has prompted public demonstrations by women's rights groups and activists in Iraq.

"The boys and girls of Iraq, already victims of grave violations resulting from years of conflict, are now at risk of being deprived of their childhood," Virginia Gamba, U.N. children and armed conflict envoy, said in a statement.

"The government of Iraq must take all necessary actions to protect every child by preventing the adoption of policies that can harm children already exposed to armed conflict," she said.

About one in five girls is married before turning 18 in Iraq, where the legal age for marriage is 18 but girls can wed at 15 with parental consent, according to the United Nations' children's agency (UNICEF) and global charity Girls Not Brides.

Read more:

<https://www.voanews.com/a/iraq-child-marriage-bill/4149586.html>

Saudi Women Riled by Robot With No Hjiab, More Rights Than Them



Women in Saudi Arabia have scorned the government's decision to grant citizenship to a female robot who, unlike them, does not need a male guardian or have to cover her head in public.

Social media was abuzz with questions about whether the robot, Sophia, who was unveiled at a technology conference in the capital Riyadh last week, will be treated like other women in the conservative kingdom now that she is a citizen.

"It hit a sore spot that a robot has citizenship and my daughter doesn't," Hadeel Shaikh, a Saudi woman whose four-year-old child with a Lebanese man does not have citizenship.

Women married to foreigners in the gender-segregated nation cannot pass on citizenship to their children.

The creation of the world's first cyborg citizen is the latest surprise announcement from the Sunni Muslim kingdom, which granted women the right to drive last month and to watch events in all-male sports stadiums for the first time next year.

Read more:

<https://www.voanews.com/a/saudi-robot-citizenship-womens-rights/4096027.html>

Egyptian women get inheritance rights



The Egyptian parliament passed a new Inheritance law Dec. 5 giving women their legitimate right to inheritance after the majority had been deprived of it, especially in Upper Egypt where cultural norms and traditions are ingrained with sexism.

Article 49 of the new law states that anyone who deliberately denies the heir, be it a man or a woman, their legal share of the inheritance or confiscates a document confirming this share shall be jailed for six months at least and be subject to a fine ranging between 20,000 Egyptian pounds (\$1,122) at least and 100,000 pounds at most. In case of recidivism, the prison sentence shall be no less than one year.

Parliament approved the new law after the Cabinet, the National Council for Women (NCW) and civil associations submitted several draft laws in January 2016, December 2016 and September 2017, respectively, to amend the 1943 Inheritance law. Other bills were submitted by members of parliament also, including by parliamentarian Nadia Henry.

NCW Director Maya Morsi told Al-Monitor, “We reached 1.2 million women in rural and underprivileged areas in our ‘Tareq al-Abwab’ [‘door-knocking’] campaign to familiarize women deprived of inheritance of their rights.”

Read more:

<https://al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/12/egypt-law-women-inheritance-rights.html>

After Burn Victims Denied Compensation Because They’re Girls, Lawyer Says Law Must Change



A lawyer in Iran is speaking out about sexism in the country’s legal code after the families of two children who died in a fire at an elementary school were denied full compensation because the victims were girls.

“In the case of the two innocent girls who died from burns in this terrible incident, the Diah allocated for them has been cut in half because of their gender,” Hossein Ahmadianiaz, a lawyer representing victims of the fire, told the Center for Human Rights in Iran (CHRI) on December 9, 2017. “That’s discriminatory and unfair.”

According to Islamic law, Diah, known as “blood money” in English, is paid as financial compensation to the victim or heirs of a victim in the cases of murder, bodily harm, or property damage.

However, in Iran, the Diah for women is worth half the value of the Diah for men.

“The religious leaders should keep in mind that we are not in seventh-century Saudi Arabia. We are in the 21st century. In progressive societies, women work side-by-side with men,” said Ahmadianiaz.

Read more:

<https://www.iranhumanrights.org/2017/12/after-burn-victims-denied-compensation-because-theyre-girls-lawyer-says-law-must-change/>

Sudanese women arrested 'for wearing trousers' released



Twenty-four women detained by morality police on Wednesday for "wearing trousers" at a party in Sudan have been released, following international uproar regarding the arrests.

Morality police raided the gathering near the Sudanese capital Khartoum, however, the charges of indecency have now been dropped.

If convicted, the women could have faced 40 lashes and a fine for the provocative "obscene" outfits.

Traditionally, women in Sudan wear loose flowing robes, however, activists warn that the laws are applied arbitrarily and say every year tens of thousands of women are arrested and flogged for indecency.

"The party took place in a closed hall in a building in El Mamoura," campaigner Amira Osman said, adding that the arrest violated women's rights.

"The girls were arrested for wearing trousers, despite obtaining a permit from the authorities."

Read more:

<https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2017/12/11/sudanese-women-arrested-for-wearing-trousers-released>

Turkish marriage law a blow to women's rights, say activists



Activists and opposition politicians in Turkey have rounded on a law that allows Muslim clerics to conduct civil marriages, describing it as a blow to women's rights and secularism and part of an ongoing effort to impose religious values on a polarised society.

The law allowing "mufti" marriages was passed by parliament and Turkey's president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, then published in the country's official gazette on Friday, despite protests by civil society activists and opposition lawmakers. Last month, Erdoğan declared the bill would be passed "whether you like it or not".

"Women's rights are going to decline," said Nazan Moroğlu, an expert on gender law and a lecturer at Yeditepe University. "Everything that has been pushed on to women in this land has been done in the name of religion."

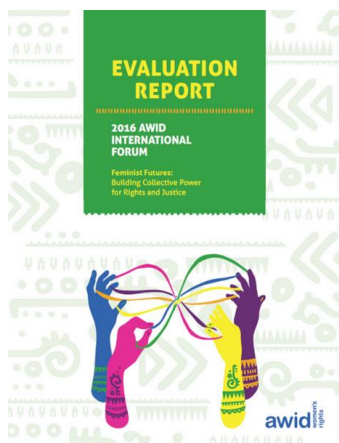
Muftis are clerics empowered with issuing religious opinions on matters of day-to-day life. Previously, only state officers in branches of the family affairs directorate were able to conduct marriages.

Read more:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/nov/14/turkish-marriage-law-a-blow-to-womens-rights-say-activists>

RESOURCES & CALLS
BOOKS & REPORTS

2016 AWID Forum - Evaluation Report



The AWID International Forum brings together feminist and women's rights leaders and activists from diverse movements, development practitioners, and donors from around the world. This global convening consistently proves to be a critical space to collectively energize and shape the analyses, agendas and alliances that drive strategies to make gender justice and human rights lived realities.

The product of a two-and-a-half-year process of co-creation by hundreds of partners, presenters, activists, facilitators, and innovators, AWID's 13th International Forum was held 8-11 September 2016 in Bahia, Brazil, under the theme of "Feminist Futures: Building Collective Power for Rights and Justice".

The 2016 Forum made the case that the current context presents a particular urgency for cultivating stronger collaboration both within diverse feminist and women's rights movements and in alliance with other movements for justice.

Read more:

<https://www.awid.org/publications/2016-awid-forum-evaluation-report>

For a direct link to publication:

https://www.awid.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/evaluation_report_2016.pdf

Understanding Masculinities: International Men & Gender Equality Survey – Middle East and North Africa



The International Men and Gender Equality Survey – Middle East and North Africa (IMAGES MENA) is the first study of its kind in the MENA region to take a wide-angle, comparative lens to the lives of men – as sons and husbands and fathers, at home and at work, in public and private life – to better understand how they see their positions as men, and their attitudes and actions toward gender equality. Equally important, IMAGES provides women's perspectives on these same issues. Its wealth of quantitative and qualitative findings (a portion of which are included in this report, and are also presented in greater detail in separately published companion country reports) complements a growing body of research on men and masculinities in the MENA region.

Read more:

<http://wunrn.com/2017/05/middle-east-north-africa-international-men-gender-equality-survey-understanding-masculinities/>

For a direct link to publication:

<https://imagesmena.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2017/05/IMAGES-MENA-Multi-Country-Report-EN-16May2017-web.pdf>

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



NO SAFE PLACE:

A LIFETIME OF VIOLENCE FOR CONFLICT-AFFECTED WOMEN AND GIRLS IN SOUTH SUDAN



As part of the What Works to Prevent Violence against Women and Girls consortium, the International Rescue Committee (IRC), the Global Women's Institute at the George Washington University (GWI) and CARE International UK sought to obtain rigorous data on the prevalence, forms, and drivers of VAWG in South Sudan. The study used quantitative and qualitative methods to explore the situation of women and girls in ve settings in South Sudan: Juba City, Juba County, Rumbek Centre, two Protection of Civilian (PoC) sites in Juba, and one PoC site in Bentiu. The household survey was conducted in three sites: Juba City, Juba PoCs, and Rumbek Centre.

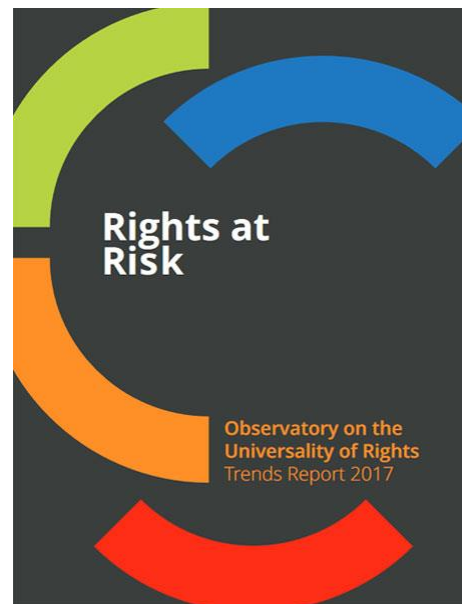
Read more:

<https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/no-safe-place-lifetime-violence-conflict-affected-women-and-girls-south-sudan>

For a direct link to publication:

<https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/southsudanlgonline.pdf>

Rights at Risk: The Observatory on the Universality of Rights Trends Report 2017



The trend is unmistakable and deeply alarming:

- Religious fundamentalists are now operating with increased impact, frequency, coordination, resources, and support.
- Anti-rights actors are chipping away at the very content and structure of our human rights concepts, institutions, and protections, with disastrous consequences for human rights and gender justice.

This report is the first of a series on human rights trends produced by the Observatory on the Universality of Rights (OURs) initiative, a collaborative and multi-organizational project that aims to monitor, analyze, and share information on anti-rights initiatives.

Read more:

https://www.awid.org/ours-report?gclid=EAlaIqObChMIzIDssOKV2AIVarXtCh26kQDhEAAAYASAAEgLn9_D_BwE

For a direct link to publication:

<https://www.awid.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/rights-at-risk-ours-2017.pdf>

The MENA Gender and Development E-Brief is published by **CRTD.A**.

To get all previous MENA GAD e-brief issues please log on to: <http://crt-da.org.lb/newsletter/82>

For more information about **CRTD.A** please visit: <http://crt-da.org.lb>

You are receiving this newsletter because you are a member of **CRTD.A** / IRIS.

Please direct any comments to info@crt-da.org.lb

If you choose to unsubscribe please send a blank e-mail from the e-mail in which you receive the e-Brief from, with the heading unsubscribe to unsubscribe@crt-da.org.lb

If you wish to subscribe please send a blank e-mail, with subscribe as a heading to subscribe@crt-da.org.lb

All the available links were accessible during the preparation process

Please accept our apologies if your subscribe / unsubscribe needs are not being met to your satisfaction, as errors will inevitably occur

Opinions and views expressed in this GAD E-Brief relate to their respective authors and do not necessarily reflect those of **CRTD.A**

Information presented in this GAD E-Brief is considered public information and may be distributed or copied. Use of appropriate credit is requested. While **CRTD.A** makes every effort to provide accurate and complete information, various data such as contacts, web links, dates, etc. may change.

CRTD.A provides no warranty, expressed or implied, as to the accuracy, reliability or completeness of the data and information harvested from other public sources.

Some of the information in this GAD E-Brief may contain references to information created and maintained by other organizations. Please note that **CRTD.A** does not control and cannot guarantee the timeliness, or accuracy of these outside materials.
