



**Gender and Development e -Brief / Issue 108**

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## NEWS & ARTICLES

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### WOMEN'S RIGHTS ACTIVISM

#### Tunisian Souhayr Belhassen Wins Arab Woman Award

Souhayr Belhassen, the Tunisian President of FIDH, received the Takreem Arab Woman of the Year Award, during a ceremony held at the Katara cultural village in Qatar. "I dedicate this award to the women and men who have brought about the Tunisian revolution. I dedicate this award to all the revolutions that are taking place in the Arab world", declared Souhayr Belhassen during the award ceremony.

The Takreem Achievement Awards aim to reward the great personalities of the Arab world who have distinguished themselves through their remarkable work and success in different fields. The "Woman of the Year" category pays homage to women who, through their activities, contribute to the repute of the Arab region worldwide.

The ceremony presented the laureates of the second edition of the "TAKREEM Arab Achievement" awards in various categories.

[http://www.wunrn.com/news/2011/05\\_11/05\\_02/050211\\_tunisian.htm](http://www.wunrn.com/news/2011/05_11/05_02/050211_tunisian.htm)



#### Mt. Everest - First Palestinian Arab Woman Aims to Conquer

The temperature is 10 degrees below freezing and the wind is like a hurricane, threatening to sweep away the unwary from the treacherously slippery mountain slope that has been home to Suzanne Al Houby and 39 other iron-willed women for almost a fortnight. Al Houby, a mother of two, aims to make history this month by scaling Mt. Everest, the highest peak in the world. If she succeeds, she will be the first Palestinian woman to do so. Originally from Jaffa in Palestine, the 44-year-old started climbing for a cause. As she told the Palestinian news agency WAFA, "When I climb, I send a message to the world: that we Palestinians have the will to live in peace," Al-Houby is the first Arab woman to conquer Mt. Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, the highest peak in Africa, Mt. Blanc in France, and Mt. Elbrus in Russia. Now, her sights are on a mountain once regarded as a male domain.

[http://www.wunrn.com/news/2011/05\\_11/05\\_09/050911\\_mtEverest.htm](http://www.wunrn.com/news/2011/05_11/05_09/050911_mtEverest.htm)

#### Water Project Helps Protect Women from Violence in Sudan

A water project supported by the UN-African Union peacekeeping force (UNAMID) in eight villages of North Darfur will not only facilitate residents' access to water but also help to reduce sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in the region, local residents and UNAMID officials said. "For years we have been afraid of being attacked while fetching water and collecting firewood; it is not always possible to move in groups and we are often escorted by men or UNAMID peacekeepers," a resident of Kuma Garadayat village, who declined to be named, told IRIN on 27 April.



Kuma Garadayat, 60km from El Fasher in North Darfur, is one of the villages where the water project was launched on 26 April. The eight villages host at least 3,000 returnees. About 30,000 rolling water containers, with a capacity of 75l each, the equivalent of four jerry cans, were distributed to women in the villages, all with poor access to water and severely affected by drought during the dry season. "I hope through the water carriers, things will become easier for us; we'll be less exposed," the villager added. More information on the site: [http://www.wunrn.com/news/2011/05\\_11/05\\_02/050211\\_sudan.htm](http://www.wunrn.com/news/2011/05_11/05_02/050211_sudan.htm)

### **Revolution's women in Egypt participate in a march against "sectarian strife"**

A large number of Egyptian women participated in a march entitled "No to sectarian strife" which appeared with its ugly face in the district of Imbaba. They participated in this march to stress the values of citizenship and tolerance and to prevent the strife that has been witnessed in the district and in many different places in Egypt after the revolution. The Egyptian Center for Women's Rights affirms that the incidents that happened between Muslims and Christians are a clear attempt to abort the 25th of January revolution through the use of women to fuel strife. For more information please follow the link <http://www.wluml.org/node/7121>

### **Muslim Women Online Social Network**

Sister Power is about Empowering Muslim Women by creating a space where their voices can be heard and their concerns made public.

Lana Abu Ayyash - "In 2008, I started [a social network for Muslim women](#) called SisterPower.net. It is a place where, as Muslim women, we can interact, share ideas, express our feelings, and voice our concerns."

[http://www.wunrn.com/news/2011/05\\_11/05\\_16/051611\\_muslim.htm](http://www.wunrn.com/news/2011/05_11/05_16/051611_muslim.htm)



### **New Leadership Sidelines Women in Libya**

In recent days, after weeks of delays and closed-door meetings, rebel leaders here have announced a slate of new appointments, including a defense chief and a minister for reconstruction and infrastructure. They have added members to a national council, to represent areas in southern, central and western [Libya](#), all in an effort to bolster the revolution, better represent the country as a whole and – in the event that Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi bolts – make civil war unlikely, the rebel leaders explained.

[http://www.wunrn.com/news/2011/05\\_11/05\\_16/051611\\_libya.htm](http://www.wunrn.com/news/2011/05_11/05_16/051611_libya.htm)



## **CALLS & STATEMENTS**

### **Grand Mufti Says Abusing Women Is Un-Islamic In Saudi Arabia**

Grand Mufti Sheikh Abdul Aziz Al-Asheikh has strongly warned against maltreating women in any form and said this is totally against Islam. In his Friday sermon at Imam Turki bin Abdullah Mosque in Riyadh, the mufti said only bad people treat women badly. "The psychological or physical abuse of wives, daughters and sisters is against the Islamic Shariah and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)," he said. Al-Asheikh warned husbands and fathers who take the salaries of their wives and daughters that they are committing anti-Islamic acts. "The fathers who make it a condition to have their daughters' salaries before they give their consent for marriage are equally wrong. Husbands who force their working wives to share in home expenses are committing erroneous acts. Islam made it the responsibility of the man to spend on the house," he told the worshippers. The mufti also said it is haram (forbidden in Islam) when husbands ask their wives who request divorce to return the dowry before they consent to divorce. "For more information please follow the link

[http://www.wunrn.com/news/2011/05\\_11/05\\_09/050911\\_saudi.htm](http://www.wunrn.com/news/2011/05_11/05_09/050911_saudi.htm)

## **Women With Disabilities**

99 states have pledged to take concrete steps to ensure equal rights and opportunities for people with disabilities by adopting the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. "These states have recognized and affirmed that a person with a disability is not the problem that needs treatment - they are ready to treat the discrimination in society that is the real problem," the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay said. "A person in a wheelchair is not prevented from accessing the voting booth by her wheelchair but by the stairs leading up to the booth. It is the stairs that are discriminatory and problematic. I congratulate 100 states for acknowledging this truth." To read more please follow the link

[http://www.wunrn.com/news/2011/05\\_11/05\\_16/051611\\_women2.htm](http://www.wunrn.com/news/2011/05_11/05_16/051611_women2.htm)

## **UN Women stresses upon Empowering Women Worldwide ...**

Speech delivered by Ms. Michelle Bachelet, Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women at the Women's Foreign Policy Group Luncheon, New York, on 28th April 2011. "It is a great pleasure for me to be here. I realize that all of you will have much to say about women's empowerment and women's leadership, based on your experience in different walks of life – whether the academy, the corporate sector or international relations. I do not need to tell you therefore that in all walks of life, women's empowerment requires overcoming a number of hurdles – including the gender stereotypes that relegate disproportionate responsibility for household care giving to women, the risk of violence in public places, inadequate training and education to compete for good jobs or access global markets – and in poor households and communities especially, inability to think beyond daily survival needs." To read all the speech please follow the link

[http://www.wunrn.com/news/2011/05\\_11/05\\_02/050211\\_un2.htm](http://www.wunrn.com/news/2011/05_11/05_02/050211_un2.htm)

## **... And GEAR Comments on UN Women Strategic Plan 2011-2013**

The GEAR Campaign welcomes the UN Women Strategic Plan (2011 - 2013) as the foundational document that cohesively spells out the work plan and programmatic activities for the new entity globally. On behalf of our members, composed of women's human rights, health, development and human rights organizations working at the local, national, regional and global levels, the GEAR Campaign has highlighted themes based on feedback we have received from our constituency for the Strategic Plan (2011 - 2013).

Please refer to the below document for a thematic overview of GEAR member submissions to UN Women during the Civil Society comment period on the Strategic Plan from late April to early May 2011. to know more about the Main themes:

[http://www.gearcampaign.org/news\\_events/uncategorized/gear-comments-on-the-un-women-strategic-plan-2011-2013/](http://www.gearcampaign.org/news_events/uncategorized/gear-comments-on-the-un-women-strategic-plan-2011-2013/)



## **GENDER & HUMAN RIGHTS**

### **Iman al-Obeidi 'raped by Gaddafi troops' flees to Tunisia**

Iman al-Obeidi, the Libyan woman who claimed she was raped by Muammar Gaddafi's soldiers, has reportedly fled to Tunisia with the help of a defecting military officer. Obeidi, who drew worldwide attention when she burst into a Tripoli hotel to describe to foreign journalists her alleged ordeal at the hands of 15 men, has been given refuge in Tunis by western officials. Obeidi told CNN she had entered Tunisia with a refugee document and was considering her next move. She claimed her court case against the soldiers - who she said had seized her at a checkpoint near Tripoli - had barely progressed. For more information please follow the link <http://www.wluml.org/node/7114>

### Women's Political Participation Protections in Egypt

While experts are working with the military council to amend the political rights law, news leaked about canceling allocating women's seats, which are known by "women's quota" and which is one of the positive type of discrimination in law. Women's quota is not the only type of positive discrimination. There is another type: the quota of workers and farmers which is 50% of the elected seats. However, there is not any news on canceling this quota, which raises the question on the validity of cancelling women's quota.

- Why does the cancellation only refer to women's quota, whereas the principle of positive discrimination continues and is not canceled?
- What are the guarantees that may preserve women's political participation just as much as they participated effectively in the revolution? For More information please follow this link [http://www.wunrn.com/news/2011/05\\_11/05\\_16/051611\\_egypt.htm](http://www.wunrn.com/news/2011/05_11/05_16/051611_egypt.htm)

### Fertility Problems Worry Officials in Armenia

One in five Armenian families are unable to have children, with doctors saying women's fertility has been damaged by stress and abortions, while men are harmed by ill health. The situation has improved from that in the 1990s, but experts worry that the country's demographic future could be threatened if more is not done to reverse the dire trend. "Although the results of past investigations (32 per cent of women were infertile compared to 17 per cent now) significantly differ from the current indicators, the level of infertility in Armenia continues to be dangerous," said Karine Saribekyan, the head of the mother and children's department at the health ministry.

[http://www.wunrn.com/news/2011/05\\_11/05\\_09/050911\\_armenia2.htm](http://www.wunrn.com/news/2011/05_11/05_09/050911_armenia2.htm)

### GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

#### Humanitarian Ship Rachel Corrie Attacked in Route to Gaza

An Israeli war ship has attacked a vessel carrying humanitarian aid to Gaza in the international waters, the Centre for Research and Globalization said in a report posted in its website. The Malaysian ship, Spirit of Rachel Corrie, was carrying 7.5 kilometers of UPVC (plastic) sewage pipes to help restore the devastated sewerage system in Gaza when it was attacked in international waters by Israeli and Egyptian ships, the report said.

[http://www.wunrn.com/news/2011/05\\_11/05\\_16/051611\\_humanitarian.htm](http://www.wunrn.com/news/2011/05_11/05_16/051611_humanitarian.htm)



#### Threat against human rights activist Nehad Abu El-Komsan

The Arab Organization for Human Rights (AOHR) expresses its deep concern at the threats that Mrs. Nehad Abo El-Komsan, the Chair of the Egyptian Center for Women's Rights, received owing to her defense of women's rights regarding the attacks that attempt to eliminate women's achievements by the pressure to amend the current Personal Status Code. For more information please follow the link <http://www.wluml.org/node/7115>

#### Muslim women beyond the stereotype in UK

Tehmina Kazi wears modest western dress and believes in plurality and diversity within her faith, Islam. For her pains, she has been labelled a whore, admonished for not wearing the hijab and accused, inaccurately, of wearing short skirts by people she has never met, writing online. When she defended Usama Hasan, the London imam who faced death threats and was suspended from Leyton mosque last month after he said evolution was compatible with Islam, she had to go to police after receiving threats of her own. For more information please follow the link <http://www.wluml.org/node/7110>

### **Continued Arbitrary Detention of Women Human Rights Defenders in Iran**

The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, had been informed by reliable sources of the arbitrary detention of Ms. Maryam Bahreman, a civil society activist involved in the defence of women rights, notably as a member of One Million Signatures Campaign in Shiraz, and of Ms. Mahbubeh Karami, another member of the One Million Signatures Campaign. According to the information received, on May 11, 2011, at 7.30 a.m., officers of the security forces from the Intelligence Ministry came to the house of Ms. Maryam Bahreman with a detention order. They reportedly arrested her on the charge of “action against national security”, and searched her house for three hours, confiscating some personal items including her cell phone, her laptop and some books. More information on the situation following this link

[http://www.wunrn.com/news/2011/05\\_11/05\\_16/051611\\_iran.htm](http://www.wunrn.com/news/2011/05_11/05_16/051611_iran.htm)

### **Combating Pay Discrimination in Jordan**

According to the ILO’s global report on discrimination “Equality at work: The continuing challenge”, significant progress has been made in recent decades in advancing gender equality in the world of work. However, the gender pay gap still exists, with women’s



**International  
Labour  
Organization**

wages representing between 70-90 per cent of wages earned by their male counterparts. Jordan has a longstanding commitment to the achievement of pay equity for women and men at work. The country has ratified several international conventions which assert the right to equal pay for equal value of work. Yet, in reality, the measures which ensure equality of pay are often not applied. ILO Online spoke with Asma Khader, Secretary-General of the Jordanian National Commission for Women (JNCW). [http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/press-and-media-centre/insight/WCMS\\_155417/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/press-and-media-centre/insight/WCMS_155417/lang--en/index.htm)

## **BOOKS & REPORTS**

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### **GENDER RIGHTS**

#### **Women Facing Fundamentalisms - AWID**

As the world waits to see the outcome of the uprisings in the region, in which way will the influence of fundamentalist and extremist groups play out in the new MENA? Will the unity shown during the revolutions spill over to a national cohesion that resists sectarianism? How far will inequality and injustice prevail in the new structures that emerge, if/when they do? For more on this, please read a quotation from the spotlight on Egypt: The demands for freedom, equality and justice of the protestors of Tahrir Square gave hope for an alternative vision of society. However, research into religious fundamentalisms clearly shows that they are opportunistic forces that capitalize on political instability and benefit from a lack of viable political options. To read more from AWID news letter and the spotlight please follow the link

[http://www.wunrn.com/news/2011/05\\_11/05\\_16/051611\\_women3.htm](http://www.wunrn.com/news/2011/05_11/05_16/051611_women3.htm)

#### **Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures (EWIC) project for scholars**

The [EWIC Scholars’ Database](#) is an invaluable listing of scholars from all over the world and from all disciplines whose work focuses on women, gender, and Islamic cultures. Based on the authors’ database for the *Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures*, this free online publication is a fully searchable directory of connecting scholars, students, policymakers, and activists with each other and with NGOs, governmental agencies, research foundations, publishers, members of the media, and potential employers seeking researchers whose work specifically covers issues on women and gender related to Islamic cultures. The online

database, funded by a grant from the [International Development Research Center](http://www.iris-lebanon.org/arabic/inner/ebrief.htm) (Ottawa), is published at <http://sjoseph.ucdavis.edu/ewic>.

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