



## Gender and Development e -Brief / Issue 112

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## NEWS & ARTICLES

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### GENDER ACTIVISM

#### In Lebanon

#### Girls camp in Lebanon focuses on technology for empowerment

Equipped with writing, filming and editing skills, "Geekettes" are ready to take back the tech and introduce audiences to an entirely new way of looking at the world: through the eyes of Lebanese girls ages 15-19.



During the weeklong Girl Geek Camp in July, girls from across Lebanon arrived in the city of Kfardebian to learn how to create blogs, use social networks, and film videos on cameras and mobile phones. Building on the camp's success, the second class of Geekettes arrive this month. "When I think of technology, I immediately think of data and really complicated stuff," said 16-year-old geekette, Reem Chamseddine. "Geek

Camp showed me that technology could be used to create beautiful things." This was the first session of Girl Geek Camp, and trainers spent weeks putting together a program that empowered young girls through technology. "This is a sensitive age where girls are very much aware of social issues, and are in a transitional period when it comes to career choices," said Chantal Partamian, a filmmaker and Geek Camp trainer. "I wanted to make them realize that film is a tool of expression, and that the availability of simple video-making tools give them another way to express, explore and shed light on their issues." To know more about the initiative and the collective that organized it, please follow the link:

<http://www.globalfundforwomen.org/impact/success-stories/62-general/1916-geek-out-with-lebanons-geekettes>

#### Support Groups with Iraqi Refugee Men & Youth on SGBV

ABAAD -Resource Center for Gender Equality and Heartland Alliance for Human Needs & Human Rights recently piloted support groups of Iraqi refugee men and youth in Lebanon to engage men in addressing Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) in their families



and communities. This activity module was conducted in collaboration with Amel Association, Caritas Migrant Center, International Medical Corps, and the Norwegian Refugee Council in Lebanon from June to August of 2011, within Heartland Alliance's SGBV program to provide services and support to Iraqi refugee survivors of SGBV.

This activity comes at a particularly crucial time for work against SGBV in Lebanon. Recent legislative gains in striking out the mitigation of penalties for honor killings and punishing human trafficking demonstrate increased political will to take crimes against women seriously. However, these are just the first steps for Lebanon to fulfill its international obligations and its responsibility to its people to ensure equal rights, security, and quality of life for women and

men. Much still needs to be done in ensuring the implementation of these preliminary laws, as well as in passing further legislation to protect women and children, such as legislation addressing family violence. In addition, it is necessary at the policy level to go beyond punishment and encompass protection for victims as well as prevention. For more information please follow this link:

[http://www.wunrn.com/news/2011/09\\_11/09\\_05/090511\\_lebanon.htm](http://www.wunrn.com/news/2011/09_11/09_05/090511_lebanon.htm)

### In Iran

#### We are Everywhere: Gay and Lesbian Iranians Come Out on Facebook'

Iran's gay and lesbian community is struggling to win some recognition by coming out in defiance of a regime that criminalises homosexuality.

A group of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender Iranians have posted videos of themselves on Facebook in a campaign to highlight the discrimination against sexual minorities in Iran where homosexuals are put to death. For more information please follow the link

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/sep/11/gay-iranians-facebook-defiance>



### In Yemen

#### Protests continue in Yemen with Women

Women carry kerosene lamps to protest power outages during a demonstration in the southern city of Taiz.



Security forces and soldiers who defected to join anti-government demonstrators exchanged heavy gunfire in the streets of the capital city in confrontations that killed dozens and stoked fears that Yemen could be descending into civil war.

More than seven months after protests began, and three months since President Ali Abdullah Saleh left for neighboring Saudi Arabia after being injured in a bombing, battles broke out on the edge of a camp in Sanaa where thousands of protesters live. For more

information kindly check the article

[http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle-east/fierce-fighting-in-yemen-as-political-talks-stall/2011/09/19/gIQAh1U5fK\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle-east/fierce-fighting-in-yemen-as-political-talks-stall/2011/09/19/gIQAh1U5fK_story.html)

## GENDER & HUMAN RIGHTS

### Questionnaire Challenges Candidates on Human Rights Issues in Tunisia



Candidates running for the Constituent Assembly should make a public commitment to protect human rights, Human Rights Watch said in addressing a questionnaire to all of Tunisia's political parties.

The questionnaire invites all candidates - those running both on party lists and independent lists in the October 23, 2011 election - to state their positions on key human rights issues. These include the need to guarantee gender equality as a matter of law, eliminate criminal penalties for nonviolent speech, strengthen judicial independence,

and revise the anti-terrorism law to ensure it does not criminalize speech offenses or trample the right to a fair trial.

“The stakes for human rights are enormous in the election of an assembly that will draft a new constitution and probably adopt critical laws,” said Sarah Leah Whitson, Middle East and North Africa director at Human Rights Watch. “We hope the responses that parties and candidates give to this questionnaire on human rights issues will help voters make an informed choice on October 23.” To have more information please follow the link

<http://www.hrw.org/news/2011/08/09/tunisia-questionnaire-challenges-candidates-human-rights-issues>

## **GENDER BASED VIOLENCE**

**In Irak**

### **Continuing Challenges for Women's Rights in Iraq**

When a middle-aged mother took a taxi alone from Baghdad to Nasiriyah, about 300 kilometres south earlier this year, her 20-year-old driver stopped on the way, pulled her to the side of the road and raped her. And that began a telling legal struggle.



"She is not a simple case," says Hanaa Edwar, head of the Iraqi rights-based Al-Amal Association, established in Baghdad after the U.S.-led invasion in 2003.

"She came from an affluent family, held a professional job, and told her family about the rape. They had the police arrest the driver," Edwar says. "Then she came to us for legal help. She said, 'I want my rights back, and what he has done to me, he will do to others. I want this perpetrator punished'."

The rape victim lost her case. "The judge had a male mentality. They think you should not make a scandal, but be silent. He prompted the accused with questions like, 'You did this when you were drunk - yes?' This is how they intimidate," Edwar said. "Now we are making an appeal." The Al-Amal Association is one of a handful of women's advocates in Iraq fighting for female equality in marriage and divorce, and opposing a draconian penal code that favours perpetrators of domestic abuse and of honour killings within households. For more information please follow the link

<http://ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=105079>

### **Attacks Continue on Women Human Rights Defenders**

Women have been at the forefront of demonstrations across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) in the recent popular uprisings, which have received much media and international attention. In contrast, coverage of attacks on women human rights defenders (WHRDs) in Iraq's Tahrir Square demonstrations has been limited, AWID asks why. On the frontlines of demonstrations or behind the scenes as tech-savvy organizers, women have played pivotal roles in the recent democratic revolutions and uprisings in the MENA region. Women's activism and organizing in Tunisia, Egypt, Bahrain, Yemen and Libya has garnered substantial international attention. Yet in spite of several attacks, including sexual assaults, on Iraqi women activists and their organizations since February, women's roles in Iraq's Tahrir Square demonstrations have generated less media coverage. And the violence against them has intensified since June, one of the deadliest months so far in 2011 for Iraqis. The Organization for Women's Freedom in Iraq (OWFI) is one of the leaders of Iraq's Tahrir Square demonstrations, helping to organize youth activists and advocating for women's rights.



<http://awid.org/News-Analysis/Friday-Files/The-Other-Tahrir-Square-Attacks-Continue-on-Women-Human-Rights-Defenders-in-Iraq>

### In Jordan

#### Rape Case Turns Focus to Jordan's Factory'

After a garment factory worker told Jordanian police she had been raped three times by her boss, the case escalated into an international campaign that threatens to close down Jordan's largest garment exporter to the U.S. It could also force government and business to do more to improve conditions in an industry that has been crucial to this kingdom's economy – and to its relations with the United States. For more information please follow the link <http://www.wluml.org/news/jordan-rape-case-turns-focus-jordans-factory>



### In Iran

#### Gay Rights: A World of Inequality

Three men were hanged in Iran for the crime of lavat, sexual intercourse between two men. The case is considered extreme even by Iranian standards, because while the death penalty is in place for homosexuality, it is usually enforced only when there is a charge of assault or rape alongside it; the accusations in these three cases were of consensual sex. For more information please follow the link <http://www.wluml.org/news/international-gay-rights-world-inequality>



#### Women's rights activist, Farnak Farid, beaten severely in detention

Farnak Farid was arrested on 3 September in Tabriz, north-west Iran, during demonstrations over the drying of Lake Oroumieh, which is situated between the Iranian provinces of East and West Azerbaijan. She is reported to have been tortured and otherwise ill-treated in detention. For more information please follow the link <http://www.wluml.org/news/iran-womens-rights-activist-farnak-farid-beaten-severely-detention>

### ... STEPS FORWARD

#### In Saudi Arabia

#### Women in Saudi Arabia to vote and run in elections

Saudi women face severe restrictions in their working and personal lives. Women in Saudi Arabia are to be given the right to vote and run in future municipal elections, King Abdullah has announced. He said they would also have the right to be appointed to the consultative Shura Council. The move was welcomed by activists who have called for greater rights for women in the kingdom, which enforces a strict version of Sunni Islamic law. The changes will occur after municipal polls, the king said. King Abdullah announced the move in a speech at the opening of the new term of the Shura Council - the formal body advising the king, whose members are all appointed. "Because we refuse to marginalise women in society in all roles that comply with sharia, we have decided, after deliberation with our senior clerics and others... to involve women in the Shura Council as members, starting from next term," he said. "Women will be able to run as candidates in the municipal election and will even have a right to vote." To read related stories about this issue please follow the link <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-15052030>



## In Lebanon

### A small step towards literacy

Seven years ago, Khadija Assaad began teaching the Koran to girls in the remote Lebanese village of Wadi al-Jamous in Akkar District, Northern Governorate, but had no idea how much impact the initiative would eventually have on her poor community. “I used to do this at home. Then illiterate women in Wadi al-Jamous came up to me; they wanted to learn how to read. I went to see the mayor, Khodr Abdelkader Akkari, who gave us a room in the municipality building. We grew little by little. I was introduced to people in charge of the Ministry of Social Affairs in Akkar. I attended a training to teach illiterate adults and they gave me books to use in class,” she told IRIN.



Khadija never attended college or high school, and only learnt to read in primary school. Like most of the girls in her village, she was married at a young age and spent most of her time at home. Now 42, she does not have children, which she says left her feeling stigmatized in this traditional rural society.

But she wanted to do something more for herself and for the women of the village. In 2008 she set up an NGO, Aleswa-al-hasana (“the good example”).

“My whole life changed, as well as the life of women who couldn’t read before attending the classes,” she said. “Women’s lives are very tough in this area. They spend their time working at home or in the fields. But when a girl knows how to read she won’t go often to pick olives in the fields. Her horizon changes and she wouldn’t work this hard. She would have a nice job that she can do at home, like becoming a seamstress, a hairdresser or a beautician.” For more information please follow the link:

<http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?reportid=93567>

## In Bahrain

### Woman Elected MP Unopposed in By-Election in Bahrain

A woman candidate has won the by-election unopposed after three of her male contestants had withdrawn from the race.



Bahrain’s Minister of Justice, Islamic Affairs and Endowments has declared Sawsan Taqawi as MP from the second constituency in the Northern governorate. She will be the second woman parliamentarian in the Lower House after Latifa Al Qoud who also won unopposed during the last two elections. There are seven other women who are contesting the by-polls that would take place on September 24 in 16 constituencies. Another candidate Ali Al Derazi won unopposed after the withdrawal of his rival. “My victory is one of the greatest achievements for Bahraini women,” she told a Press

conference on Sunday. She pledged that besides addressing women’s issue in particular, she would also tackle all matters concerning Bahraini citizens. She thanked all those who supported her and affirmed her full backing to the reform process launched in Bahrain since 2001. For more information please follow the link

[http://gitm.kcorp.net/index.php?id=573180&news\\_type=Top&lang=en](http://gitm.kcorp.net/index.php?id=573180&news_type=Top&lang=en)

### In Morocco

#### 'Gender at the Heart of New Moroccan Constitution'

The new reforms outlined in the June 2011 Moroccan constitution can be grouped in three major categories: separation of powers, independence of justice, and good governance. However there are other key reforms that have gotten less attention but will have a major impact on Moroccan society, including recognition of Morocco's multicultural roots, a greater recognition of gender equality and more freedom of speech. For more information please follow the link <http://www.wluml.org/news/morocco-gender-heart-new-moroccan-constitution>



### In Tunisia

#### Tunisia is leading the way on women's rights in the Middle East

Last December, Tunisians rose up against their dictator, triggering a political earthquake that has sent shockwaves through most of the Middle East and North Africa. Now, Tunisia is leading the way once again - this time on the vexed issue of gender equality. It has become the first country in the region to withdraw all its specific reservations regarding Cedaw - the international convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women. This may sound a rather obscure and technical matter but it's actually a very important step. It reverses a long-standing abuse of human rights treaties - especially in the Middle East - where repressive regimes sign up to these treaties for purposes of international respectability but then excuse themselves from some or all of their obligations. Saudi Arabia, for example, operates the world's most blatant and institutionalised system of discrimination against women - and yet, along with 17 other Arab states, it is also a party to Cedaw. It attempts to reconcile this position through reservations saying it does not consider itself bound by any part of the treaty which conflicts "with the norms of Islamic law".

In effect, the Saudi government claims the right to ignore any part of Cedaw it doesn't like. The "norms of Islamic law" is a meaningless phrase because the Sharia has never been formally codified. There are various methods of interpreting it and scholars often disagree in their interpretations. The "norms of Islamic law" thus means whatever the Saudis choose it to mean. To read the entire article please follow the link <http://www.awid.org/News-Analysis/Women-s-Rights-in-the-News2/Tunisia-is-leading-the-way-on-women-s-rights-in-the-Middle-East>

#### More on Tunisia lifting reservations on CEDAW

Tunisia's lifting of key reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is an important step toward gender equality, Human Rights Watch said today. The Tunisian government should next ensure that all domestic laws conform to international standards and eliminate all forms of discrimination against women, Human Rights Watch said. Tunisia is an important country in the region to withdraw all of its specific reservations to the treaty. These reservations had enabled it to opt out of certain provisions even though it had ratified the treaty. The Tunisian Council of Ministers adopted a draft decree on August 16, 2011, to lift the reservations.

"Many of the reservations limited women's equality within their families, and their removal finally recognizes that women are equal partners in marriage and in making decisions about their children," said Nadya Khalife, Middle East women's rights researcher at Human Rights Watch. "The Tunisian government, by lifting major reservations to CEDAW, is proclaiming its commitment to advance women's rights." The August 16 decree lifts all reservations except a general declaration that Tunisia "shall not take any organizational or legislative decision in conformity with the requirements of this Convention where such a decision would conflict with



the provisions of Chapter I of the Tunisian Constitution.” Chapter I establishes Islam as the state religion. For more information on CEDAW please follow the link:

<http://www.hrw.org/news/2011/09/06/tunisia-government-lifts-restrictions-women-s-rights-treaty> and [http://www.wunrn.com/news/2011/09\\_11/09\\_05/090511\\_tunisia.htm](http://www.wunrn.com/news/2011/09_11/09_05/090511_tunisia.htm)

## BOOKS & REPORTS

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### GENDER RIGHTS

#### Gender Equality boosts development the World Bank Report

Gender equality is shrewd economics as well as a human right, the World Bank said on Monday in a report that showed countries with better opportunities for women and girls can boost productivity and development. The most glaring disparity is the rate at which girls and women die relative to men in developing countries, according to "The World Development Report 2012: Gender Equality and Development."

"Blocking women and girls from getting the skills and earnings to succeed in a globalized world is not only wrong, but also economically harmful," said Justin Yifu Lin, World Bank chief economist. "Sharing the fruits of growth and globalization equally between men and women is essential to meeting key development goals."

The report cited the U.N Food and Agriculture Organization estimates that equal access to resources for female farmers could increase agricultural output in poorer countries by up to 4 percent. The direct link to the report:

<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWDR2012/Resources/7778105-1299699968583/7786210-1315936222006/Complete-Report.pdf>

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