



Gender and Development e -Brief / Issue 109  
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## NEWS & ARTICLES

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### WOMEN'S RIGHTS ACTIVISM

#### Campaign for Law to Protect Women from Family Violence in Lebanon

On the 29<sup>th</sup> of May 2011, KAFA and the National Coalition to Legalize the Protection of Women from Family Violence held a demonstration, under the title: "Movement to realize justice for women and girls in Lebanon".

Hundreds of protesters, NGOs, and representatives of some of the political parties (Free Patriotic Movement, Future Movement, Amal, Progressive Socialist Party, Lebanese Forces, Syrian National Socialist Party, Communist Party, the Phalangist Party and the Democratic Left Movement), including three Parliamentarians, participated in the demonstration advocating for the passage of the law on family violence. Participants gathered at Sanayeh in front of the Ministry of Interior and walked to the Parliament on Riad el Solh in a symbolic gesture aimed at lobbying members of the special committee convened to study the draft law to protect women from family violence.



[http://www.wunrn.com/news/2011/06\\_11/05\\_31/053111\\_lebanon.htm](http://www.wunrn.com/news/2011/06_11/05_31/053111_lebanon.htm)

#### Open Letter from Saudi women to EU High Representative Ashton

Dear High Representative Ashton, We are leading Saudi Women's rights activists and we write this open letter - endorsed by citizens throughout the EU - to express our deep concern over the EU's public silence on the issue of Saudi women's right to drive. To sign the petition <http://www.change.org/petitions/catherine-ashton-publicly-support-saudi-womens-right-to-drive>

## CALLS & STATEMENTS

**My Nationality is my right for me and my family campaign urges the new Lebanese government to reform the nationality law, and endorse a new family law as well as the law petition for the protection from family violence**

After more than five months of political toing and froing, an all-male new Cabinet has seen the light. The absence of women from the new Cabinet is indeed a worrying augur as to the continuing tension amongst political patriarchs.

As the appointed government prepares to draft its ministerial statement, “My Nationality is a Right for Me and My Family” Campaign urges the Mikati government to uphold the Lebanese state commitment to ensure equal citizenship through the reform of the currently unjust and discriminatory nationality laws. In the absence of political will, promises made by previous government towards addressing citizens’ rights and entitlements have not been addressed properly and we urge the present Cabinet to ensure that equality and social rights and entitlements are given priority. To read the communiqué please click on the link:

<http://nationalitycampaign.wordpress.com/2011/06/17/my-nationality-is-a-right-for-me-and-my-family-campaign-urges-the-new-government-to-reform-the-nationality-law-and-endorse-a-new-family-law-as-well-as-the-law-petition-for-the-protection-from-family/>



## Women Condemn Attack on Peaceful Protesters in Iraq

We, feminist activists from 12 countries, stand in support of our sisters and brothers peacefully demonstrating for basic rights in Baghdad’s Tahrir Square. This morning, June 10, demonstrators were brutally targeted with sexual violence and beatings by men who were reportedly bussed in by the thousands to disrupt the weekly protest. Protesters suffered broken bones, knife wounds and beatings. Several women were severely beaten and violently groped; armed attackers attempted to forcibly strip off the women’s clothing. The activists, who work with the Organization of Women’s Freedom in Iraq, report that their attackers were organized and paid by government security forces who used the un-uniformed men to avoid accountability for the violence. As feminists, we strongly condemn assaults against peaceful protesters and the specifically gender-based violence against women. As in so many of our countries, the use of sexual violence against Iraqi women is designed to terrorize, shame and silence those women who dare to exercise their fundamental rights as citizens and raise political demands in the public sphere. We stand with our sisters who exercise their rights to political participation and dissent. To read the entire statement please follow the link:



<http://www.madre.org/index/press-room-4/news/women-from-around-the-world-condemn-attack-on-peaceful-protesters-in-iraq-644.html>

## Leveraging Women’s Power in the Arab Revolutions

We the women from the Arab region who came together for three days to share our success in our revolutions, and to celebrate and confirm our demands to sustain what we have gained through years of struggle, hereby acknowledge: We the women from the Arab region who came together for three days to share our success in our revolutions, and to celebrate and confirm our demands to sustain what we have gained through years of struggle, hereby acknowledge: Women must have equal representation and participation in all democratic processes. Unless this occurs, democracy will remain just a theory. Women must be included in all decision-making bodies including constitutional reform committees and committees to draft election laws. We confirm women have contributed to make this change happen and should benefit fully

from the fruits of these revolutions by being acknowledged as equal partners in all spheres of life. We commit to plan strategically to stretch our arms to reach all women in our nations to continue demanding our rights and make our voices heard—the voices of the marginalized, the impoverished, women of all classes UNITED. To read the entire statement please follow the link <http://www.wluml.org/node/7242>

## **GENDER & HUMAN RIGHTS**

### **Fighting for Women's Rights in the Aftermath of the Revolution in Egypt**

In the wake of the 25 January Revolution in Egypt, and throughout ongoing political developments, women's and human rights organizations in Egypt have been fully aware of what they have to gain - or lose. Seeking to build on women's participation in the revolution and capitalize on a moment of immense hope and possibility, different groups have joined forces to demand greater representation for women in parliament and on national councils and committees. Their main concerns are the need both to expand women's roles in a new, democratic Egypt and to safeguard hard-earned gains in women's rights achieved over the past few decades. For more information please follow the link : <http://www.wluml.org/node/7255>



### **The 'fallen' heroines of the Arab spring**

Since the start of the wave of uprisings that have swept the Arab world, "establishment" figures, especially women, have been celebrated as the "icons" of the revolution - symbols of its homegrown, indigenous nature. Tawakkol Karman in Yemen, and Saida Saadouni in Tunisia are examples of this fierce matriarchy. They are of the tradition, and respected more so because of it. Hijab-clad, religiously conservative and socially conventional, they reserve their rebellion for the political arena, rendering them relatively immune to accusations of immorality or harsh personal attacks. For more information please follow the link: <http://www.wluml.org/node/7256>



### **Debates on women's bodily autonomy and sexual violence in Syria**

The Syrian government's response to the uprisings across the country has been violent; over one thousand people have been killed so far, more than a hundred of them in the southwestern city of Deraa, and ten thousand people are said to have been detained by security forces. Syrian women, in common with their counterparts in Egypt and Tunisia, have played a crucial role in the protests against the autocratic political regime, which has hitherto successfully used the threat of the well-organized *mukhabarat* (secret services) to silence dissent. Their outspoken demands for the release of male family members, and the voices of those women who have themselves been targeted by government forces, has focused the attention of women's groups and human rights organizations both inside and outside Syria on their situation. For more information please follow the link: <http://www.wluml.org/node/7259>

## From Damascus with Love: Blogging in a Totalitarian State

Following the revelation that "Amina" was a hoax two LGBT Syrian Activists speak out. Sami Hamwi, Gay Middle East Syria: Blogging in Syria has been forbidden by law for more than eight years. As internet started to



flourish, many Syrians started to use internet spaces and blogs to write personal thoughts, poetry, short stories... etc. unaware of that fact, but they remained safe as the authorities only monitored political and human rights blogs. LGBT bloggers can manage to keep safe only if their blogs were meant for gossip and entertainment, but they might have to face different kind of difficulties if they reported news or engaged into LGBT rights activism. As soon as any blog starts to attract attention, the agony with authorities' interference starts. For more information please follow the link: <http://www.wluml.org/node/7258>

## Eman al-Obeidi recovering in Romania, UNHCR says

A Libyan woman who says she was raped by supporters of Col Muammar Gaddafi is recovering from her ordeal in a refugee centre in western Romania, the UN says. Twelve weeks after she burst into a Tripoli hotel to tell her story to reporters, Eman al-Obeidi, 29, is now in a private clinic attached to the UN refugee centre in Timisoara, it says. She arrived there from Libya's rebel stronghold of Benghazi on Monday. US officials have said she is welcome to apply for asylum in America. They promised to prioritise any application she might make. For more information please follow the link: <http://www.wluml.org/node/7286>

## The role of the human rights observer at pro-democracy protests in Algeria

Karima Bennoune, member of WLUML's Council and a law professor served as a human rights observer at a series of pro-democracy demonstrations in Algeria in February. These demonstrations included significant numbers of women, and women human rights defenders (WHRDs) from a new coalition, the *Observatoire Nationale sur la violence faites on femmes* (National Observatory on Violence against Women). Bennoune documented the treatment of the protestors, in particular of the women activists involved, as they faced police beatings, arrest and harassment. Prominent women's rights advocates, like Cherifa Kheddar, was arrested and briefly detained. Many of the Algerian women Bennoune met expressed tremendous enthusiasm about the presence of an international observer. For more information about the observations please follow the link : <http://www.wluml.org/node/7287>

## Domestic Workers Need Protection

At the forthcoming International Labour Conference in Geneva, 1-17 June, the ILO and its members will debate drafts that could lead to the first international instruments specifically designed to protect domestic workers. Domestic workers play an important role in the economy and they allow others to go out and earn money. Yet they remain invisible, unprotected and their contribution is often not recognized.

[http://www.ilo.org/asia/info/public/lang--en/WCMS\\_156062/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/asia/info/public/lang--en/WCMS_156062/index.htm)



## GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

In Sudan

### Abuses Grow in Darfur

Serious abuses have increased in Darfur in the past six months while the world's attention has focused on Southern Sudan's upcoming independence, Human Rights Watch said in a report. The United Nations Security Council, which will be briefed on Darfur on June 8, 2011, and the African Union should do much more to ensure that those responsible for continued war crimes in Darfur are held accountable and press the Sudanese government to end attacks on

civilians in Darfur, cease arbitrary detention of rights activists, and reform the state security apparatus, Human Rights Watch said. The 28-page report, "Darfur in the Shadows: The Sudanese Government's Ongoing Attacks on Civilians and Human Rights," documents the intensification of the eight-year conflict over the past six months. Since December 2010, a surge in government-led attacks on populated areas and a campaign of aerial bombing have killed and injured scores of civilians, destroyed property, and displaced more than 70,000 people, largely from ethnic Zaghawa and Fur communities linked to rebel groups, Human Rights Watch said. <http://www.hrw.org/node/99396>

### **Journalists Reporting on Sexual Violence against Women Face Criminal Charges in Sudan**

On 29 May, proceedings brought by the prosecutor of the Press and Publications Court against Professor Omar el Gerai, a journalist and activist, and Abdallah Sheikh, the editor of *Ajras Alhurria*, began in Al Shemali Court in Khartoum North. The two journalists are being tried for an article published 6 March by Professor el Gerai in *Ajras Alhurria* entitled "Rape...under *Sharia* law", (available [here](#) in Arabic). The article detailed the brutal treatment of the youth activist and *Girifna* member Safiya Ishag, who was raped multiple times and subjected to torture in National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS) custody following her participation in the 30 January demonstrations in Khartoum. In his piece, Mr. el Gerai called for a formal investigation. For more information please follow the link : <http://www.wluml.org/node/7250>

### **Early Marriage Often Ends Girls' Education in Sudan**

It took years of pleading before Jane Aketch persuaded her parents to send her to primary school in the dusty bush of South Sudan's Eastern Equatoria state. Although her parents wanted her to learn how to read and write, like most of the communities in Aketch's home county of Magwi, they did not place particular importance in furthering a girl's education.

"Generally, in South Sudan, girls are supposed to stay at home and clean, while boys attend school," explained the 14-year-old, who is one of five daughters. Aketch said her sisters all dropped out of school before completing their primary education. Yet boosting education will be vital in developing South Sudan as it prepares to become an independent country on July 9, following January's referendum on secession, which was part of a 2005 deal to end two decades of civil war. Schooling is poor across the board in South Sudan, an overwhelmingly rural region. There is only one teacher for every 1,000 primary school students and 85 percent of adults do not know how to read or write. To read more about the effects of early marriages please follow the link <http://www.violenceisnotourculture.org/node/1843>



### **In Egypt**

#### **General admits 'virginity checks' conducted on protesters in Egypt**

A senior Egyptian general admits that "virginity checks" were performed on women arrested at a demonstration this spring, the first such admission after previous denials by military authorities. The allegations arose in an Amnesty International report, published weeks after the March 9 protest. It claimed female demonstrators were beaten, given electric shocks, strip-searched, threatened with prostitution charges and forced to submit to virginity checks. At that time, Maj. Amr Imam said 17 women had been arrested but denied allegations of torture or "virginity tests." But now a senior general who asked not to be identified said the virginity tests were conducted and defended the practice. For more information please follow the link : <http://www.wluml.org/node/7237>

### **In Bahrain**

#### **Women Latest Target Of government's Crackdown in Bahrain**

For the past 2 1/2 months, Bahrain's government has cracked down brutally on opposition figures who led massive anti-government protests in February and March. Doctors, journalists, human rights workers and even elected officials have been detained and beaten. The government's most recent targets are women. For more information please follow the link:

<http://www.wluml.org/node/7239>



### **In Turkey**

#### **Change in Women's Ministry May Alter Focus on Equality in Turkey**

The Turkish government's changes to the current Ministry for Women and Family is a step backward in its struggle to combat gender inequality and violence against women, Human Rights Watch said today. Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan announced that the "Ministry for Women and Family" will be replaced by a "Ministry of Family and Social Policies," ending a much-needed explicit focus on women's rights, Human Rights Watch said. Erdoğan made the change on June 8, 2011, four days before the June 12 general election, as part of a revised structure for the Council of Ministers. This is much more than just a name change and signals a reduced emphasis on women's rights, and efforts to promote the rights to non-discrimination and freedom from violence will suffer, Human Rights Watch said. Rather than taking the spotlight off women's rights, Turkey needs to take urgent steps to combat endemic violence against women, Human Rights Watch said. "The Turkish government's decision to scrap the Ministry for Women flies in the face of research showing major shortcomings on women's rights and horrendous violence against women," said Gauri van Gulik, women's rights advocate and researcher at Human Rights Watch. "Women in Turkey need more determined action by the government, not less, to protect women's rights in practice."

[http://www.wunrn.com/news/2011/06\\_11/06\\_06/060611\\_turkey2.htm](http://www.wunrn.com/news/2011/06_11/06_06/060611_turkey2.htm)

### **In Iran**

#### **Britain asks Iran to investigate death of women's rights activist Haleh Sahabi**

Britain has called on Iran to launch an immediate investigation into the death of Haleh Sahabi, the daughter of a veteran Iranian dissident who died during scuffles with security forces at her father's funeral on Wednesday. Sahabi was leading the procession at the ceremony by holding a picture of her father, Ezzatollah Sahab. She died from a heart attack after reportedly being attacked by an agent and falling down.



The Foreign Office (FCO) has joined the US state department and human rights organisations in urging Iran to carefully look into the case.

<http://www.wluml.org/node/7243>

### **...STEPS FORWARD**

#### **In Saudi Arabia**

#### **Shoura Council in Saudi Arabia Favors Women Voting**

The Shoura Council recommended to the government that it take necessary measures to allow Saudi women to vote in municipal elections under Islamic law. The decision was taken unanimously by members of the council, which also discussed the

annual report of the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs during its 38th regular session, chaired by the Shoura Chairman Abdullah Al-Asheikh in Riyadh on Sunday. Speaking to reporters, Shoura Council Secretary-General Muhammad Al-Ghamdi said the house took the decision when the council's committee on housing, water and public services tabled its comments on the report, which covered the fiscal year 1427/1428 AH. Although the members strongly recommended women participate in the municipal elections, Al-Ghamdi explained that the house insisted that the franchise should only be exercised by women in line with Islamic regulations.

[http://www.gulfinthemedial.com/index.php?id=564662&news\\_type=Top&lang=en](http://www.gulfinthemedial.com/index.php?id=564662&news_type=Top&lang=en)

### **Manal Al Sharif is released in Saudi Arabia**

Faced with an avalanche of indignation at home and abroad, Saudi authorities freed a woman jailed nine days ago for her role in promoting the right to drive for Saudi women. Manal Al Sharif, a 32-year-old computer security specialist employed by the oil giant ARAMCO, was detained May 22 after she defied the kingdom's ban on female drivers and posted a video of her action on YouTube, as part of a national campaign. The divorced mother of a 5-year-old son was charged with "inciting women to drive" and "rallying public opinion." It is not clear if those charges have been formally dropped. Her lawyer, Adnan Al Saleh, declined to discuss the conditions of her release. For more information please follow the link: <http://www.wluml.org/node/7234>



### **Saudi Arabia May Ban Child Brides**

In a country where no laws protect children from marriage, efforts to make wedlock more female-friendly raises conservatives' ire. The case of a nine-year-old girl given away in marriage by her father to a 58-year-old man because of argument with his wife shocked many Saudis. Widespread media coverage brought the plight of child brides to the fore in the oil-rich Gulf kingdom where no law currently protects children like "the Unayzah girl," as she was called after her home town, from the misery of early marriage. That was two years ago. Finally, the Shoura Council, Saudi Arabia's 150-member consultative body, voted this week by a large margin in favor of setting a minimum marriage age for women. The council is only an advisory body, so the matter has been sent to the Justice Ministry for enactment. Government sources told the on-line daily Ilaf that the ministry would set the minimum marriage age at 17.



"The only way to stop this legal rape is to pass a law," Wajeha Al-Huwaider, a Saudi woman activist, told The Media Line. "They can start with age 15, like most Gulf countries, and then they gradually increase it." For more information please follow the link <http://www.jpost.com/MiddleEast/Article.aspx?id=223495>

### **Call for Women Foreign Ministry Attaches in Saudi Arabia**

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has announced that it has a number of "attaché" positions open to women. The ministry said in a statement that the positions are open to "women of Saudi origin" who have obtained university degrees graded as at least "good" in political science, law, economics, media studies, and English, French or Spanish. The ministry said that applications will be accepted from June 4 to 15 through its website [www.mofa.gov.sa](http://www.mofa.gov.sa). Successful interviewees will then be put through an eight-month training program. [http://www.wunrn.com/news/2011/06\\_11/05\\_31/053111\\_saudi.htm](http://www.wunrn.com/news/2011/06_11/05_31/053111_saudi.htm)

## BOOKS & REPORTS

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### GENDER RIGHTS

#### Women's Online Activism - Strategizing Toolkit

This toolkit was inspired by the workshops held in Asia and Africa for the partners and members of the Violence is not our Culture (VNC) campaign. While this toolkit has been designed primarily for the local partners and activists of the VNC campaign, this can be a resource, too, for human rights activists who are keen to develop their online activism and want to know where and how to start. **Direct Link to Full 49-Page Report:**

<http://www.violenceisnotourculture.org/files/Strategising%20Online%20Activism.pdf>

Strategising Online Activism: A Toolkit

Published by Association for Progressive Communication Women's Networking Support Programme (APC WNSP) and Violence is not our Culture (VNC) 2011



#### Muslim Women's Rights in Land +

During its work in a range of Muslim countries from Afghanistan to Indonesia, UN-HABITAT has been increasingly aware of the importance of Islamic land tenure conceptions and land rights. Over 20 percent of the world's population is Muslim but there has been little research on the complex and distinctive forms of land tenure and land rights. The Land Tenure and Property Administration Section of UN-HABITAT therefore commissioned a year long in depth study of the Islamic and other dimensions of land and property rights in the Muslim world which is reproduced in Sait S and Lim H (2006) *Land Law and Islam: Property and Human Rights in the Muslim World* (London: Zed Press/UN-HABITAT). This series of briefing papers is intended to provide policy makers and others working on land issues in Muslim contexts an easy reference to Islamic dimensions through a question and answer format. This output is part of the Global Land Tool Network (GLTN) Islamic Land Tools Initiative. To read the report please follow the link: [http://zh.unrol.org/files/GLTN\\_Islamic\\_Briefing\\_Papers.pdf](http://zh.unrol.org/files/GLTN_Islamic_Briefing_Papers.pdf)



#### Report on the Food Crisis and the Global Food System

Women produce between 60 and 80 percent of the food in most developing countries and are responsible for half of the world's food production, yet their key role as food producers and providers and their critical contribution to household food security is only now becoming recognized. FAO studies confirm that while women are the mainstay of small-scale agriculture, farm labour force and day-to-day family subsistence, they have more difficulties than men in gaining access to resources such as land and credit and productivity enhancing inputs and services. Women are a little over half the world's population; but in many parts of the world, especially in Asia and South America, they are more likely to go hungry than men. to read the full report

<http://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/growing-a-better-future-010611-en.pdf>



#### Feminist Literary Criticism

Feminist literary criticism is literary analysis that arises from the viewpoint of feminism, feminist theory and/or feminist politics. Basic methods of feminist literary criticism include:



Identifying with female characters: This is a way to challenge the male-centered outlook of authors. Feminist literary criticism suggests that women in literature were historically presented as objects seen from a male perspective.

Reevaluating literature and the world in which literature is read: This involves questioning whether society has predominantly valued male authors and their literary works because it has valued males more than females. To read the entire article please follow the link [http://womenshistory.about.com/od/feminism/tp/feminist\\_theory.htm](http://womenshistory.about.com/od/feminism/tp/feminist_theory.htm)

### **Religion, Politics & Gender Equality**

The prediction that secularism would sweep the world has been confounded in recent years as religion has left the place assigned to it (by theories of modernity) in the private sphere and thrust itself into the public arena. What are the social and political implications of religion assuming such prominent and contested public and political roles? Some observers, including many feminists, see incompatibilities between democracy, human rights and gender equality, on the one hand, and a world in which religious issues and organizations have an active presence in public affairs, on the other. Others, however, argue that religion (at its best) can act as a significant counterweight to the otherwise hegemonic institutions of the state and the market, revitalizing public debate on their moral underpinnings and their social outcomes. The task of research, therefore, is to develop analytical and normative criteria to differentiate between the various forms of public religion and their social and political consequences, including the implications for gender equality.

To read more about the project and the research please follow the link [http://www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BB128/\(httpProjects\)/3F3D45E0F8567920C12572B9004180C5?OpenDocument](http://www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BB128/(httpProjects)/3F3D45E0F8567920C12572B9004180C5?OpenDocument)

### **EU Strategy for Promoting Gender Equality & Women Empowerment in Development Cooperation**

The new European strategy for promoting gender equality and women empowerment in development cooperation was presented by the EC on 8th March 2007, International Women's Day. It is new in that not only does it provide guidelines on how to improve gender mainstreaming, but it also suggests a number of concrete actions in five key areas: governance, employment, education, health and domestic violence. This communication also recognises the role of budget support for the promotion of gender equality and places emphasis on gender sensitizing the country strategy papers (CSPs).

To read more about the project please follow the link

<http://www.concordeurope.org/Public/Page.php?ID=5583&language=eng>

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