



The Middle East & North Africa "Gender and Development E-Brief"

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NEWS & ARTICLES

GENDER ACTIVISM

Saudi Arabian Women Vow To Keep Up Campaign Against Driving Ban



A woman drives a car in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, during a previous protest against the ban on female drivers.

Another woman posts video online of herself behind the wheel, a day after dozens defied police to demonstrate for right to drive

Saudi women demanding the right to drive said they would keep up their campaign a day after government warnings and a heavy police presence thwarted their call for many women to get behind the wheel.

Activists are asking Saudi women to go on driving in public and posting online photographs or films of themselves doing

so, after putting dozens of such videos on YouTube in recent weeks.

A video posted online on Sunday showed Azza al-Shamasi, wearing the black headscarf typically worn by Saudi women, driving with her son to and from Kingdom hospital in north Riyadh earlier in the day.

"The campaign continues, in order to normalize driving in our country, whose laws allow the practice of this right," said a post on the campaign's Twitter feed.

The activists say that no specific law in Saudi Arabia bans women from driving, although women cannot apply for driving licenses. Government officials say a ban is in effect because it accords with the wishes of society in the conservative kingdom.

<http://www.awid.org/News-Analysis/Women-s-Rights-in-the-News2/Saudi-Arabian-women-vow-to-keep-up-campaign-against-driving-ban>

In Gaza, first female mukhtarah mediates legal disputes



A Palestinian woman participates in a training

Um Mohammed broke the conservative tribal traditions of her community when she became one of Gaza strip's first "Mukhtarah" - the female equivalent of Mukhtar, one who peacefully settles disputes without need to resort to formal judicial systems.

"I once found myself having to intervene to resolve a problem between a husband and his wife," recalls Um Mohammed. "The angry man ridiculed me, [but] I approached him calmly until he was able to engage in a

constructive discussion. After a few sessions, I was able to bring him and his wife back together. Many men had previously intervened before but failed to resolve the differences."

Fifty-year-old Um Mohammed became a Mukhtarah after learning the legal skills necessary to perform this informal, yet important, role of gatekeeper of justice during a 52-hour training on legal mediation and its basic rules. As part of UNDP's Access to Justice programme in the occupied Palestinian territory, legal



experts provide training on conflict resolution, negotiation techniques and an overview of laws and regulations in matters of engagement, marriage and divorce.

Um Mohammed graduated, along with 75 other female Mukhtars, from the Culture and Free Thought Association's Legal Clinic in Gaza and now practices in cooperation with the Legal Clinic teams, assisting in drafting agreements and contracts of reconciliation; and providing legal advice or representation. She says her knowledge of religious verse and mastery of traditional sayings and proverbs helps her fulfill her role as a broker of social peace.

<http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/ourwork/womenempowerment/successstories/conquering-traditions--the-first-female-mukhtarah-in-gaza/>

Unity around the demand for a quota within the women's movement in Egypt



Women's organisations in Egypt continue the struggle to put women's rights on the agenda. Recently, 800 women's organisations met in Cairo to discuss the way forward during this crucial transitional period.

In the end of September, The Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation's partner organisation Alliance for Arab Women, together with the Solidarity Ministry in Egypt, organised a national conference on women's role during the transitional period in the country.

"Women are now organised in such a way that they can put pressure on the government. But the conference also showed that NGOs are willing to cooperate with the government, as long

as the government is willing to recognize women," says Hoda Badran, chairperson of Alliance of Arab Women, one of the organisations that Kvinna till Kvinna supports in Egypt.

Still lots to be done

During the conference, a five-year plan for the Egyptian Feminist Union - where the 800 organisations are members - was launched. Hoda Badran says that the focus during the first year will be "on the roadmap to arrive at democracy and reach the goals of the revolution". The Feminist Union sees it as its role to inform people about the content of the roadmap. Their focus is to reach women outside of Cairo and try to make them involved in the political process. Similar initiatives are being carried out by other women's networks, for example a knocking-in-doors campaign in support of the Egyptian revolution and the roadmap.

The roadmap, issued by the military in July, is not uncontroversial though. Saba Nowzari, Kvinna till Kvinna's field representative for Egypt, says that the roadmap has some positive parts - such as the establishment of a transitional reconciliation committee - but she is also sceptical since the committee has been inactive and also partial.

"It refuses to acknowledge human rights violations that occurred during the summer. No proper investigation has been conducted, which has led to the spreading of fear and rumours rather than tackling the national crisis. Lots of civilians are tried in military courts and sentenced to lifetime in prison without proper investigations. Reports about the police sexually harassing female detainees are being neglected. So in means of reconciliation and a roadmap for peace and security, there is still lots to be done," Saba Nowzari says.

Pushing for increased participation

Another central issue for the Egyptian women's movement is the new constitution. A draft is currently being discussed by a committee of 50, of which only 10 % are women. The Egyptian Feminist Union has put



forward a number of demands to the committee that they want to see incorporated in the draft constitution, one being that women's political participation should be increased through a quota.

"This has not been approved yet, but we are pushing for it and making coalitions with other feminist organisations to make it happen," Hoda Badran says, adding that if the committee doesn't listen they will not vote.

Saba Nowzari fears that the committee will only take bits and pieces of different women's rights coalitions' suggestions, since there are several different coalitions that don't seem to coordinate their work and lack a unified voice.

"One area where there is unity, though, is in the demand for a quota that clearly gives women increased political participation. Despite this, though, the constitution committee has only five female members, of which two are heads of state institutions."

"Not a religious country"

The Egyptian Feminist Union - which is one of these different coalitions - demands that equality between different groups (men and women; various religious groups) has to be spelled out very clearly in the constitution. "We also believe that the constitution has to reflect that Egypt is not a religious country," Hoda Badran says.

The participants at the recent conference also discussed how to work with regards to the upcoming elections.

<http://www.wluml.org/news/unity-around-demand-quota-within-womens-movement-egypt>

Cairo Women Bring Men Back On The Rails

Nihal Saad Zaghloul is an Egyptian woman in her late twenties. Like other young women, she faces the daily risk of sexual harassment on the streets of Cairo. But Egypt's revolution made her realize that people can unite and that she can make a difference.

A trend of mob rapes has risen rapidly in Egypt as political stability and social security have diminished post-revolution. Together with a friend she founded an organization called Basma to raise awareness about sexual harassment in the streets of this metropolis of 30 million.

After gathering dozens of volunteers, they deployed on the streets around Tahrir Square and inside the downtown metro stations last year for the first time. Zaghloul deeply believes that everything starts with education - and she set out to educate.

"Our educational system is failing. Government schools perform poorly and private schools are too expensive. This keeps most of the Egyptian youth uneducated. And it is exactly this group that we find in the streets, bored with life, mistreating women." Zaghloul argues.

Women in Egypt are often harassed by men and both sexes tend to take it as something normal. According to an April survey by U.N. Women, 99.3 percent of Egyptian women respondents said they had been sexually harassed.

But with Basma, Zaghloul started to fight this. Whenever they see a girl being harassed, she and her team of volunteers approach the young men or boys to sensitize them.

The first months were a struggle for the organization. The police, themselves often active participants in the harassment, did not take the initiative seriously and caused more problems, rather than offering support.

<http://www.awid.org/News-Analysis/Women-s-Rights-in-the-News2/Cairo-Women-Bring-Men-Back-on-the-Rails>

Arab Regional Network on Women, Peace & Security Established in Response to Critical Needs

AMMAN (Jordan) - On October 29th, following a landmark regional training, participants from fourteen countries unanimously called for the establishment of an Arab Regional Network on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS). Together, over 80 Arab leaders and activists identified participation, protection, prevention, and peace building as their four key areas of strategic focus. This network marks a turning point in transforming leading international mechanisms, such as UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security, into concrete and measurable actions.



The Arab Regional Network on WPS comes at a pivotal time in the Arab region, when political transitions threaten to undermine women's peace and security and to exclude women from key national and international dialogues where their perspectives, experiences and expertise are essential in developing long-term stability and peace.

Arab Leaders and Activists gather for Regional Training in Amman.

"Democracy is not medicine we take and then the problem is over. It is an ongoing process. It can never be imported from abroad, and it cannot occur if at the same time, women are being isolated," said Dr. Haifa Abu Ghazaleh, a veteran women's rights advocate and the Assistant Secretary General for Civil Society in the League of Arab States, in a keynote speech to participants in Amman.

The network aims to strengthen civil society to engage with conflict prevention and decision making processes; foster an enabling environment at the regional level to improve women's leadership in these processes; ensure women's human rights are protected; and pool regional resources on women, peace, and security, including technical support and capacity development tools.

http://www.wunrn.com/news/2013/11_13/11_04/110413_arab.htm

In Bolivia, micro loans lift thousands of women from poverty



Linnet Claros Yevara, a resident of Mizque, a municipality in Bolivia with an 85 percent rate of extreme poverty rate, has seen her situation improve a lot lately.

"My family eats better," she says. "Every day I give them fruit." These improvements are thanks to the Semilla, or Seed, programme, a microcredit and skills-development programme financed by the Government of Spain (through the MDG Fund), and supported by the Bolivian Ministry of Justice.

Bolivia has one of the highest levels of inequality of any country in the region, and indigenous women are the main victims of this dynamic of exclusion. An indigenous woman who is active in the informal economy earns an average of US \$97 a month, compared with \$395 for a non-indigenous man in the formal sector.

<http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/ourwork/womenempowerment/successstories/miles-de-mujeres-bolivianas-pobres-gozan-ahora-de-un-patrimonio-productivo/>

GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

Dhahran harassment incident sparks outrage



A screengrab of a video posted on YouTube shows an unidentified man harassing young ladies at the parking lot of Dhahran Mall in the Eastern Province.

A group of young women were repeatedly harassed by men at a Dhahran mall, triggering an angry wave of reaction across the country against it.

The two-minute video shows a group of five young women wearing black abayas and headscarves being harassed by a countless number of young men at the Mall of Dhahran.

The men were making funny moves at their victims and verbally abusing them during the terrifying and intimidating

chase to the parking lot of the mall. One woman tried to fight back by kicking one of her attackers after he had grabbed her hands in an attempt to hold her tight.

He backed off. "You said you had a knife, show it to me," the attacker said. "Don't beat them. Stay away, it is my turn," another attacker said as he prepared to join his accomplice in the physical and verbal attack.

<http://arabnews.com/news/468577>

WLUML named a top nonprofit in the field of violence against women!

WLUML is pleased to announce that we have been identified by experts as a top nonprofit working in the field of violence against women internationally!

In 2013, we are looking forward to developing projects in line with current global events, starting with work in areas such as political participation. We need your continued support in order to help us develop WLUML's work and offer WLUML's unique and expert perspectives to a wider audience.

<http://www.wluml.org/>

MOFA announces procedures of combating violence against women



A protest was held by the Shura Council building, on 13 November 2013, against the lack of safeguarding of women's rights in the current constituent assembly

Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) issued a press release on Wednesday titled "Egypt's efforts to combat violence against women". It was issued two days after a Thompson Reuters Foundation study ranked Egypt the worst Arab country for women's rights.

The press release cited 22 points detailing those efforts, divided into both a general and legal framework. MOFA

measured violence against women as ranging from the lack of political participation, discrimination to crimes of rape.

The most important points in the release were concerned with the constitutional and legal protection of women as well as the efforts of the National Council for Women (NCW) in monitoring the commitment of governmental and nongovernmental agencies concerned with countering violence of all forms against women.



“The National Council for Childhood and Motherhood, which reports directly to the Prime Minister, counters female circumcision by implementing a national programme designed to raise social awareness against female circumcision and to limit social and cultural pressures to practice female circumcision,” the release read, adding that the council announced that 120 Egyptian villages are free of female genital mutilation. MOFA also praised the role of civil society associations for the protection of Egyptian women, especially in the fields of research, and holding training sessions to combat violence against women.

The release also discussed the legal efforts taken by Egypt to criminalize “all forms of violence against women”, including the possibility of execution as a punishment for crimes of rape. “Sexual harassment, through the use of force or threatening to do it, is penalized by Article 269 of the Penal Code, as amended by Decree No. 11/2011,” MOFA stated.

However, these efforts do not seem to bear fruit in reality. Around a hundred people protested outside the Shura Council building in Downtown Cairo on Wednesday, demanding that the constitution, currently being amended, contain articles protecting the rights of women.

<http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2013/11/14/mofa-announces-procedures-of-combating-violence-against-women/>

GENDER & HUMAN RIGHTS

ILO Governing Body reviews progress on the situation of domestic workers worldwide

The organization’s executive body discusses the measures that countries have adopted since the adoption of the ILO’s Domestic Workers Convention, as well as the steps that are needed to achieve decent working conditions for the world’s 53 million domestic workers.

GENEVA - According to an ILO study released in January 2013, only ten per cent of domestic workers worldwide are covered by the same laws and legislation as other workers. Many of them are also subject to deplorable working conditions, labour exploitation and human rights abuses.

But the situation is changing. A discussion held during the ILO’s governing body on 23 October took stock of the progress made since the adoption of the ILO’s Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189) and the conclusions were quite encouraging.

To date, ten ILO member States (Bolivia, Germany, Guyana, Italy, Mauritius, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Philippines, South Africa and Uruguay) have ratified the Convention. Several other member States have started ratification procedures or have stated their intention of doing so.

Since June 2011, interest in improving the living and working conditions of domestic workers has spread across the regions. Legislative reforms regarding domestic workers have been completed in numerous countries, including Argentina, Bahrain, Brazil, Spain, Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam.

In several other countries, new regulatory and policy initiatives are being taken, including in Angola, Austria, Belgium, Chile, China, Finland, India, Indonesia, Jamaica, Morocco, Namibia, Paraguay, United Arab Emirates and United States.

http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/activities/all/WCMS_227338/lang-en/index.htm

Longing for Spring: The revolution that betrayed Arab women



A woman leads chants during a demonstration in Tahrir Square in January 2011. Almost three years after popular uprisings toppled autocratic leaders in one of the most conservative corners of the world, three out of five Arab Spring countries rank among the bottom five states for women's rights

During the past three years, the Middle East has changed faster than anyone could have ever anticipated. When Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire in Tunisia in December 2010, he couldn't have known his death would trigger extraordinary events that would transform the Arab world.

From the oceanic gatherings on Cairo's Tahrir Square to the death of Col. Gaddafi in Libya, the political landscape has changed. But the transformation is still in motion, with a number of key forces fighting for power, from religious fundamentalists to the military. At a time when sectarianism is on the rise and reformists are clearly losing momentum, where does this leave women?

The picture is grim. A perception poll of gender experts by the Thomson Reuters Foundation shows that the rise of political Islam across Arab Spring countries has had a real impact on secularism. Almost three years after popular uprisings toppled autocratic leaders in one of the most conservative corners of the world, three out of five Arab Spring countries rank among the bottom five states for women's rights.

Many political gains for women have been lost. In fact, women are struggling to preserve their dignity, and far from progressing, they are now fighting to preserve the rights they had before the Arab Spring.

https://www.devex.com/en/news/longing-for-spring-the-revolution-that-betrayed/82290?source=DefaultHomepage_Center_5

Turkey - Prime Minister leads offensive against mixed sex student dormitories at public universities

November 6, 2013 - Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan has stood behind his objection to mixed-sex student accommodation, making public that governors had already been "intervening" in certain situations upon "intelligence" about houses where male and female university students live together.

The prime minister said the government was already on a mission to "segregate" girls' and boys' buildings in dormitories operated by the state, adding that this segregation had already been completed in around three quarters of all dorms.

http://www.wunrn.com/news/2013/11_13/11_04/110413_turkey.htm

Morocco - Positive measures on parity in new law on political parties: possibilities and challenges

A Paradox

Democratic countries with long democratic traditions are very reluctant to regulate internal relations within political parties with a very nicely sounding excuse: democracy rests upon the freedom of political association. In some countries only there are special rules, banning political parties based on ideologies of exclusion of any specific group in the society or the ones which propagate hate and violence. These rules are never strictly applied, especially not with regard the parties which are propagating values and traditions detrimental to the women's enjoyment of indivisible human rights.

Following this approach of sanctity of the freedom of political association, internal party regulations of democratic procedures did not need to become a matter of detailed legal interference and sanctioning. So the articles dealing with internal party democratic rules are scarce, generalized, limited to a bare



minimum, mostly stipulating that parties have to have statutory warranties of their inner democracy. On the top of it, there is little or no control over the implementation of party inner democracy rules and no serious sanctions for noncompliance. How the party will do it, or will not do it in practice, should be, by the theories of this understanding of the freedom of political association, the matter which concerns only party members and party voters. The members who do not like the party inner procedures can leave the party, the voters who find that the party has a problem with internal democracy can chose not to vote for such a party and the issue is solved. Nobody seems to be worried when the facts of malpractice of democracy rules within the parties are becoming omnipresent and neither members nor voters do not have a choice of any really democratic party and are becoming more and more cynical, disgusted, and distant from all political parties.

I find it is a real paradox that political parties, even the ones which are strongly depending on the tax payers moneys, are not legally bound, controlled and punished if they do not develop and respect strong rules of inner party democracy. Marginalization and exclusion from decision making of the women in the parties is just one, telling sign - the best Litmus test- of the parties' lack of inner democracy. So we have, all over the globe, an incredible tacit presumption that the rule of law in a nation and parliamentary democracy could be built upon political parties without legally warranted inner democracy and respect of their own internal democratic procedures and their internal rule of law.

Moroccan Innovations in the New Political Party Law

Left and green parties in Europe have at least half a century long tradition of special women party organizations and positive measures for equal women's representation in party organs, but the praxis to enact any positive measures for all political parties, is rather new and connected to the new wave of so called "fast track" women strategies to achieve gender equality in transitions and post conflict emerging democracies.

http://www.wunrn.com/news/2013/11_13/11_11/111113_morocco.htm

RESOURCES & CALLS

BOOKS & REPORTS

Who cares: Unpaid care work, poverty and women's human rights

ActionAid International, Institute of Development Studies and Oxfam are hosting the UK launch of the UN Special Rapporteur's report on unpaid care and women's human rights.

The report, by UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, Magdalena Sepúlveda Carmona, will be presented at the 68th session of the United Nations General Assembly in October. The report positions unpaid care work as a major human rights issue. Focusing on women caregivers, particularly those living in poverty, the report argues that heavy and unequal care responsibilities are major barriers to gender equality and to women's equal enjoyment of human rights, and in many cases, condemn women to poverty. This is a landmark report as it is the first to present the links between unpaid care work, poverty and women's human rights to all 193 UN member states.

Unpaid care work underpins all societies, contributing to wellbeing, social development and economic growth. It involves domestic tasks and direct care of people within family homes and local communities. It is estimated that if unpaid care work were assigned a monetary value it would constitute between 10 and 39 per cent of GDP. However, despite considerable research, care is generally unrecognized and under-valued by policy-makers and legislators.

The meeting includes a presentation by UN Special Rapporteur, Magdalena Sepúlveda Carmona, and a discussion of the report's findings with a panel of experts.



ActionAid International, IDS and Oxfam have long played a prominent part in promoting policies to support the empowerment of women and girls. This event forms part of our exciting programs of current work on this theme.

<http://www.ids.ac.uk/news/who-cares-unpaid-care-work-poverty-and-women-s-human-rights>

New report highlights more than 400 threats to civil society around the world



A new report released today by the global civil society alliance, CIVICUS, reveals a pattern of sustained attacks on civil society organizations (CSOs) around the world.

CIVICUS has tracked 413 threats to civil society in 87 countries since the beginning of 2012. Worryingly the report shows that several governments are attempting to weaken civil society organisations by enacting laws which prevent them from accessing the funding they need to survive and prevent them from conducting legitimate activities involving expressions of democratic dissent.

“We are hugely concerned about the killings of land rights and environmental activists in Latin America and Southeast Asia due to collusion between politicians and big businesses. Equally, defenders of rights of women and the gay community are facing severe threats in the Middle East and Africa respectively,” said Danny Sriskandarajah, CIVICUS Secretary-General.

<https://civicus.org/>

UN expert breaks global silence on rape of young virgin girls in Iranian prisons



On 24 October, UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, Professor Rashida Manjoo, introduced a comprehensive report, entitled Pathways to, conditions and consequences of incarceration of women. The report was officially presented at the UN General Assembly session and was followed by efforts highlighting the need to improve knowledge and skills pertaining to rights of women in the criminal justice system.

The report highlights the causal relationship between acts of violence against women and cases involving incarceration. It further illustrates how human rights abuses and violence prior to, during,

and after imprisonment affects women of all ages and cultures. In her report, Ms. Manjoo refers to the standards set by the UN Bangkok Rules that are designed to protect women from victimization, upholding adequate care and facilities during incarceration, and proper post-prison rehabilitation mechanisms. By referring to the JFI report entitled Crime and Impunity: Sexual Torture of Women Prisoners in Islamic Republic Professor Manjoo’s report acts as a landmark in highlighting the plight of women in Iranian prisons. It identifies Crime and Impunity as a source that has “uncovered cases of rape of female political prisoners in the Islamic Republic of Iran throughout the 1980s, including the rape of young virgin girls before execution, forced marriages and other forms of sexual violence, some of which continues today.”

<http://www.wluml.org/news/un-expert-breaks-global-silence-rape-young-virgin-girls-iranian-prisons>

The Arab Spring in the winter sun



While tourists relaxed on the pristine sands of one of Tunisia's many beach resorts, I met with journalists, academics and policy-makers in Tunisia's capital to discuss the findings of BBC Media Action's latest research.

The research surveyed 1000 people across Tunisia to find out how they use media and their views on governance in Tunisia. It highlighted the important role that media has in holding government to account in Tunisia and contrasted this finding with

low levels of trust in what the media report.

Political turmoil

The launch of the research was timely. It came at the end of a week of protests and increasing violence marking the second anniversary of Tunisia's post-revolution elections. Furthermore, it came on the day the prime minister made a written pledge to step down in a last-ditch effort to persuade the opposition to take part in negotiations to set a date for new national elections and to appoint an electoral commission. Meanwhile, the staff in my hotel refused to acknowledge that any significant political action had taken place and reassured me that Tunisia is a stable and safe country.

The Tunisian economy relies on tourism. In 2012, tourism accounted for 6.5% of Tunisia's gross domestic product and employed around one in five people directly or indirectly.

Yet in Tunis, one journalist told me that she hadn't slept in three days because she was so concerned about the current situation.

Make-or-break moment

Tunisia is at a turning point, and the media plays a pivotal role in whatever happens next - over half of the Tunisians in our survey rated media more highly than any other institution as a way to hold leaders to account, with over two thirds saying that if there was a way to question government officials, they would.

But the overwhelming majority - 93% - also told us they do not contact the media about issues that matter to them because, as nearly a third of them thought, it "will not make a difference". Finding a way to change this perception is vital if the media is going to represent Tunisians and I hope that the research that I was able to share last week can help with that process.

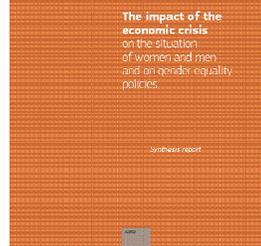
As Patrick Merienne, First Secretary for Development at the British Embassy in Tunis, explained, "There is progress in the media compared to pre revolution Tunisia... But it is not perfect. This research can underscore the path that could be followed to reform state media in Tunisia for the future."

<http://www.cominit.com/global/content/arab-spring-winter-sun-0>



EU - The impact of the economic crisis on the situation of women and men and on gender equality policies

Europe is experiencing a financial and economic crisis. This began with the 'credit crunch' in the financial services sector and evolved as a sovereign debt crisis. Fiscal consolidation and austerity measures have been deployed in response to the crisis to reduce public deficits and debt. This crisis is still unfolding so that the analysis and findings of this report must remain a work in progress.



This report aims to assess the impact of this crisis on the situation of women and men in Europe and on gender equality policies. This is important as economic crises are deeply gendered. Past experience cannot provide sufficient insight into the gender impact of this crisis as the position of women has changed considerably since the last major recession. This crisis offers opportunities for radical change, including a potential to advance equality for women and men. However, the crisis also poses

challenges where gender equality may be seen as an issue only for the good times.

http://www.wunrn.com/news/2013/10_13/10_28/102813_eu.htm

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