

Chair Introduction



Meet your Head Chair!

Hey everyone, I'm Zoe. I'm currently studying A-Levels at Charterhouse Malaysia. This is my first time as a chair and I apologise for any mistakes in advance but please feel free to contact me or Suyashaa if you have worries or concerns regarding this council. I'm an avid webtoon reader and I love playing volleyball. Hit me up if you ever wanna play a friendly game with my school. I got into MUN around 2-3 years ago and I took a year-long hiatus from the MUN scene to focus on my IGCSEs. MUN has been a place for me to explore different political, social and fictional debates that plague our society and the chairs have always tried their best to make it a safe space for me and other delegates to make mistakes. At the end of every conference, I learn something new; whether it be the fact that I have quite a penchant for debate, a love of writing backstabbing directives or just the fact that the Malaysian MUN community is extremely supportive of each other. Recently, I've discovered a passion for chairing and I'm excited to be your chair for this council. Please don't be afraid to ask any questions and make mistakes because I'll be there to help you back up.

Meet your Co-chair!

Greetings distinguished delegates! Despite looking forward to doing a Physics Degree, my name is Suyashaa and I am a 14-year-old high school student from SMK Bukit Jelutong and I will be your Co-chair for UNW.

I started my MUN journey in late April. Ever since then I've been an active participant, having to participate in both national and international conferences.

I wish you all a fruitful conference. I know speaking can be intimidating, but the skills you learn while delegating in MUN are worth a lot. The more I delegated, the more confident and passionate I became. I took most of this opportunity to learn about diplomacy, problem-solving, public speaking, and research skills.

Outside of the council, you will find me reading books or listening to One Direction. Lastly, If you have any concerns, please feel free to reach out to me via discord or Gmail. See you soon!

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Position Paper Guidelines



Since the UN Women Council will be conducted in Malaysia Standardised Harvard MUN Rules of Procedures, position papers are **mandatory** in order to be considered for any rewards. It provides the council with detailed information of your country's stance and policy as well as your proposed course of action. This also helps the Board of Dias to paint a comprehensive picture of your position and research.

Keep in mind that plagiarism (20% or more) will not be tolerated, in which the Dais or Secretariat has the right to disqualify them from any awards.

A position paper should include the following:

- Background of the issue;
- Stance and policy of your stakeholders;
- Relations to other parties;
- Solutions relevant to the topic and;
- Bibliography.

Formatting guidelines for the position paper:

- Font: Times New Roman
- Size and spacing: size 12 and 1.15 spacing
- Paragraphing format: justified
- Page size: A4 and normal margin
- Citation/Bibliography: APA citation
- Maximum pages: 1.5 pages per topic (excluding Bibliography)

Submission Guidelines

- Save your Position Papers as a PDF file with the filename of UNW_[Country].pdf.
 Google/Word Doc submissions will be disregarded.
- The Position Paper is to be sent to both the chair (chair (chinzoe86@gmail.com) and co-chair (suyashaasriis@gmail.com)

Please do note that the deadline for submission of the position papers is on the **25th November 2021, 11:59 p.m (GM+8).** The position paper is a prerequisite for all awards. Requests for deadline extensions for the position papers (with valid reasons) may be made by contacting your dias through their council Gmails, and shall be approved on a case-by-case basis.



Introduction to the committee: UN Women

The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) was formed on July 2, 2010, focusing on issues of inequality and lack of opportunity based on gender roles. UN Women focuses on four strategic priorities: ensuring women's participation in and benefit from governance systems, promoting women's income security and economic autonomy, condemning all forms of violence against women, and encouraging women's influence in building resilience. By acting as a channel for women and girls to voice themselves at global, regional, and local levels, UN Women has thus far effectively addressed challenges including discrimination, HIV and AIDS, and the lack of humanitarian action for women.

The UN Women has a triple mandate:

- Providing normative support to inter-governmental bodies, such as the Commission on the Status of Women, in their formulation of policies, global standards, and norms
- Providing program implementation support to the Member States who request support in implementing these standards, by providing technical expertise and financial resources
- Coordinating the United Nation (UN) system's work on gender equality to enhance coherence as well as to promote accountability, including through regular monitoring of system-wide progress

UN Women focuses on **five strategies priorities**:

- Strengthening global norms and standards
- Increasing women's leadership & political participation
- Enhancing women's economic empowerment
- Ending violence against women
- Engaging women in all aspects of peace and security processes & Humanitarian Action



Topic A: Addressing Gender-Based Violence in Africa

Introduction

Gender-based violence occurs in all countries and regions of the world in all economic and social groups. Unfortunately, one in three women and girls experience sexual coercion, physical violence, female genital mutilations, and other types of liberties in their lifetime. These acts of violence against women are particularly committed against their will and based on gender norms and power imbalances in their relationships and are recognized as a significant global public health problem due to its acute and chronic effects on mental health, including physical disabilities.

Furthermore, these factors are amplified in times of conflict and displacement, when the rule of law erodes and families and societies fall apart. Gender-based violence has become a weapon of war and is intended to intentionally intimidate, relocate and destroy certain communities and ethnic groups.

The current prevalence of the COVID19 pandemic has intensified gender-based violence against women in Africa, making it difficult to obtain accurate statistics, but it is clear that gender-based violence is much more prevalent in African countries.

Key Issues

1. Physical Factors

Physical security owing to break-down of public disorder, law enforcement, disruption of the judiciary, family, social, or community structures where women are vulnerable leaving their communities in search of work and food. Poverty then exacerbates the lack of educational and livelihood opportunities, and inadequate access to housing, food, and income generation can increase the exposure to gender-based violence, including forced prostitution.

2. Judicial barriers

In addition, survivors often face significant obstacles due to shortcomings in criminal law and criminal procedure, gender stereotypes, victim-blaming, and inadequate response from criminal justice organizations, such as national legislation may not guarantee a certain right (eg. rape or non-discrimination), resulting in secondary victimization. On top of that, the

current pandemic has further reduced access for women to essential police and justice services, despite reports of increasing levels of gender-based violence.

3. Individual barriers

Not to mention, individual barriers can lead to threats or phobias of stigma, self-isolation, and social isolation from the hands of the preparator particular in times of armed conflict, the community, or the authorities, as well as arrest, detention, ill-treatment, and punishment that has then led to a deficiency of information on human rights and on how and where to seek remedies.

4. <u>Humanitarian programming obstacles</u>

Lack of information or understanding of the scope or nature of gender-based violence prevents the government from addressing and prioritizing gender-based violence assessment, policymaking, planning, and programming. Similarly, gender-friendly programs, services, and facilities are poorly designed and managed with inadequate registration practices and distribution of goods and services. Besides, the other issues also include weak linkages with other associations or organizations and protection programs such as:

- Lack of security and reporting confusion
- Lack of support from the community of broad significance
- Referral mechanism

Parties Involved

1. African Union Commission

The African Union has developed several international instruments that its member states have agreed to promote and adopt within the framework of United Nations and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) policies, including the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa. Presently, eight African countries are implementing this policy and framework, include, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Uganda, and Zimbabwe. Additionally, in February 2014, the African Union also worked on the establishment of a set of tools to fight against gender-based violence through the work of the Women, Gender and Development Directorate (WGDD).

2. The World Bank

In recent years, the World Bank has increased efforts to more effectively address GBV risks in its operations, including learning from the experiences of other organizations, including

interventions to address societal norms and behaviors that underlie violence and to some and improve resilience when violence occurs. The World Bank has recently approved a \$107 million financial grant to countries like Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Rwanda to provide comprehensive health and counseling services, legal assistance, and economic opportunity to survivors or victims of sexual and gender-based violence.

3. **UNITE Africa Campaign**

Importantly, the consequences of society and the government's response to gender-based violence are dehumanizing women, whose concerns are greater than the society itself. Whereas, the UNiTE Africa campaign aims to create an enabling environment for governments, in partnership with experts from civil society, to be able to respect existing political commitments, to respond adequately, and put an end to impunity. As outlined in the UNiTE Africa campaign framework and work plan, the goals of this organization are to end all types of gender norms and violence against women and sustain equal rights for all human beings.

4. United Nations Population Fund

UNFPA is a major United Nations agency that plays an important role in combating gender-based violence through sexual and reproductive health programs. As the lead UN agency for sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, UNFPA has significant opportunities to reach women and girls who are affected, especially most women who live in remote areas. The program also provides essential medical supplies, such as rape kits, to assist survivors and support psychosocial and legal counseling, for example, in Rwanda, UNFPA works with other UN agencies in "one-stop centers" to address survivors' diverse physical, emotional, and social needs. UNFPA is also helping victims of GBV during a humanitarian crisis where violence against women is on the rise, for instance, in Haiti, Uganda, Sierra Leone, and Nepal, UNFPA's humanitarian work includes meeting the needs of those affected by gender-based violence.

Timeline of Key Events

Timeline	Key events
1975	UN First World Conference on Women in Mexico City about World Plan and Action from 133 member states to achieve Decade for Women: Equality, Development, and Peace

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1993	Women's movement and governments at the world conference on Human Rights led to the recognition of violence against women
1994	International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, Egypt addressing the connection between violence against women, health impact of domestic violence, and female genital mutilation
1995	UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China about Declaration and Platform for Action from 189 countries on GBV, poverty, human rights, etc
1996	UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women was established by General Assembly resolution 50/166
2003	Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa was adopted
2008	Security Council adopted the landmark Resolution 1820, the first devoted to addressing sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations
2010	The Human Rights Council adopted Resolution 14/12
2011	Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence adopted as the second legally binding regional instrument
2013	Member States adopt agreed conclusions during the 57th Commission on the Status of Women and elimination of all forms of violence

<u>Case Studies</u> Gender-Based Violence in Timor Leste

In the early twenty-first century, most communities in Timor Leste were organized according to patriarchal principles and followed traditional beliefs and customs, many of which jeopardized women's full enjoyment of rights. However, the first study of gender-based violence, conducted in 2002, found that nearly half the respondents reported at least one incident of "violence" from their intimate partner.

Statistics conducted by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) vary, with one NGO recording a decrease in gender-based violence cases since 2002, whereas another has recorded an increase. Many of the victims seeking help were children under the age of 18, most of whom were molested by their families. Consultations have shown that the community has a relatively broad definition of domestic violence and is relatively tolerant of

the consequences. Most believe that the community has a role to play in responding gender-based violence and favors community-based punishment for perpetrators rather than imprisonment. On other issues related to GBV, attention is increasingly drawn to human trafficking, especially for those trafficked into Timor Leste. Consequently, training is needed so that government officials can respond appropriately and develop services for victims of trafficking.

Throughout the country, traditional processes are used to respond to gender-based violence. Recently, efforts have been made to systematically study these traditional processes related to gender-based violence. A victim of gender-based violence is disenfranchised by traditional processes, which are rarely transparent and are based on patriarchal beliefs about the roles of women and men in society and in the family. Penalties usually include fines or the exchange of goods. It is hoped that research into traditional processes and gender-based violence will lead to efforts to identify how traditional processes can be improved. The reality for a traditional rural country like Timor Leste is that traditional justice processes will continue in one form or another.

While funding was provided for activities on gender-based violence after the 1999 crisis, after 2002 the funding dropped off. Nevertheless, few donors were willing to fund long-term projects and cover the basic operating expenses of the organization, making it difficult to sustain organizations over time. Anyhow it will continue to be useful for local organizations to have the support of international staff in this regard.

Notably, Timor Leste has now established a referral network that works for victims of gender-based violence, a major achievement. Limited infrastructure, the poverty of the victims, and the remoteness of the victims outside the national capital, Dili, remain challenges. Another challenge is developing methods to measure the impact of work on gender-based violence.

In conclusion, some of the lessons learned from gender-based violence in Timor Leste involve international staff with a strong background and experience in working on gender-based violence to address the medical and psychosocial needs of victims and it is important to find a balance and use research to determine the focus of the program. Cultures with little experience in research require additional effort to convey research results.

Past Actions/Resolutions

Various resolutions and declarations by the UN Security Council, the General Assembly, Human rights council, and other bodies have repeatedly condemned numerous forms of gender-based violence in Africa and stressed the responsibility of the state, the exemption

for war crimes and crimes against humanity, as well as sexual and other violence against women. In addition, the Security Council has passed a series of resolutions calling on parties to armed conflict to take full respect for international law and take special measures to protect women. The following are a list of passed resolutions:

<u>Elimination of violence against women</u> (resolution 7/24)

<u>Promotion and protection of all human rights</u> (resolution 12/17)

<u>Women Peace and Security</u> (resolution 1325)

Possible Solutions

1. Referral and response mechanism

Set the seal on that appropriate referral and response mechanisms are established, including clear and acceptable referral and reporting mechanisms that respect the confidentiality and rights of the survivor/victim and are known and accessible to the community.

2. Community mobilization

Strengthening the capacity of individuals to protect themselves and recover from acts of GBV, for instance by encouraging and promoting equal participation of both men and women in all community activities and supporting education, income-generating activities, and literacy programs that empower women.

3. Improving the formal justice system response

A legal assistance program is needed to assist police officers and prosecutors in conducting specific investigations into GBV cases. Moreover, prosecutors must have sufficient resources to carry out their work and be advised by the judicial authorities in carrying out their duties.

Questions A Resolutions Must Answer (QARMA's)

- 1. How has the pandemic affected survivors of gender-based violence?
- 2. How does the education system play an important role in preventing gender-based violence?
- 3. How should UN agencies and government bodies work to improve accurate data collection and analysis on gender-based violence?
- 4. What will the formal justice system do to redress cases of survivors who face several barriers in accessing it?
- 5. What are the gaps in legal policy and framework in African countries to end gender-based violence against women during armed conflict?

6. How can your nation address the social and economic boundaries that affect survivors of GBV?



Topic B: Addressing the disempowerment of women in the Middle

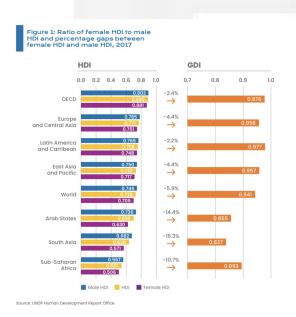
Introduction to topic and general overview

By definition, disempowerment refers to the forcible denial by persons in positions of power over the rights and choices of persons of another group. (TheFreeDictionary.com, 2012) In our council, disempowerment refers to the discrimination and oppression faced by women and the erosion of their rights in the Middle East/MENA Region.

The World Economic Forum 2020 Global Gender Gap Report marks the Arab countries in the MENA region as the lowest in the world for gender equality, with MENA states occupying 13 of 25 worst-performing countries internationally. (WEF, 2019) Furthermore, the 2021 report notes that at the current pace women's rights are being upheld in the MENA region, it will take 140 years on average for gender gaps to be closed. (World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report, 2021) When addressing the 'disempowerment of women' it is important to note that there are several different aspects of the debate at hand and delegates are expected to explore the different nuances to this debate.

Human development disparities between genders

In the UNDP Gender Development Index (GDI) (2019), the ratio of female HDI to male HDI, the Arab States report a GDI value of 0.855 (where 1 indicates total gender equality); meaning the gender gap in the middle east as found by UNDP is 14.4%- one of the largest



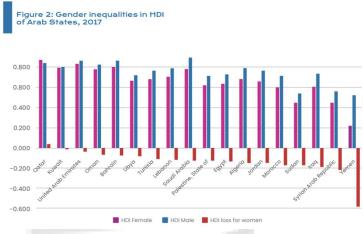
their richer counterparts. (UNDP, 2018)

gender gaps in the world's regions. Furthermore, it was found that women's per capita income is on average 78.9% lower than that of men in the Arab states.

The UNDP Human Development Report Office reports that while Qatar is the only country in the MENA region where women's HDI is slightly higher than that of men, in Yemen, women's HDI is less than 50% of men's. When comparing the countries within the region, it seems that the more economically developed countries have higher gender equality with Saudi Arabia being an anomaly. The war-torn countries of Yemen and Sudan have larger gender disparities than



On average, the female labor force participation rates in the Arab states have only increased an 18.3% in 2019 as compared to the global average of 48%. Furthermore, only 27% of females in the region participate in the workforce as compared to the global average of 56%. The International Labour Organisation notes that while the Arab States provide access to free schooling and the rates of female attendance in schools have been increasing in recent years, this has not led



to higher levels of employment for women. (AW, 2018) Within the region, lower and middle-income countries have lower rates of literacy- for example, 46% of women in Somalia are illiterate, 47% in Sudan, 55% in Yemen (Unesco.org, 2021), and 58% in Morocco (Unesco.org, 2021). Illiteracy is one of the largest obstacles in job opportunities, accessing justice, and reaching out to organizations.

It should also be known that within the countries themselves, gender equality differs exponentially between the urban and rural areas due to the different levels of development, access to services, and beliefs which often serve to disadvantage and disempower women. Rural poverty is linked to illiteracy, unskilled and poorly paid labor, and child marriage. As a culmination of these factors, females in rural areas experience greater gendered power imbalances as compared to those in urban areas. (Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia The State of Gender Justice in the Arab Region © Eclectic Yememi, n.d.)

One of the largest obstacles in achieving gender parity is the prolonged conflict within the region, namely in Iraq, Libya, Syria, and Yemen as well as the occupation of the Palestinian territories. War, conflict, and occupation all heighten the levels of inequality faced by women in the region. The instability and lack of safety multiply the impediments in the road to progressive legislation and policy reforms needed for women's empowerment in the Middle East. (UNDP, 2018)

Women in politics and the law

Women were very distinct participants in the Arab uprisings in 2011. Their participation in protests in the region was a point of contention as in the police repression of the Tunisian revolution, they were beaten by security thugs, and in rural areas around Kasserine some were raped by police after demonstrations. However, in Bahrain, women were among the first wave that descended on Pearl Square in the capital – some with their children – to

demand change. (Xan Rice et al., 2011) The prominence of women in the Arab protests could not be denied and served as an inspiration to future generations of Arab women.

In recent years, women have been at the helm of many political uprisings like Alaa Salah calling for the dismissal of the former president of Sudan, Omar al-Bashir after unpopular emergency austerity measures were set in an attempt to stop the impending economic collapse. (Allouche, 2020)

This is a stark contrast to the dwindling protests in Afghanistan caused by the Taliban taking threatening measures to curb the civil unrest since they usurped the government. Taranom Seyedi, a women's activist from Afghanistan, said that she had received letters saying the Taliban had made a list of all the women who protested and would conduct house searches for them. (Zeba Siddiqui, Parniyan Zemaryalai, 2021)

Family laws in most Arab States define men as the head of the household and imply that women's role is to focus on domestic duties. In most Arab societies, women's citizenship and relationship to the state are mediated by the institution of male guardianship. The husband's legal responsibility to provide for the family confers authority on him and assumes that his wife will be financially dependent on him rather than pursue her career or profession. Laws relating to property ownership often require separation of assets, rather than joint ownership of property, and most property is usually held in the husband's name. Women contribute financially to family expenses directly and indirectly through unpaid domestic and care work. However, women are generally disadvantaged in property division during marriage and after divorce because their contributions are not recognized or given financial value by the law.

Many member states of Arab labor laws that apply to people in formal employment are supportive of women, however, enforcement of these laws is inconsistent. The laws of many Arab States provide for equal pay for equal work, maternity leave benefits, and access to child care. However, in practice, these labor laws are often weakly enforced and women lack practical recourse should they not receive these benefits. In addition, women are often expected to carry out care roles in the workplace (also known as 'workplace housework'). Women's employment options are restricted by the requirements imposed by guardianship rules for wives to obtain their husband's permission to work and travel by-laws that restrict the types of work in which they can participate. These factors discourage employers from hiring or promoting women and limit women's ability to compete for jobs. (United Nations Development Programme, 2018)



Parties Involved

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)

Though they have long existed, NGOs are playing an increasingly significant role in global governance, whether participating in the United Nations system or bringing global concerns to the domestic level. (Willetts, 2011) An example of an NGO that has a large influence on politics in the MENA Region would be the Center of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR).

In 2020, CAWTAR worked alongside the ILO and OECD to create a report named "Changing Laws and Breaking Barriers for Women's Economic Empowerment in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, and Tunisia" which highlighted the disproportionate effect of the global pandemic on women in the aforementioned countries located in the Middle East/MENA region. (OECD, ILO, and CAWTAR, 2020)

Female Activists

A major misconception about the Middle East and North Africa is that women have been powerless, voiceless, and hidden. In Iraq, women rights activists relentlessly protested against the Jaa'fari draft law, introduced in 2014 to decrease the age of marriage for girls to 9 years old. Our sisters at the Baghdad Women Association organized a frozen flash mob in a shopping mall in Baghdad to denounce girls' early forced marriage. Meanwhile, the Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq, along with other women's rights groups, organized protests in main squares in Iraq and debated the Minister of Justice who drafted the law on BBC Arabic. Because of all these efforts, and the success of women human rights groups in Iraq to mobilize public opinion against the law, the Prime Minister decided to pause the proposal and return it to a committee for further review. In Jordan, on April 17, 2016, the Jordanian Minister of Justice announced the repeal of a controversial clause in the Jordanian Penal Code that allowed men convicted of rape to be spared punishment or legal prosecution if they marry the girls or women they raped. Because of this clause, many women were forced to marry their rapists to "restore their families' honor", which pushed some to kill themselves. In 2014, the Moroccan parliament repealed a similar article in the country's penal code, and a few years before the same happened in Egypt. (Global Fund for Women, 2021) Female activists have unequivocally reshaped the political landscape of the Middle East for the better at a heightened risk for themselves. Governments should look to protect their rights to freedom of speech and the freedom to protest rather than take punitive measures that are often cruel and inhumane e.g the mass rape and killings of over 100 demonstrators during the 2018 protests in Sudan (Ahmed, 2018).



Timeline of Key Events

Timeline	Key Events
1920	Iraqi women move to gain more rights and better education.
1923	Three leaders of the Egyptian women's movement return to Cairo from a feminist conference in Rome and remove their veils in public.
1934	Women in Turkey earn full voting rights.
1949	Women in Syria are given the right to vote and stand for election.
1956	Egypt grants women equal voting rights.
1965	Zaynab al-Ghazali, Islamic activist and founder of the Muslim Women's Association, is imprisoned in Egypt.
1969-1974	Golda Meir serves as Israeli prime minister, becoming the world's second female head of government.
1973	Jordanian women gain the right to vote.
1988	Women comprise about 25 percent of Iraq's workforce and Benazir Bhutto becomes prime minister of Pakistan.
1990	Female literacy in Yemen reaches 26 percent.
2000	President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt signs a legal-reform package that provides women equal divorce rights.
2002	Female attendance in schools reaches a record high in the United Arab Emirates. (Pbs.org, 2021)
2015	Saudi Arabia grants women the right to vote. Women in all Arab States now have the right to vote.
2017	Tunisia is the only Arabic-speaking Muslim-majority country to grant women equal rights as men, outlawing polygamy, allowing Muslim women to marry non-Muslim men (BBC News, 2017)
2017	Women in Saudi Arabia are granted the freedom to drive (Jazeera, 2017)

Case Studies

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has notoriously been associated with restricted women's rights. The World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report (2021) ranked Saudi Arabia 147th out of 156 countries. Not a single female has ever been appointed as a minister in Saudi Arabia and women held only 30 out of the 150-seat shura council, an insufficient influence to recommend actions to the King. Furthermore, women are barred from making rulings in courts as not a single female judge has ever presided over any courtroom in all of Saudi Arabia. Saudi law requires women to be obedient to husbands, considers a man's word as twice as valuable as a woman's, permits women's evidence to be discarded if a man swears an oath to contradict her, and makes it incredibly difficult for women to divorce or marry without the permission of a man. Children in Saudi are being stolen away from their mothers based on judicial justifications as outlandish as failure to cover their face, having a different culture, working full time, and remarriage. Saudi judges routinely order such shockingly low amounts of child support from fathers that divorced mothers are habitually forced to give up custody or live in poverty. Despite the countless hardships that women face in the Saudi legal system, there are minimal legal consequences for men who abuse and even kill their wives or daughters. (Freedom Forward, 2020)

In recent years, due to the rise of female activism, women's rights have progressed in Saudi Arabia; namely through these issues:

- Having ID Cards: Too many, the era of female progress in Saudi Arabia began in 2013
 when the government began requiring women to have their ID cards. Previously,
 many women had simply been listed as dependent on their father or husband's card.
 Thus, it required a male figure to prove their identity during many transactions.
 While this practice largely continued, women welcomed their IDs as a symbol of
 independence.
- 2. Freedom to Choose Attire: The following years also saw a loosening of decades-old modesty requirements for Saudi women. In 2017, the government prohibited the country's religious police, the principal enforcers of modesty rules, from arresting or detaining the public. In 2018, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman reinforced this progressive sentiment, telling CBS, "The laws are very clear and stipulated in the laws of Sharia: that women wear decent, respectful clothing, like men. This, however, does not particularly specify a [traditionally required] black abaya or a black headcover." The Crown Prince also talks about letting women decide what they choose to wear.
- 3. The Right to Drive: Saudi female autonomy saw another great victory in 2018 when the nation lifted its infamous ban on female driving. This landmark decision was part of the Crown Prince's plan to revitalize the Saudi economy. He hopes to bring more women into the workforce. According to the United Nations Development

- Programme 2018 Human Development Reports, 23.4% of Saudi women ages 15 older participated in the labor force that year. This is a figure Salman hopes to increase significantly by 2030.
- 4. Lift Permission From Male Guardian: In 2019, many once again heralded the Crown Prince for his reform. Under a new law, women in Saudi Arabia no longer needed permission from a male guardian to travel. They could also apply for passports, and register and receive official documents for a marriage, birth, or divorce. (Thelwell, 2020)

Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

Before the Taliban overthrew the Afghan government (again), women's rights were a source of pessimism as child marriages were widespread, women's rights activists faced extreme dangers and girls had extremely restricted access to school education. (Medicamondiale.org, 2020) Instead of economic, social, and political empowerment, Afghan women in rural areas—where an estimated 76 percent of the country's women live—experience the devastation of bloody and intensifying fighting between the Taliban and government forces and local militias. The UN study also revealed that 80 percent of Afghan women experience domestic violence. Some 50 percent of women in Afghan prisons and 95 percent of such girls have been jailed for "moral crimes" such as having sex outside of marriage. Others have been prosecuted for killing their brutally abusive husbands, including in self-defense. Distressingly, not only the Taliban but important segments of Afghan society appear to be growing more conservative, embracing doctrinaire versions of sharia that call for reducing women's rights and freedoms.(Allen and Felbab-Brown, 2020)

Past Actions

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, or the Treaty for the Rights of Women), was adopted by the United Nations in 1979 and is the most comprehensive international agreement on basic human rights of women. The Treaty provides an international standard for protecting and promoting women's human rights and is often referred to as a "Bill of Rights" for women. It is the only international instrument that comprehensively addresses women's rights within political, civil, cultural, economic, and social life (Amnesty International, 2005). All countries in the Middle East have signed CEDAW except for Iran where it was ratified in 2003 but vetoed by the Guardin Council. (Dan De Luce, 2003)

Possible Solutions

The United Nations Development Programme (2018) recommends that states should consider:

- 1. Providing access to legal aid for women and girls including for personal status matters and for survivors of gender-based violence to enable them to seek protection orders, reparations, and other legal remedies.
- Implement legal empowerment programs targeting vulnerable women and girls, including the use of paralegals to provide legal information and to conduct community education, and raise awareness on how to access the protection of laws against sexual and gender-based violence.
- 3. Ensure that international human rights law and international humanitarian law are rigorously adhered to by any occupying power and ensure that accountability mechanisms are in place to counter acts of impunity, especially concerning women and girls in the State of Palestine.
- 4. Ensure compliance with international human rights law and international humanitarian law in relation to the rights of women and girls in the context of conflict, including rights to special protections against sexual and gender-based violence.
- 5. Appoint special judges and prosecutors for domestic violence cases who are sensitized to the needs of women and girls to ensure they are treated with dignity and respect.
- 6. Actively recruit and encourage the appointment of female judges and prosecutors. The obligation under international law to ensure full and equal participation of women in the judiciary applies to all legal systems including religious tribunals, courts, and councils that exercise judicial functions. Restrictions on women's full and equal participation as judges in religious tribunals could be removed.



Questions A Resolution Must Answer (QARMAs):

- 1. How to tackle the disproportionate effect of humanitarian crises on the disempowerment of women?
- 2. How to increase the number of women in the political and legal scene, empowering them to stand on equal footing as their male counterparts?
- 3. What are the methods of combating the regressive social expectations on women and promoting the employment of women in the workforce?
- 4. To what extent do religion and culture tie into the disempowerment of women and how to tackle it?



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