



For activists and academics — and everyone in between

**Upholding Gendered Peace at a Time of War:  
Academics and Activists Speak Out on the Shifting  
Places of Women in the Arab World**

**The 7th International Forum “Mediterranean  
Women” on “The Escalation of Violence against  
Women in the Middle East and North Africa**

**Global Peace and Security: Women’s Learning  
Partnership**

**Launching of the “Status of Arab Women Report” in  
partnership with ESCWA-Center for Women**

## Opportunities

### Announcement

The *AMEWS E-Bulletin* is soliciting and encouraging excerpted contributions from PhD students who are writing or have already written their doctoral dissertations. For more information kindly contact Angie Abdelmonem: [angie.abdelmonem@asu.edu](mailto:angie.abdelmonem@asu.edu)

### Call for Papers

The editorial committee of *Al-Raida* invites submissions to a non-thematic, double-blind, peer reviewed issue. For more information kindly contact al-raida: [al-raida@lau.edu.lb](mailto:al-raida@lau.edu.lb)

## Upholding Gendered Peace at a Time of War: Academics and Activists Speak Out on the Shifting Places of Women in the Arab World

The conference was organized by the Institute for Women’s Studies in the Arab World, IWSAW, at the Lebanese American University, the Paris-based feminist think tank, Women in War, founded by Dr. Carol Mann, and Beit al-Hanan. Partners were the Danish donor agency KVINFO, Germany’s Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, and l’Organisation internationale de la francophonie. The key issues addressed pertained to the record of the Arab Spring thus far: the ongoing conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa region; women’s roles in

religious extremism, conflicts, peace-building, and political leadership; trends in temporary marriage in Iran and Egypt; feminist cyberactivism. There were two keynote addresses (by Dr. Nawal el-Saadawi of Egypt and by Professor Valentine M. Moghadam of Northeastern University) and a total of eleven panels. Conference participants included university professors, junior researchers, and Kurdish activists, which ensured a rich and lively set of discussions. Indeed, some of the key issues included the following:

-The Arab Spring: why Tunisia has done best thus far, and whether or not the Arab Spring (or its

presumed “revolutions”) continues. The debate was generated by Moghadam’s keynote, on explaining the divergent outcomes of the Arab Spring and in particular the differences between Egypt and Tunisia, in which I emphasized the salience of pre-existing gender relations and women’s mobilizations, along with military spending.

-Young women from France and Tunisia who join ISIS: an interesting difference in analysis was provided by Dr. Armelle Le Bras-Chopard (University of Versailles, France), on the one hand, and the Tunisian participants Dr. Ikbal al-Gharbi (Zeytouna University, Tunis), Dr. Najet Limam-Tnani (University of Tunis), Dr. Khediya Arfaoui (University of Tunis and the feminist organizations AFTURD and Femmes Démocrates), on the other. The different analyses underscored the persistence of the agency-structure tension in the social sciences.

-Why women’s political participation in Lebanon remains so low, despite high educational attainment. A session on women, war and displacement in Lebanon highlighted the problems of Lebanon’s continuing “patriarchal-feudal” political system (as described by Tracy Chamoun, in an interesting and poignant presentation), and the socio-political implications of large populations of refugees, whether Palestinian or Syrian.

-The status of the Kurdish struggles for national and gender liberation in Rojava and elsewhere:



**Keynote speaker Dr. Nawal el-Saadawi**



**Keynote Speaker Professor Valentine M. Moghadam**



**Q&A session at the closing session**

this came about with a very instructive presentation by Meral Cicek, co-founder of the Kurdish Women's Relations Office (REPAK) in northern Iraq. Following the internal transformation of the Kurdish People's Party (PKK), the goal now is not necessarily a Kurdish state but the broader objective of liberation and emancipation, along with democratic practices in self-governing. Rojava, a *de facto* autonomous region in northern Syria consisting of three self-governing cantons with male and female co-presidents, has been leading the fight against ISIS/ISIL, not least on the part of the YPG, or the People's Protection Units, which include women fighters.

-The strengths and weaknesses of international law and the inconsistency of its application: examples are the Palestine-Israel conflict and especially the summer 2014 Israeli attacks on Gaza; the absence of gender justice for women victims of sexual violence (the Bosnian war, eastern Congo, Egypt); and impunity of perpetrators of wars, occupations, invasions, and bombardments in Iraq 2003 (US and UK), Libya 2011 (NATO and its regional allies), Syria 2011 and since (the Western powers and their regional allies), and Yemen today (Saudi Arabia).

Simultaneous interpretation in English, French, and Arabic enabled all participants to understand each other, and there was ample time for Q&A

and challenges from the floor after each panel, as well as discussions over coffee breaks, lunch and dinner. The conference began with Nawal Saadawi's references to "many forms of war", including economic war, the tragic migrations of peoples, epidemics, the trafficking of women, and the "new form of colonialism" that has adversely affected the Arab Spring – all evidence of "an inhumane world". Saadawi drew attention to the "very destructive role" played in the region by the Western powers, which she claimed were responsible for both al-Qaeda and ISIS. Other presentations reported on research findings or on new political developments in the region. An evening visit to Beit al-Hanan introduced conference participants to one of Lebanon's first shelters for women victims of violence; the shelter was founded by Dr. Evelyne Accad (professor emerita of French, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign) and her sister Dr. Jacqueline Hajjar. *Upholding Gendered Peace at a Time of War* was an extraordinarily rich and stimulating experience that could generate a set of recommendations addressing some of the issues I have highlighted above.

**Professor Valentine M. Moghadam,  
Northeastern University, Boston,  
Massachusetts, USA**

## **The 7th International Forum “Mediterranean Women” on “The Escalation of Violence against Women in the Middle East and North Africa**

In 2013, Isis Center for Women and Development organized the 6th International Mediterranean Forum on the status of women's rights in the Middle East and North Africa two years after the so-called Arab Spring. The major conclusion that the participants came up with was a looming backlash on these hard-won rights that came with years of reflection, activism and political endeavor.

On May 29-31, 2015, four years or so after uprisings (which among other things raised the slogans of freedom, dignity and equality), fast-moving and dangerous events that accompanied the mounting tide of religious extremism that uses Islam to attain power, reveal the transformation of the initial backlash into unprecedented new types of violence against women.

It is true that the turmoil is affecting men, women, and children, but specific forms of pernicious violence systematically target women and girls. These forms range from the imposition of the *niqab* (total veiling), the ban of women from public spaces unless they are accompanied by a male member of the family, a return to Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) for women between the ages of

11 and 46, stoning to death of women suspected of adultery, assassination of female activists, *Jihad al-Nikah* (brainwashed women offering their bodies in support of the Jihadists), and enslavement (the buying/selling of women and girls).

These new forms of violence indirectly “sanction” the already familiar types such as moralization incriminating women for any social crisis, domestic battering, increased sexual harassment, forced marriage, and (gang) rape that accompanied the post-uprising phases in the region. More than that, extreme violence against women is regularly used in the Jihadists’ propaganda narratives and glorified by mainstream national and international media.

And yet, very little is being said on the gender aspect of what’s happening in the Mena region. This forum is our way of engaging with this idea. It is important to underline that this forum gathers academics, activists and politicians of both sexes from and outside the region. A combination of academe, activism and politics as well as the engagement of men and women has always characterized work on women’s issues in the Middle East and North Africa because of the nature of the space-based patriarchy that oppresses men and women. It is through these channels that this forum wants to draw attention to the dangers that increasingly target our societies and the future of the region... Let’s not forget that societies where women are oppressed will easily

fall into the hands of extremists.



**A glimpse of the audience**



**From left: Fatima Dhibat (Fes Municipality), Helmut Reifeld (Fondation Konrad Adenauer – Rabat), Mohammed Kabbaj, Le Wali (Region Fes-Boulemane), and Dr. Fatima Sadiqi (ISIS Center)**



**Participants from Japan, Sri Lanka and the US**

## NGO Highlight

### Safe Kids Egypt

Safe Kids Egypt is a non-governmental organization established in 2012. It aims to empower children by raising awareness and teaching them to speak up in cases of sexual abuse. It also targets teachers and parents by providing training and awareness sessions on how to prevent sexual abuse, and equip them with adequate knowledge and skills on how to support children in cases of sexual abuse.

Click [here](#) to know more about Safe Kids Egypt.

A number of questions come to mind: What connection is there between “Islamist” movements as geographically and culturally distant as Al Qaeda, Boko Haram, the Taliban, and now the Islamic State? While all these groups claim the Qur’an (although they do not offer the same interpretations of it), one trait, which is less about ideology than what might be described as group psychoanalysis, unites them: the hatred of women.

Is it not strange that the priority of these groups wherever they win battles or seize power is to subjugate women? In Tehran, the ayatollahs consistently make sure that no hair protrudes from a woman’s *tchador*, in Kabul that the burqa makes women uniform when they are not raped or enslaved, which is their fate in Nigeria and Iraq.

The claim that the source of this hatred of women and obsession with their bodies is found in the Qur'an must be disputed. These and related questions need serious and beyond religion research.

The dire absence of reliable statistics, let alone serious academic research, on this issue exacerbates the short- and long- term local, regional, and international social, economic, and political repercussions of gender-based violence and calls for urgent policies.

The seventh edition of the Mediterranean Women Forum aimed at documenting and unveiling these new types of violence, linking them to the familiar types, understanding their social, economic and political ramifications, digging out their surface and deeper underpinnings especially in relation to Jihadism, and proposing strategies to alleviate and gradually stop them. The forum targeted seven major axes:

1. The significance of the escalation of violence against women
2. The escalation of violence against women in the Middle East
3. The escalation of violence against women in North Africa
4. Patriarchy and violence against women
5. The impact of masculinity
6. Some strategies for fighting violence against women:
  - Reform of school curricula
  - Reform of textbooks
7. International networking in the face of a transnational violence

The following countries were represented: Egypt, Lebanon, Palestine, Jordan, Yemen, Oman, Bahrain, Turkey, Iran, Tunisia, Algeria, Kenya, France, Italy, Spain, Belgium, Germany, USA, Canada, Japan, Sri Lanka, and Morocco. Whether speakers, chairs or listeners, the participants represented the four continents. Academics, activists, experts and politicians discussed the issues in three languages (Arabic, French and English) and came up with the following recommendations:

1. Reduce the gap between progressive constitutions and laws regarding violence against women.
2. Preserve the achievements and rights of women and counter any setbacks.
3. Enforce the law that criminalizes all forms of violence against women.
4. Eliminate the theoretical roots of violence against women in the media.
5. Strengthen civil society, especially women's groups that seek to eradicate all forms of violence against women.
6. Stop political, economic and social violence against women.
7. Promote the education of girls and the rights of children.
8. Promote transnational networking to stop violence against women.

**Fatima Sadiqi, Ph.D.**  
**Senior Professor of Linguistics and Gender Studies (MA, PhD), Woodrow Wilson Center Fellow (Washington DC), Co-Founder, International Institute for Languages and Cultures (INLAC), and Director, Isis Center for Women and Development**

## Global Peace and Security: Women's Learning Partnership

Women's Learning Partnership (WLP) was founded in response to the expressed needs of an international partnership of 20 independent grassroots Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) in the Middle East-North Africa region at the 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, where an international treaty was articulated. Mahnaz Afkhami (former Secretary General of the Women's Organization of Iran and Minister for Women's Affairs) organized a dialogue in June 2000 for women NGO leaders from Muslim-majority societies to identify the themes and priority areas for the newly established organization. WLP member partners have since worked together to strengthen their capacities through network building, knowledge sharing, and logistical support.

WLP celebrated its 15th anniversary on March 8, 2015 during the annual International Women's Day - coinciding with the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action - with representative Partners coming from Bahrain, Brazil, Egypt, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Iran, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mauritania, Morocco, Mozambique, Norway, Pakistan, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Turkey, USA, and Zimbabwe. The partnership holds Special Consultative Status with the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), which enables it to

ensure that grassroots women's voices are heard in international fora. I had the opportunity to attend some of the events that WLP organized during the 59th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in New York in March 2015, and was highly impressed by WLP's steadfast work to empower women in the Global South, its unique approach, and its many successes.

The WLP's multipronged objectives are: a) to build a partnership of indigenous partner organizations dedicated to women's human rights, development and peace; b) to increase the number of women taking on leadership and decision-making roles at family, community and national levels; and c) to improve the effectiveness of feminist movements in Muslim-majority societies locally, and strengthening the capacity of the partner organizations globally. WLP's foundational operating philosophy is that for change to be truly lasting it must come about organically from within. While each partner is autonomous and independent, they share common visions, values, and aspirations. The WLP uses this network of interconnected partners to expand their reach and replicate their participatory programs to enable women and youth around the world to recognize their own individual promise and support them to begin to imagine themselves as powerful leaders in their homes, in the public space, and well beyond. The synergy created by

these relationships has made possible the astonishing growth and impact of their programs over the last 15 years.

From the WLP's perspective the key to gender equality and justice is leadership and active participation of women. Accordingly, WLP has redefined concepts of leadership and power to conform to women's values - a concept of horizontal, participatory leadership based on dialogue, consensus building, and shared vision. They have developed on the ground a culture-specific curriculum that could be adapted to varied societies. In Jordan, for example, WLP partner SIGI/Jordan has now established a national partnership of ten organizations engaged in creating and expanding knowledge on an evolving culture of democracy and tolerance. Some partners, such as ADFM in Morocco, engage organizations from countries in the region where WLP does not have partner organizations, e.g., Tunisia and Algeria, and replicates the international model at the regional level. In this way, the culture of co-creation of programs, peer to peer organizational development, and capacity building expands without creating a large international bureaucracy. This pattern also energizes the partnership's main driving force, namely, indigenous knowledge and grassroots ownership.

As an international NGO, the ongoing mission of WLP is to link those with access to resources,

knowledge, and technologies to those without, and augment the voices and visions of the world's resource-poor majority. The WLP has systematically arranged international workshops, eCourses, Training of Trainers Institutes, convening South-South, peer-to-peer exchanges, supporting cross-regional exchange of experience, knowledge, and strategies, as well as publishing training manuals and handbooks that are translated into 20 languages and disseminated to the local Partners, all of which can be accessed freely through the [WLP's website](#).

WLP has also been acutely cognizant of the power of film and visual representation, and so has embarked on the task of creating documentaries on topical issues.

WLP's latest documentary production, "*Human Rights: The Unfinished Journey*," premiered at the CSW in New York this March, is a vivid response to the growing challenges of "war on terror," and "national security" that have since 9/11 contributed significantly to the increase in violence against women and human rights violations. Governments worldwide, as this film makes it clear, have shifted to hard security measures and counter-terrorism tactics. WLP is not insensitive to the necessity of taking precautions regarding security, but notes that prior to 9/11, nations would have found it impossible to uphold the use of torture by arguing for its effectiveness and would have, instead,

considered it a human rights abuse. Unfortunately, this is an indication of how global values have changed.

The major challenges facing the WLP, as the Partners came together in New York City on the week of March 8, 2015, was to map out their course of action. What the WLP is looking for is an investment in human security, safety and the dignity of people, not in more arms that are actually a threat to people but in amplifying women's voices, and raising the capabilities and skills of those who would work for equality and justice. More than ever, the Partners are focused on women's leadership.

**Shahla Haeri, Ph.D.**  
**Associate Professor**  
**Boston University**

## **Launching of the “Status of Arab Women Report” in partnership with ESCWA-Center for Women**



On May 26, 2015, [the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World \(IWSAW\)](#) at the Lebanese American University (LAU) hosted the launching event of ESCWA's Flagship Study on [“Access to Justice for Women and Girls in the Arab Region: From Ratification to Implementation of International Instruments”](#). The study examines women's right of access to justice in the Arab region. Focusing on women in the 17 countries covered by the ESCWA mandate – namely Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, the State of Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen – the study examines the ability of women in these countries, both citizens

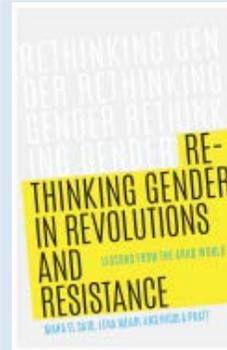
and non-citizens, to access judicial processes and gain just remedy for violations of their rights.

Assessing the legal, institutional and structural impediments and challenges facing women's access to justice in the region, this study analyses the extent to which national legal frameworks meet the requirements set forth in ratified international human rights treaties; reviews the measures currently taken by Arab Governments to improve the availability, accessibility, adaptability and affordability of women's access to justice; and provides policy recommendations aimed at improving women's access to justice and thereby translating internationally guaranteed rights into practice.

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## Highlights



### Rethinking Gender in Revolutions and Resistance

Lessons from the Arab World

**Editors:** Maha El-Said, Lena Meari and Nicola Pratt

**Year of Publication:** 2015

**Publisher:** Zed Books / Radical International Publishing

Ever since the uprisings that swept the Arab world, the role of Arab women in political transformations received unprecedented media attention. The copious commentary, however, has yet to result in any serious study of the gender dynamics of political upheaval.

*Rethinking Gender in Revolutions and Resistance* is the first book to analyse the interplay between moments of sociopolitical transformation, emerging subjectivities and the different modes of women's agency in forging new gender norms in the Arab world. Written by scholars and activists from the countries affected, including Palestine, Egypt, Tunisia and Libya, this is an important addition to Middle Eastern gender studies.

