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CSW 61 marred by US travel bans

An opportunity of this scale comes around once a year for feminists and women's rights activists

Every year since 1947, government officials, NGO representatives and activists, have travelled to the United Nations headquarters in New York for the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), a multilateral space dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and women's rights. Some of the attendees wield policy recommendations, and others, lists of grievances on their country's track record of violations against women's rights, all hoping to have an impact on international women's rights policies, and to hold their governments accountable on existing commitments made to promote and enshrine women's rights.

But the 61st session was marred by the spectre of travel bans. The restrictions even spurred doubts from a number of human rights organizations about the legitimacy of the US as a venue for events such as CSW.

Other feminist and human rights institutions called for accountability from the CSW host country.

Read more:

<https://www.awid.org/news-and-analysis/csw-61-marred-us-travel-bans>

Women's Rights Caucus: Conclusion of CSW61

Feminist persistence pays off at UN Commission Status of Women, but challenges loom large in the changing world of work.

Feminist activists have seen their hard work pay off as the 61st UN Commission on the Status of Women adopted a set of Agreed Conclusions that made significant commitments to advance women's rights and economic empowerment in the changing world of work.

In response to feminists' demands for gender-just strategies to confront the multiple impacts of climate change and related ecological damage, the Commission recognized the imperative of moving towards a just transition of the workforce toward low-carbon economies that deliver for women and the planet.

The Commission also called for gender-responsive strategies to increase women's resilience to the economic impacts of climate change.

Recognizing that women continue to shoulder the bulk of unpaid care and domestic work, the Commission established a blueprint for governments to reduce and redistribute this work through public services, labour and social protections, and affordable child and other care services.

Read more:

<https://www.awid.org/news-and-analysis/womens-rights-caucus-conclusion-csw61>

Tunisia – Teens & Society Respond with Theatre, Videos, Marches, Against Rape & Rapist Impunity with Marriage

Rania Bel Haj, a teen actor in Tunisia, didn't consider women's rights high on her list of priorities until she played a teen girl who was raped and forced to marry the older man who assaulted her in a high school video. "I wasn't truly a feminist before I interpreted this role," Bel Haj said.

She plays an unnamed lead character, based on a recent case in Tunisia that made headlines.

"While rehearsing for the role, I felt close to the victim," said Bel Haj, who, at 16, is close to same age and the same nationality as the minor in the case. The only difference, Bel Haj said, is that the other girl was "unlucky enough to be raped."

Bel Haj imagined herself in this teen's shoes, living out her fears and her insecurities after the awful experience. "That's how I felt this connection with her."

This is the same reaction many young girls in Tunisia had to the piece when they saw it on Facebook, where the three minute video went viral and garnered more than 670,000 views.

Read more:

<http://wunrn.com/2017/03/tunisia-teens-society-respond-with-theatre-videos-marches-against-rape-rape-impunity-with-marriage/>

Saudi women in silent walking protest over right to drive in the kingdom

Activism gathers momentum as Theresa May visits country where women were banned from driving in 1957

Women campaigners in Saudi Arabia have filmed themselves silently walking in the street without male companions as part of their fight for the right to drive.

The campaign is part of a growing protest against sweeping restrictions which prevent women from doing everyday activities unless they are accompanied by a male guardian.

Prime Minister Theresa May has been urged to address human rights abuses including the oppression of women during her visit to the deeply conservative Islamic kingdom, which comes as part of a Government bid to secure post-Brexit trade deals.

She said she hopes to be seen as a "role model" for women there and met the country's crown prince without wearing a head scarf, eschewing sharia law's strict dress code.

Saudi Arabia is the only country in the world where women are banned from driving under its strict interpretation of Islamic law. The Interior Ministry strictly enforces the ban, which came into effect in 1957.

The silent footage of the women carries the hashtag #resistancebywalking on social media.

Read more:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/saudi-arabia-women-silent-protest-walking-right-drive-kingdom-middle-east-only-country-world-theresa-a7667646.html>

GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

Women's bodies are the battleground for civil liberties

Female activists face persecution largely because their existence is an affront to the patriarchal nature of societies.

Around the world, civic spaces are shrinking. In many countries, activists are under threat as governments increasingly use the law and violence as tools of oppression, according to a new report.

For women human rights defenders, this means their bodies have become the battleground on which the fight for civil liberties is being waged.

In Egypt, such sexual violence has become a prevalent form of silencing women protesters.

A group of Egyptian women took part in a sit-in and were arrested. Later, an army general publicly admitted that officers had conducted "virginity tests" on the women, according to a 2012 report issued by the African Union's African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. The women were also insulted, beaten and tortured with electric shocks, according to the report.

"The Egyptian military conducted the degrading 'virginity tests' on female protesters, which, in itself, is sexual violence, and on 4 May 2016 female protesters and journalists were physically and sexually assaulted in a protest," says the executive director of Nazra for Feminist Studies group, Mozn Hassan.

Read more:

<http://bhkisisa.org/article/2017-03-08-00-womens-bodies-are-the-battleground-for-civil-liberties>

'I was married to Boko Haram:' Life in the shadow of captivity

Most were abducted, others chose to go but all have to face the stigma and hope for acceptance.

Amina married her husband when she was 11. He was a foot soldier in Boko Haram, the jihadist group whose seven-year campaign of abduction, sexual violence and killing has ravaged northeastern Nigeria. He appeared old to the young girl — perhaps even in his 30s. "All he wanted to do was sleep with me," says Amina, which is not her real name, as she tugs at the hem of her long skirt under her grey hijab.

In 2014 Boko Haram had captured her hometown, Banki, near the Cameroon border. Amina's family fled to the nearby village of Walasa, but the militants invaded it as well. The girl was given a choice: marry the insurgent or her father would be killed.

"I felt no love for him," she says softly. "It was my duty to marry him. I knew I found myself in a hopeless situation."

State-sponsored safe houses shelter the returned

Amina, now 13, is sitting on a mat in the dusty courtyard of a compound in Maiduguri, the capital of Borno state where Boko Haram launched its drive to create a regional Islamic caliphate in 2009.

Read more:

<http://bhkisisa.org/article/2017-03-07-00-i-was-married-to-boko-haram-life-in-the-shadow-of-captivity>

New Egyptian anti-sexual harassment campaign challenges passive bystanders

Egyptians have launched many campaigns in recent years to combat the sexual harassment that continues to plague Egyptian society. Some of these campaigns implore victims to speak up and report the incident, while other initiatives condemn the harassers. A recent awareness campaign launched by a team of three Egyptian women has adopted a new approach to fighting this social epidemic: bystander intervention.

With the help of a director, the women released a daring photo campaign titled "Your Silence Is Harassment," blowing the lid off the passive role of bystanders who do not intervene when a woman is sexually assaulted. The alluring sequence of photos depicts the daily struggle of Egyptian women on city streets, public transportation, markets and the workplace, blaming idle bystanders in the hope of stirring a sense of collective responsibility.

The project displays staged scenes of sexual harassment, as a silent bystander stands in the background, his mouth sealed by black tape. The victims featured in the photos include a woman wearing a headscarf and an unveiled girl to refute the claim that it's clothing that provokes sexual harassment. Through an interview with the campaign's founders, Al-Monitor was able to find out the details of this bold photo session that went viral within a few hours.

Read more:

<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/04/egypt-anti-sexual-harassment-campaign-cairo.html>

Fleeing Woman Returned to Saudi Arabia Against Her Will

Taken From Philippines in Transit; Faces Harm, Criminal Charges

A fleeing Saudi woman faces grave risks after being returned to Saudi Arabia against her will while in transit in the Philippines, Human Rights Watch said today. Saudi authorities should ensure that Dina Ali Lasloom, 24, is not subjected to violence from her family or prosecution by Saudi authorities for trying to flee, Human Rights Watch said.

On April 10, 2017, Saudi activists posted videos that appeared to show Lasloom at Manila's international airport pleading not to be returned because she feared her family would kill her. The Saudi embassy in the Philippines issued a statement on April 12 saying that Lasloom's return was a "family matter."

"Saudi women fleeing their family or the country can face so-called 'honor' violence or other serious harm if returned against their will," said Sarah Leah Whitson, Middle East director at Human Rights Watch. "Saudi authorities should immediately protect this woman from her family to ensure she's not subjected to violence and should not punish her for fleeing."

Read more:

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/04/14/fleeing-woman-returned-saudi-arabia-against-her-will>

Lebanon: Pass Bill to End Child Marriage

Would Set Minimum Age at 18, Punish Violators

Lebanon's parliament should quickly pass legislation to end child marriage in the country, Human Rights Watch said today.

Lebanon has no minimum age for marriage for all of its citizens or any civil code regulating personal status matters. Instead, religious courts set the age based on 15 personal status laws, some of which allow girls younger than 15 to marry. A draft law, introduced on March 28, 2017, would set the minimum age for marriage at 18, with no exceptions.

"Legislation prohibiting child marriage is long overdue for Lebanon," said Lama Fakih, deputy Middle East director at Human Rights Watch. "Setting 18 as the national minimum age for marriage will go a long way toward protecting children from the horrors of early marriage."

The draft law would penalize anyone contributing to or complicit in the marriage of a child with fines equal to 10 times the minimum wage and prison sentences ranging from six months to two years. The bill was prepared by the Lebanese Women's Democratic Gathering and introduced by Elie Keirouz, a member of parliament.

Read more:

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/04/12/lebanon-pass-bill-end-child-marriage>

GENDER & HUMAN RIGHTS

The future of work in Arab states: Working together for growth

"The Future of work" is a phrase that now seems to be on everyone's lips: studies, websites, seminars and even a discipline within an entirely new field of study – "futurology" – are all devoted to pondering what the world of work may hold for us in the coming decades. Many of these discussions revolve around how technological advances are transforming or destroying jobs, creating "sharing" or "gig" economies, overturning employment relationships, especially in advanced economies.

The Arab countries of the Gulf and Middle East are certainly not immune to such transformations. But we face unique circumstances that turn our thoughts on the future toward considerations altogether more vital and pressing. Given the regional instability, protracted conflicts in some Arab countries, endemic lack of social dialogue, high unemployment, widening inequalities and inadequate economic reforms, the future of work seems to be knocking more loudly on our doors than in other regions. And for many of us, the echoes are ominous, because our future seems to be moving away from, not toward, social justice.

Read more:

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/Business/Local/2017/Mar-30/399742-the-future-of-work-in-arab-states-working-together-for-growth.ashx>

Turkey Offers Legal Assistance to Turkish Citizens Affected by the European Court of Justice Ruling That Companies Can Ban Employees from Wearing Visible Religious Symbols as the Muslim Headscarf

On March 14, the European Court of Justice made a controversial ruling, stating that companies are permitted to ban employees from wearing visible religious symbols such as the Islamic headscarf. The decision from Europe's top court came after two women were fired because they refused to take off their headscarves at workplaces in France and Belgium.

Many right-wing political actors praised the court's decision, while human rights groups and liberal media criticized the ruling. While the European court claimed neutrality for not singling out Muslims and argued no direct discrimination, it was impossible to evaluate the court's decision independently from increasingly hostile, anti-Muslim atmosphere in Europe and the fact that ruling was brought after two Muslim women filed complaints.

In Turkey, the European court's decision was condemned as "scandalous" by the pro-government media and reopened a long-standing wound.

The headscarf issue is one of the most sensitive and politicized issues in recent Turkish history, and one of the most powerful symbols of past secularist authoritarianism and discrimination against religious conservatives.

Read more:

<http://wunrn.com/2017/03/turkey-offers-legal-assistance-to-turkish-citizens-affected-by-the-european-court-of-justice-ruling-that-companies-can-ban-employees-from-wearing-visible-religious-symbols-as-the-muslim-headscarf/>

Female plumbers in Jordan clear path for women in labor market

A number of Jordanian and Syrian women are defying social norms by working outside the home. On top of that, a few of them have ventured into a profession that has long been the sole preserve of men — plumbing.

In the city of Irbid, 62 miles north of Amman, five path-breaking Jordanian and Syrian women wear the blue uniform of the trade, having established the first female plumbing company in 2016. The Syrians found their way to plumbing in an effort to provide for their families, who fled to Jordan during the civil war raging in their home country since 2011. The conflict, unsurprisingly, has dealt a blow to their savings. Meanwhile, bad economic conditions, unemployment and poverty drove the Jordanian women to the trade.

Safa Sukariya, fleeing war in Syria, settled in 2013 in Irbid, leaving behind a Damascus accessories shop, her only source of income. Without a job or other income, Sukariya began looking for work that could provide for her and her three kids.

Sukariya told Al-Monitor that she began plumbing two months after attending a grant-based training course in 2015 sponsored by the German Center for International Cooperation in partnership with the Hakama Vocational Training Institute. "Society did not initially accept the idea, but over time people began to tolerate the existence of a workshop for women who live alone, especially Syrians who have lost their husbands in the war," Sukariya said.

Read more:

<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/04/jordan-syria-women-plumbing-jobs-economy.html>

Egypt's Al-Azhar to open classes for female students in branch campus

Usama Abdul Raouf, vice president of Al-Azhar University's Assiut branch, announced the opening of special classes for female students at the all-male faculties of pharmacy and medicine in early 2018. The March 27 decision was made to spare female students the long commutes to other branches of Al-Azhar University.

The decision sparked controversy. Some thought that Al-Azhar was giving up its Sharia values that forbid the mixing of men and women, while others saw the decision as a victory for the civilized world and an opportunity for cultural and social development in Upper Egypt and change in Egyptian society's perception of women.

Raouf told Al-Monitor that Al-Azhar University took the step to make the lives of women students easier and that the Assiut branch is only administratively affiliated with the all-male faculties.

He added, "Female students will study in a building within the same campus three meters from that of male students and separated from it with a fence. Behind it, a medical science building was constructed to hold classes for female students as a prelude to establishing independent faculties of pharmacy and medicine for them in the future. Equipping the morgue at the Faculty of Medicine requires huge funding. That is why the morgue at the all-male student faculty is also used by female students but on a different schedule. Three days for male students and three days for female students."

Read more:

<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/04/egypt-al-azhar-mixed-education-sisi-taboo-controversy.html>

RESOURCES & CALLS BOOKS & REPORTS

Towards a better future for women and work: Voices of women and men

This study provides a first-ever account of global attitudes and perceptions of women and men regarding women and work based on the 2016 Gallup World Poll. The poll, which was conducted in 142 countries and territories, is representative of 98 per cent of the global population.

Read more:

http://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_546256/lang--en/index.htm
http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_546256.pdf

Women, gender and work: Social choices and inequalities. Volume 2

A collection of 30 recent articles selected from the International Labour Review, offering the insights of economists, sociologists and lawyers into a wide range of gender issues and country settings.

This second volume of Women, Gender and Work is an invitation to reflect upon the connections between measured labour market outcomes and the real lives people lead, what work means to them, the care work continuum, and the very notion of “gender equality”.

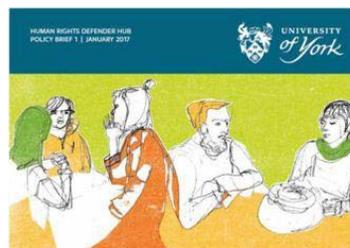
Read more:

http://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_488475/lang--en/index.htm

For a direct link to report:

http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_488475.pdf

Human rights defenders at risk – wellbeing, risk and human rights practice – women



Wellbeing, Risk, and Human Rights Practice

Human rights defenders at risk often find it difficult to talk about their mental and emotional wellbeing, even when they are concerned about it. Cultures of human rights practice tend to emphasize self-sacrifice, heroism, and martyrdom. These norms inhibit defenders from expressing their anxieties and seeking help. How can we engage in discussions about wellbeing in human rights practice? How can we strengthen personal and collective strategies for wellbeing amongst defenders at risk?

Introduction
As a group of human rights defenders at risk in our study expressed that they were somewhat concerned or very concerned about their mental and emotional wellbeing, they were also concerned about this as it was about their physical health and legal security. In the brief, we highlight the recurrent themes on wellbeing that emerged through our interviews and surveys with defenders at risk in Colombia, Mexico, Egypt, Kenya and Indonesia.
The important but insufficient focus on wellbeing, although defenders at risk are concerned about their mental and emotional wellbeing, this is not discussed much.
In human rights communities, even amongst defenders themselves, it is often given only secondary attention. As a human rights defender in Indonesia observed:
Human rights defenders sometimes do not have room for their wellbeing, because they are too busy doing what. Therefore, they sometimes forget to think about their own welfare. Sometimes, they also work too hard and do not have time to rest or exercise, and so they are neglecting their mental and emotional wellbeing.
Defenders also tend to prioritize the necessity and importance of their work before thinking about their personal wellbeing. Their strong commitment to achieving human rights goals propel them forward in spite of the challenges in their work.

Human rights defenders at risk often find it difficult to talk about their mental and emotional wellbeing, even when they are concerned about it. Cultures of human rights practice tend to emphasize self-sacrifice, heroism, and martyrdom. These norms inhibit defenders from expressing their anxieties and seeking help. How can we engage in discussions about wellbeing in human rights practice? How can we strengthen personal and collective strategies for wellbeing amongst defenders at risk?

Read more:

<http://wunrn.com/2017/03/human-rights-defenders-at-risk-wellbeing-risk-human-rights-practice-women/>

For a direct link to report

<https://www.york.ac.uk/media/cahr/documents/Wellbeing,%20Risk,%20and%20Human%20Rights%20Practice,%20Human%20Rights%20Defender%20Policy%20Brief%201.pdf>

The 2016 Women's Status Report The Egyptian Woman ... Important Steps & Big Challenges

In spite of the progress in the status of Egyptian women achieved over the year 2016, according to the Gender Gap Report, Egyptian women still struggle in various other aspects, the most notable of which is gender-based violence. With this regard, the Egyptian Center for Women's Rights (ECWR) in its annual report sheds the light on the developments in the status of Egyptian women in a number of areas over the year 2016. The report is divided to 4 main sections tackling women's status in various public domains. These sections are as the following:

Firstly: Civil and Political Rights

On the level of political empowerment, the women status has improved, moving from the 136th place to the 115th place, out of 144 countries. This improvement is primarily due to the parliamentary elections that resulted in 89 female MP, 75 of whom are elected and 14 are appointed, constituting 14.7%.

Read more:

<http://wunrn.com/2017/03/egypt-the-egyptian-woman-important-steps-big-challenges-2016/>

For a direct link to report

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BwsERZCDkIWYN3ZXWDhjZUx6bUk/view?ts=58ce7f71>

Syrian Young Women's Empowerment Report



We Asked: What Do Syrian Young Women Want?

Driven by Syrian young women themselves, this is the very first Syrian young women's empowerment report.

In the midst of unimaginable human suffering, bold young women in nearly 20 countries of refuge have spoken.

Read and find out:

- What are their hopes and dreams?
- Do they believe their life can change?
- Who do they think can change Syria?

Read more:

<http://wunrn.com/2017/03/syrian-young-womens-empowerment-report/>

For a direct link to report

http://4ggl.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/What-Syrian-Young-Women-Want-v4_03-07.pdf

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