This second issue of Al-Raida consists of papers that were presented at the international conference “Arab Countries in Transition: Gender Rights and Constitutional Reforms” held by the Institute for Women’s Studies in the Arab World (IWSAW) at the Lebanese American University (LAU) in June 2014 and centering on human rights, women’s bodies, power relations, violations and testimonials. Despite women’s active and indispensable role in the Arab uprisings and their role in overthrowing authoritarian regimes, women have been marginalized, disempowered, and sexually abused and harassed in the public sphere. Given this unstable moment of transition, participants discussed these violations and made recommendations as to how to transition into women-friendly societies that have gender justice written into their constitutions.

The first three articles focus on Tunisian women’s bodies, their attempts to advance their rights in the freedom afforded by the revolution, and on subversive acts performed by women to challenge patriarchal control. The challenging article by Awatef Ketiti titled “Body, Gender, and Power Problematics Manifested in Arab Revolutions” centers on the pivotal role of sex, gender, and the state in the formation of concepts of authority and how these notions are addressed in the public and private spheres. She observes that the revolutions that have taken place across the Arab world have revealed that the female body, which is considered a public affair, is the site for struggle for power across religious and political institutions. Ketiti delves into archaeologies of power to understand the structural components of political power which are intimately linked with male tyranny in familial and tribal structures. She
proceeds to deconstruct notions of body, gender, and power in order to understand the structural and formal components that lead to the continued gender violence that took place within the optimistic surge of political uprisings against the state. Abdelhamid Rhaiem’s paper explores women’s rights in Tunisia in the aftermath of the revolution and underscores the challenges women still have to confront to advance their fundamental rights in the midst of social and political turbulence. Agatha Palma’s paper titled “Of Laws Tattooed in Flesh: Gendered Self-Expression through ‘Tounsi’ in Post-Revolutionary Tunisia” emphasizes the subversive use by women of ‘Tounsi’ (the Tunisian dialect), the language of the street as opposed to French or formal and Quranic Arabic. Palma explains why women purposely choose to use a rough, masculine language, saturated with curse words in the public sphere. She maintains that while this dialect is generally associated with vulgarity and crudeness and is often viewed as inappropriate, particularly to women, it is the mother tongue, that of affect, and emotions. It is a significant language of resistance against authority whether Quranic or French, where women have the chance to reclaim public space, challenge language use, and destabilize the boundaries between what is considered feminine and what is viewed as the exclusive prerogative of men.

The succeeding articles center on the various modes of violence practiced against women during and after the Egyptian uprising, with presentations by young women activists who have worked on the ground and their recommendations for resistance. Mozn Hassan shared a moving YouTube video of a gang rape in Tahrir Square, posted by OpAntiSH (Operation Anti Sexual Harassment) and asks whether there is, or even can be, a public space for women. Her talk centered on the sexual violence committed against women in the public sphere, where they were cordoned, molested, and raped by gangs of preying men eager for a piece of the pie. Amal Elmohandes’s article titled “Survivors, Not Victims! The Problem of Rehabilitation of Sexually assaulted Women”
focuses on language use and insists that women who have been raped or sexually harassed should be referred to as ‘survivors’, not ‘victims’ in need of protection. The latter implies that they are passive entities in a patriarchal society, and are stigmatized as lacking agency. Oftentimes these women are blamed and slandered for the violation perpetrated against them, and their bodies become a social burden linked to honor and virginity as indicators of their value within society.

The theme of violence and exploitation is further reinforced in presentations on Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon. Saada Allaw’s work presents a testimony by “Abu Ghassan” who works on the ground to guide Syrian women refugees in Lebanon and help them cope with a dire state of penury and need. Through this testimony she exposes the exploitation they are subjected to by fellow Arabs, basically for sexual favors. Fahima Rzaij’s article titled “Gender-Based Violence: Ambitious Laws Versus Bitter Reality The Case of Iraq” emphasizes the incongruity between legislative ambition and the implementation of these laws in a country torn by wars and violence, causing families to bar women from the public spaces and deprive them of their rights to education, health, social welfare, and freedoms in general. Marie-Rose Zalzal’s “Protection of Women from Domestic Violence under ‘The Bill for the Protection of Women and Family Members Against Domestic Violence’” maintains that the effort to promulgate a special law to protect women from domestic violence in Lebanon began in 2007 and was finally passed in 2014 and renamed “The Bill for the Protection of Women and Family Members Against Domestic Violence”. However, the addition of family members disrupted a comprehensive condemnation of violence against women and created unfortunate intersections with other laws. Zalzal presents the new concepts developed by law, the protective measures and amendments introduced, as well as blemishes in the law which reveal lack of political will to explicitly condemn violence against women.
The last part of this issue records the various exchanges that took place around a roundtable focused on “Gender Research in Iraq: Facts and Expectations”. This was a follow-up to a two-year project titled “Gender Training for Iraqi Academics and Researchers” that IWSAW undertook, in collaboration with Open Society Institute, to build the capacity of Iraqi academics and researchers in women and gender studies, improve the quality of higher education in contemporary Iraq, and increase capacity relevant to civil society linked to women’s rights and gender equality. IWSAW invited five Iraqi participants who benefited from the project to attend the conference “Arab Countries in Transition: Gender Rights and Constitutional Reforms” as well as the roundtable. The purpose was to enable them to gain exposure to recent regional and international research, and to academic papers covering several topics related to women and gender issues, and to allow them to network with the conference participants and to exchange views. The Iraqi researchers benefited from this great opportunity and learning experience where they discussed the problems that they face as academicians and researchers in Iraq, learned how to seek funding opportunities for research related to women and gender within the Iraqi context, and were updated on the latest findings and material related to gender studies.

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المؤتمر الدولي في لبنان-أمريكا حول "البلد العربية والتحولات الراهنة" في LAA

أحمد علي

استطلاعات الطاقة (LAA) تؤيداً بقوة "البلد العربية والتحولات الراهنة: الحقوق المدنية والإحصائيات "، في حزب الجامة في بيوت برازيلية، الزارب كاتبة، و مشجعة الأديان.

وسورت الدعوات الثلاثية للاستعراض والرادارات الأعلامية للاستعداد للمؤتمر، تحدث وضعته كالكاب، من الزمن، في أول مسيرة دعوية للدكتور جوز وسورية "الْعَلِيْمَةُ"، جوز "الْعَلِيْمَةُ".

والدكتور زكريا "الْعَلِيْمَةُ"، جوز "الْعَلِيْمَةُ". وبحسب خططه، جوز "الْعَلِيْمَةُ"، جوز "الْعَلِيْمَةُ". وبحسب خططه، جوز "الْعَلِيْمَةُ"، جوز "الْعَلِيْمَةُ".

وباختصار، إذا سنرى خاطئة أو كلمات تنقص، حاول "الْعَلِيمَةُ"، جوز "الْعَلِيْمَةُ"، جوز "الْعَلِيْمَةُ".

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