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Democracy without Women is Hypocrisy

Violence against Women in the Arab Region in all its Forms and Approaches to
Mitigation in the Context of the Arab Uprisings

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Summary

Women across the globe daily experience violence and harassment as a result of
infrastructures and frameworks that a) fail to protect them and their rights and b) fail to
implement higher standards for gender equality and stronger punishments for the
violation of these standards. Violence against women is not limited to physical violence,
but is also the systematic discrimination and marginalization of women with regard to
their equal rights, protection, and dignity as described by the following realms: politics,
economics, society, culture, education, health, and media.

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*The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily
represent those of the United Nations

In the Arab region in particular, women and girls face a disproportionate level of discrimination and violence, and in both public and private life are treated as unequal to men and boys. Access and opportunity are among two of the biggest factors in preventing full engagement of these constituencies, who have been marginalized by legal, political, social, and cultural factors that work to undermine their full participation in society. Following the Arab uprisings, the risk factor of conservative Islamist influence has been exacerbated, threatening progress made under "secular" regimes and challenging the very principles espoused on the streets, during public protests that propelled the revolutions to their height. Together, all these elements continue to stress the urgency for action today by core constituencies at all levels and across all sectors in order to prevent backlash against women by new governments and promote women's advancement in new infrastructures and frameworks adopted by new and existing governments.

In this paper, three leading forms of violence will be discussed as a means to explore the regional situation and approaches currently in use and/or recommended for adoption. These forms of violence against women include: political violence, legal violence, and physical violence (particularly with regard to situations of armed conflict).

Political Violence against Women

Women in the Arab region historically have struggled with exclusion and marginalization from politics, peacemaking and decision-making. As of June 2012, the average number of women in parliament for the Arab States was 14.7 percent, ranking above only the Pacific States (14.5 percent) for the lowest female representation of any region worldwide.[1] While this number has more than doubled over the past eight years[2], women, who make up just under fifty percent of the global population, continue to be under-represented not only in parliament and high-level decision-making positions such as in key ministries and cabinets, but also in peacemaking and transitional committees, where their presence could contribute exponentially to countries' future stability—economic, political and otherwise. In the Arab world, this phenomenon is exacerbated and was acutely observed following the Arab uprisings, where women and men initially—in protests on the streets, makeshift service tents, and neighborhood watches in local communities—appeared equal.

In the transition period, for instance in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya, women were systematically excluded from key committees and councils organizing the terms of upcoming elections and reviewing the articles of the constitution. During the height of war, Libya's 43-member National Transition Council (NTC) included two female ministers and by September 2011, included only one woman[3]. Moreover, instead of placing her in key role, she was relegated to the post of minister for women, a position stereotypically given to women and often weakened by lack of influence and access to a lower budget than other ministries. In Egypt, female participation was even worse, with

[1] Inter-Parliamentary Union, "Women in National Parliaments," 30 Jun 2012, http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm.
[2] Inter-Parliamentary Union, "Women in National Parliaments," 30 Jun 2004, http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/arc/world300604.htm.
[3] Chris Stephen, Irina Kalashnikova, and David Smith, "Libyan Women: it's our Revolution Too," *The Guardian,* 16 Sept 2011, http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/sep/16/libyan-women-our-revolution-too.

not a single woman included in transitional bodies or the constitutional committee put together following the toppling of Mubarak's regime in February 2012.

The issue in the transitions and subsequent elections, as well as in the years prior, continues to be complicated by a series of social and cultural biases and taboos used to perpetuate old laws and stereotypes, thwarting reform and progress with regard to not only women's election but women's efficacy in office. During Egypt's parliamentary elections in November-December 2011, a woman candidate first used a flower and then her husband's photo in place of her own on campaign posters.[4] Her campaign was largely criticized and derided, and the use of both the flower symbol and her husband's likeness disempowered her presence as a viable and credible candidate.

There is also an entrenched advantage given to candidates fielded by political parties—as in any electoral system. This systematic bias perpetuates women's exclusion as historically, in many nations including those in the west, women were late in winning their right to vote as well as in participating as candidates in local and national elections. In Bahrain, women were given the right to vote and run for election only ten years ago, in 2002. That year, six women ran unsuccessfully for the Council of Representatives and in 2006, 21 female nominees participated. Of these, an overwhelming 90.5 percent (19 women) ran independently, while only two ran as part of political parties[5]. In 2006, one woman won a seat in parliament[6], after running unopposed, and in 2010, a woman won a place on the municipal council for the first time[7]. Of those who lost, 28.8 percent cited the attitude of religious leaders who have social and spiritual influence as the reason. Over the course of elections, candidates have been known to drop out due to external pressures or threats pushing them out of the race.

More than any other political parties in the region, however, Islamist parties have exercised an undue amount of control over political races. While certain governments, for instance, Mubarak in Egypt, Tunisia under Ben Ali, and Morocco under King Mohammed VI, long held secular leaders, there has been a recent resurgence of Islamist politics. In Egypt, the November 2011 parliament, which held power for only a few short months due to a power struggle between the military and new government, was over 70 percent Islamist, dominated by the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice party, which won 47 percent of the votes.[8] In Tunisia, a moderate Islamist party Ennahda also won the majority of votes and was historically inspired by the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. Both groups were largely suppressed under prior regimes and with strong connections, financial backing, and influence, have been enjoyed an overwhelming resurgence following the Arab uprisings.

[4] "Female Salafist candidate is using her husband's photo on campaign posters," *Al Arabiya,* 10 Nov 2011, http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/11/10/176372.html.
[5] "Next Elections: Women Doomed to Failure Unless Supported by Political Societies," *Bahrain Monitor,* http://www.bahrainmonitor.org/in-news/s-009-03.html.
[6] Suad Hamada, "POLITICS-BAHRAIN: More Than A Matter of Putting Women in Office," *IPS News*, 18 Oct 2010, http://www.ipsnews.net/2010/10/politics-bahrain-more-than-a-matter-of-putting-women-in-office.
[7] "Bahrain: First woman elected to municipal council, " Trade Arabia News Service (reprinted in wluml.org), 31 Oct 2010, http://www.wluml.org/node/6751.
[8] "Muslim Brotherhood tops Egyptian poll result," 22 Jan 2012, *Al Jazeera*, http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/01/2012121125958580264.html.

Of course, then, it is another clash for women as liberal or progressive women are at odds with the values and ideals of candidates in the more conservative Islamist parties and groups. In Egypt, a 64-seat quota established under Mubarak was canceled in the transition and replaced with a requirement stipulating every political party must field at least one woman candidate. A leading member of the Salafist Nour Party, which won the second most votes in the November-December elections, referred to this rule as "evil" and shared that they would only do it because they were "forced" to by law. Meanwhile, political activist and candidate Gameela Ismael withdrew from the elections when her party Ghad El-Thawra Party, part of the Democratic Alliance led by the FJP, failed to field her in a higher position, essentially undermining her ability to secure a seat in the new assembly[9]. Ultimately, only eight women were elected to the new assembly, less than two percent of total seats, four of who were from Islamist parties.

Recommendations for increased women's political participation

A Supreme Council for Women study, completed with the cooperation of UNDP, shared the wide array of obstacles facing women's increased political participation including: their inability to build alliances; lack of financial support; the lack of an affordable specialized administrative team and technical experts; prevalent cultural and social norms opposing women's participation in public life held by both men and women; biases of male voters, who worry that women candidates will dedicate the majority of their time to women's issues; and media bias, which undermines women's candidacy through depiction of women politicians or omission of women leaders as experts in programming.

Civil society has worked to combat this successfully through a variety of approaches. First, and most noted, is the effort to lobby for quotas. According to a UN Report, out of 59 countries that held elections last year, 17 of them enforced quotas. In those countries, women gained over ten percent more seats—27 percent—compared to 16 percent in countries without quotas[10]. In the Arab region, the use of quotas has demonstrated direct results increasing the number of women in parliament. For instance, in Morocco, constitutional reform has increased the number of seats reserved for women from 30 out of 325 (just over 9 percent) to 60 out of 395 seats or 15 percent[11]. As a result, in the 2011 elections, women won 17 percent of seats (67/395 seats)[12]. In Algeria, women's political participation went up from about 7 percent to about 32 percent due to the adoption of a quota prior to May 2012 elections[13].

Despite the success of quotas, debate regarding their overall impact continues. It can be argued that the presence of women alone contributes to women's advancement by challenging existing expectations and models regarding women's inclusion and providing visibility for women politicians on local and national bodies. But visibility is only the

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[9] Yasmine Fathi, "Will women make it into Egypt's upcoming parliament?" *Ahram*. 20 Oct 2011, http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/24583/Egypt/Politics-/Will-women-make-it-into-Egypts-upcoming-parliament.aspx.
[10] "Women's political participation must be accelerated through quotas," 2 Mar 2012, *UN News Centre*, http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=41445&Cr=un+women&Cr1.
[11] "Morocco Parliamentary Election 2011, http://www.makeeverywomancount.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2124:morocco-parlamentary-elections-2011&catid=69:political-participation-a-election-monitoring&Itemid=170.
[12] Ibid.
[13] AFP, "Algerian women claw their way into parliament," Al Arabiya, 16 May 2012, http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/05/16/214420.html.

first step and does not necessarily encourage or ensure that the women who are elected as a result of a quota will promote, support, or accurately represent women's rights and priorities or have the influence necessary to build support for recommended reforms.

Thus, in addition to quotas, there must be attention paid to the types of positions women gain and internal structures that can serve to enhance or detract from their efficacy and influence. Women must be appointed and included in core ministries and committees, and given access to high-level positions typically reserved for their male counterparts. This is an area that continues to lag behind, and even in countries where quotas are in place, there are no constitutional guarantees of female participation in the highest levels of government, which are usually designated by appointment as opposed to popular vote.

It is also important, as noted in the analysis above, to discuss the distinction between female politicians and pro-women politicians. To this end, it must be clarified that increased representation of women does not immediately translate into better representation for women. Take for example the case of a woman MP from Tunisia who spoke out against a law protecting women who have children outside of marriage early in her term, citing that it would encourage other women to behave similarly and that instead of implementing a law protecting these women, the government should work on reforming these individuals. She went on to clarify that freedom granted to Tunisian women should not be at the expense of Islamic principles.[14]

Women promoted as leaders in public office and decision-making roles must be vetted and trained to ensure they are truly representative of women's priorities in the region and do not further anti-women sentiment. That is not to say that only liberal women should be appointed to office, but it is to point out and establish that women's mere presence in decision-making bodies does not guarantee implementation of gender equality standards in the region.

A linked consideration is advocacy for establishing quotas and standards for women's inclusion on party lists. As introduced in earlier discussion, women's lack of access to influential networks and resources affiliated with leading political parties can contribute to their lack of success during elections. As independents, women have had even less success because of the absence of supporting infrastructures and resources typically provided through party affiliation. In Egypt, a requirement for women to be included on party lists fell short, however, due to limitation of the language, calling for a minimum of only one woman candidate per list and placing no emphasis on where she is included on the party's list. A positive model is the case of Libya, where 32 women or nearly 17 percent of women won seats in the new assembly as the result of a zipper list—drafted and lobbied into legislation by Karama partners the Libyan Women's Platform for Peace—requiring every other slot on party lists be filled by women candidates not only within their lists but at the top of their lists.[15] One more woman won a seat out of 85 candidates running as independents: however, many originally fielded as independents

[14] Amal al-Hilali, "Ennahda members make conflicting statements about women's rights in Tunisia," Al Arabiya, 13 Nov 2011, http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/11/13/176916.html.
[15] "Libyan Elections Give Women a 17% Starting Point," *Forbes,* 19 Jul 2012, http://www.forbes.com/sites/womensenews/2012/07/19/libyan-elections-give-women-a-17-starting-point/

decided to run with a select party to benefit from the alternate electoral law and from network support during the election process.

In addition to the above methods, civil society must invest in training women candidates to communicate effectively during election campaigns, as well as once seated in office. The stereotype that exists in media and among voters and other politicians is that women are not qualified for office. This notion can be combated through direct training and support of women politicians, and nomination of competent women leaders not only well-versed in women's issues, but also in the broader local and national priorities and goals, such as mitigating widespread unemployment and creating economic stability for youth and families.

It is also important to build awareness among voters of women's priorities and the importance of electing responsive representation into office. Programs that have been discussed following the revolution include engagement of youth activists and voters to better understand their role in the political process and how they can wield more impact, through voting, through community initiatives, and through education and awareness-building. It also emphasizes the importance of developing women as a constituency that is addressed by leadership, and through its collective influence, can lobby jointly for core demands and reforms.

Legal Violence

In the Arab region, women face a number of challenges to due to discriminatory laws and policies, which effectively fail to: protect them from violence and harassment; support and promote their advancement; and criminalize violence perpetuated against them. Women have struggled with a range of issues as a result, from lack of protection for migrant workers (as many struggle to find work in the formal sector)—the lax conditions of which have fostered a growing epidemic of human trafficking in women—to women's lack of recognition as full and equal citizens in terms of passing on their nationality to their children or making decisions regarding marriage or divorce.

Over the past two decades, women have recorded significant progress in these areas, including Morocco's new family code or Moudwana. Adopted in 2004 and further revised in 2007, Moudwana granted women equal rights in the family with regard to key issues such as equal rights in marriage, divorce, and custody, and with regard to passing on nationality.[16] In Egypt, reforms were also enacted with regard to family code, granting women the right to 'no-fault' divorce through the 'khul' law and extending the age up to which women are able to retain custody of their children from age twelve to fifteen.[17] There are numerous other examples, and while they exemplify progress in implementation of gender equality standards, the day-to-day situation for women proves that a large gap still exists between men and women legally.

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[16] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, "Social Institutions and Gender Index: Morocco," http://genderindex.org/country/moroc
[17] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, "Social Institutions and Gender Index: Egypt," http://genderindex.org/country/egypt-arab-rep

The rise of Islamist influence following the Arab uprisings has created increasing concern regarding women's rights under the law and how they will be impacted by new governments. Women's rights have always been complicated under the application of sharia law—the moral code and religious law of Islam—in many national and local matters. Even in more secularly-based governments, sharia law is relied upon to decide a variety of matters. In Sudan in 2008, thirteen women were arrested and faced lashings and jail time for wearing trousers in a public café. It was considered a violation of Sudan's public decency law, which is based on Islamic law, and applies even to non-Muslims in Khartoum.[18] In May 2012, a young mother was found guilty of adultery and sentenced to death by stoning under sharia law.[19] While Sudan's constitution is not solely based on sharia, in practice, it is randomly applied, particularly in situations regarding women's behavior in public or family life.

Recent changes in the political landscape threaten to reverse hard-won rights and intensify the influence of Islam in government decisions and legal proceedings. For instance, in just a few short months of being seated, Egypt's Islamist-led parliament made proposals to reduce the marriage age for women from 18 to 14, cancel the revision to the custody law made in 2005, and cancel the 'khul' law altogether. Newly elected President Mohammed Morsi says he wants a constitution that respects civil rights yet is enshrined in sharia, suggesting future reforms may be consistent with more conservative interpretations of Islam.[20] Meanwhile in Jordan's constitution, speech critical of Islam (as well as of the king, government officials and institutions, etc.) is criminalized. A 2010 revision of the law increased penalties for some of these offenses and a subsequent law extended these policies to apply to online expression.[21]

This type of legal violence is perpetuated in today's society in the following ways:

1. The laws themselves: Whether discussing the absence of legislation, the phrasing of laws and policies, or the lack of comprehensive and strict measures imposed by these articles, laws in the Arab world fail to fully protect women, promote their advancement, and prosecute crimes committed against them. For example, in September 2012, the Royal Committee on Constitutional Review in Jordan proposed amendments to Jordan's constitution, including an amendment to Article 6, which prohibits discrimination based on race, language, or religion. While the committee promised women's rights activists it would include the term "gender" in the revised article, the final draft submitted to the King did not include this.[22]

2. The failure to implement and enforce existing laws: In Egypt, actions have been taken to address sexual harassment through legislation. However, women victims of violence and women's rights activists and monitors have shared reporting and judicial processes are time-consuming and flawed, resulting in incidents being left

[18] "Sudan women 'lashed for trousers,'" *BBC News*, 13 Jul 2009, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/8147329.stm.
[19] Nesrine Malik, "Sudan's haphazard sharia legal system has claimed too many victims," *The Guardian,* 6 Jun 2012, http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/jun/06/sudan-sharia-legal-system.
[20] Jeffrey Fleishman, "Egypt President-elect Mohamed Morsi moves into Mubarak palace," 26 Jun 2012, http://articles.latimes.com/2012/jun/26/world/la-fg-egypt-presidential-election-20120626.
[21] "Country Summary: Jordan," Human Rights Watch, 2012, http://www.hrw.org/world-report-2012/world-report-2012-jordan.
[22] Ibid.

unreported or unprosecuted.[23]   Other issues with implementation and enforcement of laws include lack of training of legal professionals, and social and cultural taboos which result in the victim feeling isolated or ashamed and reluctant to report incidence of violence.

3. <u>The lack of understanding of legal provisions:</u> Even when governments enact necessary laws protecting women, for instance Jordan's 2008 domestic violence law, the adoption of these laws often fails to be widely publicized or well understood. Laws are written in complex legal terms and can be difficult for parties to interpret. In 2009, Karama's Jordanian partners launched a program in order to build awareness of the new domestic violence law, as well as simplify its articles into terms that were easily understood and applied. As a result, brochures and posters were produced, and workshops were held. The brochures were also translated into Braille.

4. <u>The lack of awareness of the impact of legal violence:</u> With greater understanding of how certain laws impact women, their families, their communities, and even the nation at large, there can be greater support behind lobbies for their reform. In Jordan, a campaign to raise awareness of the impacts of a discriminatory nationality law, which prevents women who marry non-Jordanians from passing on their citizenship to their husbands or their children, shared the widespread consequences for women who marry non-Jordanians and for their husbands and children. The campaign launched first with a study itemizing the devastating situations for women, men, and children affected by this law. Later, it served as the basis for a parliamentary hearing, where for the first time, in-person testimonies of those impacted were shared with members of parliament.

5. <u>The absence of women in politics:</u> Legal violence against women and its perpetuation is of course inextricably linked to the absence of women on key committees enacting, canceling, or reforming legislation. Following the revolutions, women's absence on constitutional committees proved alarming, as did their limited presence in new assemblies and cabinets.

Approaches to address legal violence against women in the region

The process to combating legal violence against women begins with the reform of existing laws and enactment of new laws that promote gender equality with regards to women's equal access to key infrastructures (education, health, etc.), women's security and protection, and women's equal opportunities for advancement (labor force protection, laws governing mobility, etc.). Civil society continues to work toward these reforms through coalition-building and capacity-building. Through exchange of expertise and experiences with local, national, and international experts, policymakers, and activists, civil society fosters development of a) shared priorities, b) short and long-term action plans, and c) best practices.

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[23] Hassan, Rasha Mohammed; Shoukry, Dr. Aliya; and Komsan, Nehad Abdul, "Clouds in Egypt's Sky: Sexual Harassment to Verbal Harassment to Rape," Egyptian Centre for Women's Rights, 2008.

Following the revolution, the women came together to establish new linkages and coalitions and build upon new ones in order to ensure they were not left behind in the transition. In Libya, women's organizations worked largely in isolation from each other, and formal structures for joint action were not well-defined. As part of Karama's initiative in Libya, a coalition of women from all walks of life came together to form the Libyan Women's Platform for Peace in October 2011, jointly establishing the priorities for Libyan women in the elections and later lobbying the National Transition Council to adopt the alternate electoral law which ultimately resulted in women gaining more seats in the new assembly. As in the revolutions, youth become a core part of this new constituency, and social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, became a building block of its growth and influence.

At the international level, gender equality standards such as the Millennium Development Goals or the Beijing Platform for Action establish a global consensus and metric in working toward equal human rights between men and women. They can be incredibly useful tools in pressuring governments at the national level to adopt new laws or amend existing ones such that they adhere to these standards.

An influential document has been the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Violence Against Women (CEDAW). CEDAW has been ratified by 187 member countries globally; however, ratification of CEDAW has not proven synonymous with implementation of gender equality in the signatory countries. All Arab states ratified CEDAW with the exception of Somalia, and Sudan[24], however, out of the 22 states, only two did so without reservations (Comoros and Djibouti). Reservations have been held on the following articles in particular[25], drastically limiting the implications of the convention's adoption in the region:

a) Article 2, which requires State Parties to condemn discrimination against women in all its forms and pursue all appropriate means to eliminate discrimination against women.
b) Article 9, which requires that State Parties grant women equal rights to men with regards to nationality and with respect to the nationality of their children.
c) Article 15, which requires that State Parties should accord women equality with men before the law, including in terms of legal rights to conclude contracts, administer property, etc. and legal rights relating to mobility.
d) Article 16, which requires State Parties to take appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in matters relating to marriage and family relations and ensure equality of men and women in these matters, for instance, with regard to the right to enter into marriage, choose a spouse, share responsibilities for children, dissolve the marriage, and share ownership of property.

Arab states holding reservations on Article 2 have asserted compliance is dependent upon conflicts with sharia law.[26] Articles 9, 15, and 16 are often objected to on the basis of conflicts with family codes and nationality codes, which are also often governed by

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[24] "United Nations Treaty Collection: CEDAW," 20 Aug 2012,
http://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-8&chapter=4&lang=en.
[25] "Declarations, Reservations, and Objections to CEDAW," 20 Aug 2012, Department of Economic and Social Affairs,
http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/reservations-country.htm.
[26] "Text of the Convention," 20 Aug 2012, Department of Economic and Social Affairs,
http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw.htm

sharia law, and have been historically difficult to amend due to their entrenchment in religious debate.

Civil society must work together to a) increase monitoring regarding implementation of these conventions and their articles and b) training for preparation and submission of reports. At the international level, the UN and related bodies must adopt recommendations shared in these reports and raise them in dialogues on compliance with national governments.

Physical violence against women

Political and legal violence go hand in hand with the physical violence against women that occurs in the Arab region, in that they perpetuate a culture where violence against women is not criminalized and may be treated with grave impunity, and where women victims of violence lack access to support services necessary for rehabilitation. Violence against women is widespread throughout the region: in Algeria, a national survey conducted in 2006 shared half the women polled had experienced some type of family violence[27]; in Lebanon, a study conducted by the United Nations Population Fund reported two-thirds of Lebanese women experienced domestic violence[28]; and in Egypt, a study performed by the Egyptian Centre for Women's Rights reported 83 percent of Egyptian women experienced some type of sexual harassment, while 62 percent of Egyptian men admitted to sexually harassing women[29].

Violence against women in the region, as in other parts of the world, is exacerbated by situations of armed conflict. Women and girls constitute close to 80 percent of internally displaced people and refugees worldwide.[30] Conflicts tend to increase the incidence of sexual violence, and essential social services, such as access to healthcare and education, tend to be significantly disrupted during times of war. Following the Arab uprisings and in the transitional environment of the past year and a half, this issue area has been the subject of renewed concern.

In October 2000, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1325 regarding women and armed conflict. Resolution 1325 stresses the inclusion of a gender perspective addressing the special needs of women during post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation. Eight years later, UN SCR 1820 was adopted, going further to specifically call for criminalization of sexual violence committed during times of war. Resolution 1820 added clauses to 1325 linking sexual violence as a security issue related to reconciliation and eliminating sexual violence crimes from provisions of amnesty. It also advocates for training of peacekeepers regarding gender sensitivity and amendment of penal codes to list crimes against women and girls.

However, despite the strength of these resolutions, twelve years later not a single state in the region has adopted a national action plan addressing implementation of 1325. During the revolution, aggravated violence against women was reported: in Libya, soldiers were accused of waging a campaign of rape and assaulting hundreds of women[31] during the

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[27] "State of Play: Gender-based Violence in South Mediterranean Countries," Euromed Gender Equality Programme,

[28] Ibid.

[29] Christian Caryl, "The Women of Tahrir Fight Back," *Foreign Policy,* 5 Jul 2012, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/07/05/the_women_of_tahrir_square_fight_back?page=full.

[30] "The Impact of Conflict on Women and Girls," UNFPA, 13-15 November 2002.

[31] "ICC prosecutor may bring Libya rape charges," 9 Nov 2012, http://af.reuters.com/article/topNews/idAFJOE7A80CK20111109.

uprisings in 2011; and in Egypt, military members were accused of forcing "virginity tests" on female protesters last year and the only member charged with the crime was later acquitted; nearly a year later, more than a dozen women were detained following a protect outside the Defense Ministry in Cairo and several claimed abuse by prison guards and troops.[32] In other cases, women have reported rape committed by government officials at security checkpoints as they are attempting to escape local conflict and violence. Human rights Watch estimates that hundreds of Syrian women and girls have been raped by soldiers loyal to President Assad in crowded refugee camps sharing borders with Syria in Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan.[33]

Approaches to mitigating the impact of war on women

Women are essential to the reconciliation and peacemaking processes, and their inclusion is crucial to ensure long-term peace and stability. Only 2.3 percent of military peacekeepers are women and approximately 8.2 percent of the 13,221 UN police are women. The presence of women is necessary to ensure stable transitions from times of war and women peacekeepers in conflict and post-conflict zones not only provide unique perspectives in this process, but they help support the transition for women and girls following situations of armed conflict, during which women and girls face a disproportionate amount of burden. Moreover, women peacemakers and police troops help create a safer space for women and girls who have suffered sexual violence or other types of abuse. In Liberia in 2007, an all-female formed police unit encouraged women to report instances of sexual violence; their presence helped calm crowds[34]. In addition to presence of women on the ground, the inclusion of women decision-makers in peacemaking and reconciliation dialogues helps accurately depict and illuminate priorities for women and girls in transition periods and ensures that terms of reconciliation are responsive.

Multiple strategies must be employed in order to mitigate these impacts and promote women's inclusion:

a) Economic empowerment of women: In times of war, women face a disproportionate burden in providing for their families, whether due to their spouse's absence or due to a lack of security in traveling, which may cut women off from their source of income (trading, farming, etc.). In order to mitigate this burden, skills-training programs and access to microloans are crucial to help balance daily financial needs.

b) Training of service providers: Women victims of violence face ostracization from their local communities and families, and also must deal with the emotional, psychological, and physical consequences of violence. Training of service providers to deliver standardized and comprehensive care, as well as working to proliferate these models of service is essential in rehabilitation. There must also

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[32] "Women accuse Egyptian military of sexual assault," 5 Oct 2012, http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/women-accuse-egyptian-military-exual-assault
[33] Karen Leigh, "Rights groups detail rape in Syria's civil war," *Deutsche Welle*, 13 Aug 2012, http://www.dw.de/dw/article/0,,16162679,00.html.
[34] "Gender: Women UN peacekeepers - more needed," Irin News, 20 May 2010, http://www.irinnews.org/Report/89194/GENDER-Women-UN-peacekeepers-more-needed.

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be standardization of terms used to refer to violent acts and survivors of violence, with care taken to fight negative violence stereotypes and with attention paid to the quality of services provided. In Morocco in 2008, Karama hosted a meeting with its partners to discuss VAW terminology and found that terms vary within nations and between them. This was a source of tension as different terms conjured different connotations among the group assembled, and this meeting demonstrated the need for consistency in use of terminology across providers to avoid causing offense or promoting a negative stereotype.

c) <u>Lobbying at the national and international levels for criminalization of violence committed during periods of armed conflict and fair prosecution of these crimes:</u> National and regional strategies on implementation of UN SCRs 1325, 1820 and related resolutions will fuel joint lobbies and ultimately pressure national governments to commit to the necessary reforms and investment in support programs. Coalitions working toward these goals must reach out to regional organizations such as the League of Arab States and policymakers to create broad constituencies of high-level support.

d) <u>Data collection and monitoring:</u> It is difficult to collect data in the region, particularly with regards to situations of violence, which women are reluctant to speak out about publicly due to feelings of shame or fear of isolation as a result. However, this data is essential in building pressure toward reform and in fully understanding the extent of the situation and how best to address its consequences.

Conclusion

Violence against women in all its form is costly, not only for the victims and their families, but for the communities and nations within which they live. A study conducted by Karama's partners in Egypt estimated that the total direct and indirect cost of violence against women in the nation exceeds 785 million Egyptian Pounds a year and 3 billion Egyptian pounds over the last three years. Within the region, social and cultural frameworks deeply rooted in patriarchal and Islamic tradition continue to challenge women's progress and momentum in reforming discriminatory laws, finding a voice in new and existing governments, and gaining equal access to supports and services. The Arab uprisings have demonstrated how entrenched these structures remain, and how existing challenges have been exacerbated by the shifting political landscape, leaving an urgent gap between international human rights and gender equality standards and goals and the every day reality for women in the region.

In approaching different forms of violence, it is essential that civil society works with and is supported by national, regional, and international exchanges and institutions in order to affect reforms from the top down and the bottom up.

In this effort, three additional components will be important overall, in addition to the specific approaches detailed in each section above:

1. Media training: Media is intrinsically linked to cultural and social taboos and stereotypes which are perpetuated on gender, whether with regard to how violence

is discussed, reported, or viewed by the general public or with regard to how women decision-makers or leaders are portrayed. Training of media personnel to apply a gender-sensitive lens and training of civil society to be savvier in their use of media to counter this perspective will help mitigate this issue. Moreover, as Karama's partners have done, social media, such as Twitter, and entertainment media, such as film and artwork, should be embraced as tools with which to combat negative gender and violence stereotypes and with which to build awareness on women's issues.

2. Engaging men and boys: Women's rights activists must reach out to new constituencies in order to build broader support for women's equal access, protection, and opportunities in public and private life. Men and boys must be part of the dialogue, and they must be part of the campaigns as well, in order to ensure that the reforms enacted are supported broadly by a society who feels ownership of these changes and responsibility for ensuring their enforcement.

3. Engaging youth: The Arab uprisings demonstrated passion and leadership from the youth constituency that was both invigorating and unexpected from veteran activists. Youth leaders can provide unique perspectives and galvanize new constituencies through use of new media and other tools, for instance, a Twitter petition or campaign.

4. Finding common ground with religious leaders: Given the trend toward Islamist politics and founded fears over backlash against women in these new landscapes, it will be essential to reach out to religious groups and MPs to engage in shared dialogue and discussion, and attempt to find areas of common understanding. While it will be difficult to unite those on extreme ends of the spectrum, it is important to engage the opposition and attempt to establish shared approaches to reaching mutual goals. By reaching out to new constituencies and coalitions, new opportunities for collaboration and compromise can be identified.

The spirit of the revolutions was absolutely in line with the dignity, freedom, and equality of women. A true democracy by definition is defined by the equal voice of the people; a democracy without women is hypocrisy. While there remains a long road ahead in institutionalizing this spirit, the revolutions themselves, and the subsequent speed and strength exhibited by civil society in addressing post-revolutionary concerns and building its capacity to address joint priorities, provides hope that change is possible. And that it is absolutely necessary.