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THE SEX ISSUE

AN FP SPECIAL REPORT

Why Do They Hate Us?

The real war on women is in the Middle East.

BY MONA ELTAHAWY | MAY/JUNE 2012



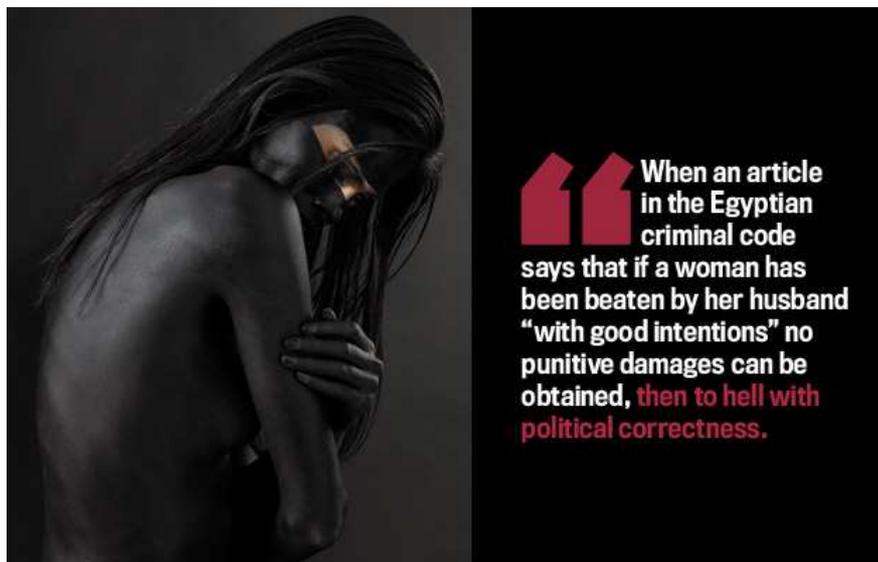
In "**Distant View of a Minaret**," the late and much-neglected Egyptian writer Alifa Rifaat begins her short story with a woman so unmoved by sex with her husband that as he focuses solely on his pleasure, she notices a spider web she must sweep off the ceiling and has time to ruminate on her husband's repeated refusal to prolong intercourse until she too climaxes, "as though purposely to deprive her." Just as her husband denies her an orgasm, the call to prayer interrupts his, and the man leaves. After washing up, she loses herself in prayer -- so much more satisfying that she can't wait until the next prayer -- and looks out onto the street from her balcony. She interrupts her reverie to make coffee dutifully for her husband to drink after his nap. Taking it to their bedroom to pour it in front of him as he prefers, she notices he is dead. She instructs their son to go and get a doctor. "She returned to the living room and poured out the coffee for herself. She was surprised at how calm she was," Rifaat **writes**.

In a crisp three-and-a-half pages, Rifaat lays out a trifecta of sex, death, and religion, a bulldozer that crushes denial and defensiveness to get at the pulsating heart of misogyny in the Middle East. There is no sugarcoating it. They don't hate us because of our freedoms, as the tired, post-9/11 American cliché had it. We have no freedoms because they hate us, as this Arab woman so powerfully says.

Yes: They hate us. It must be said.

Some may ask why I'm bringing this up now, at a time when the region has risen up, fueled not by the usual hatred of America and Israel but by a common demand for freedom. After all, shouldn't everyone get basic rights first, before women demand special treatment? And what does gender, or for that matter, sex, have to do with the Arab Spring? But I'm not

talking about sex hidden away in dark corners and closed bedrooms. An entire political and economic system -- one that treats half of humanity like animals -- must be destroyed along with the other more obvious tyrannies choking off the region from its future. Until the rage shifts from the oppressors in our presidential palaces to the oppressors on our streets and in our homes, our revolution has not even begun.



So: Yes, women all over the world have problems; yes, the United States has yet to elect a female president; and yes, women continue to be objectified in many "Western" countries (I live in one of them). That's where the conversation usually ends when you try to discuss why Arab societies hate women.

But let's put aside what the United States does or doesn't do to women. Name me an Arab country, and I'll recite a litany of abuses fueled by a toxic mix of culture and religion that few seem willing or able to disentangle lest they blaspheme or offend. When more than 90 percent of ever-married women in Egypt -- including my mother and all but one of her six sisters -- have had their genitals cut in the name of modesty, then surely we must all blaspheme. When Egyptian women are subjected to humiliating "virginity tests" merely for speaking out, it's no time for silence. When an article in the Egyptian criminal code says that if a woman has been beaten by her husband "with good intentions" no punitive damages can be obtained, then to hell with political correctness. And what, pray tell, are "good intentions"? They are legally deemed to include any beating that is "not severe" or "directed at the face." What all this means is that when it comes to the status of women in the Middle East, it's not better than you think. It's much, much worse. Even after these "revolutions," all is more or less considered well with the world as long as women are covered up, anchored to the home, denied the simple mobility of getting into their own cars, forced to get permission from men to travel, and unable to marry without a male guardian's blessing -- or divorce either.

Not a single Arab country ranks in the top 100 in the World Economic Forum's **Global Gender Gap Report**, putting the region as a whole solidly at the planet's rock bottom. Poor or rich, we all hate our women. Neighbors Saudi Arabia and Yemen, for instance, might be eons apart when it comes to GDP, but only four places separate them on the index, with the kingdom at 131 and Yemen coming in at 135 out of 135 countries. Morocco, often touted for its "progressive" family law (a 2005 report by Western "experts" **called** it "an example for Muslim countries aiming to integrate into modern society"), ranks 129; according to Morocco's Ministry of Justice, 41,098 girls under age 18 were married there in 2010.

It's easy to see why the lowest-ranked country is Yemen, where 55 percent of women are illiterate, 79 percent do not participate in the labor force, and just one woman serves in the 301-person parliament. Horrific news reports about **12-year-old girls dying in childbirth** do little to stem the tide of child marriage there. Instead, demonstrations in support of child marriage outstrip those against it, fueled by clerical declarations that opponents of state-sanctioned pedophilia are apostates because the Prophet Mohammed, according to them, married his second wife, Aisha, when she was

2 new comments

But at least Yemeni women can drive. It surely hasn't ended their litany of problems, but it symbolizes freedom -- and nowhere does such symbolism resonate more than in Saudi Arabia, where child marriage is also practiced and women are perpetually minors regardless of their age or education. Saudi women far outnumber their male counterparts on university campuses but are reduced to watching men far less qualified control every aspect of their lives.

Yes, Saudi Arabia, the country where a gang-rape survivor was sentenced to jail for agreeing to get into a car with an unrelated male and needed a royal pardon; Saudi Arabia, where a woman who broke the ban on driving was sentenced to 10 lashes and again needed a royal pardon; Saudi Arabia, where women still can't vote or run in elections, yet it's considered "progress" that a royal decree promised to enfranchise them for almost completely symbolic local elections in -- wait for it -- 2015. So bad is it for women in Saudi Arabia that those tiny paternalistic pats on their backs are greeted with delight as the monarch behind them, King Abdullah, is hailed as a "reformer" -- even by those who ought to know better, such as *Newsweek*, which in 2010 named the king one of the top 11 most respected world leaders. You want to know how bad it is? The "reformer's" answer to the revolutions popping up across the region was to numb his people with still more government handouts -- especially for the Salafi zealots from whom the Saudi royal family inhales legitimacy. King Abdullah is 87. Just wait until you see the next in line, Prince Nayef, a man straight out of the Middle Ages. His misogyny and zealotry make King Abdullah look like Susan B. Anthony.



SO WHY DO THEY HATE US? Sex, or more precisely hymens, explains much.

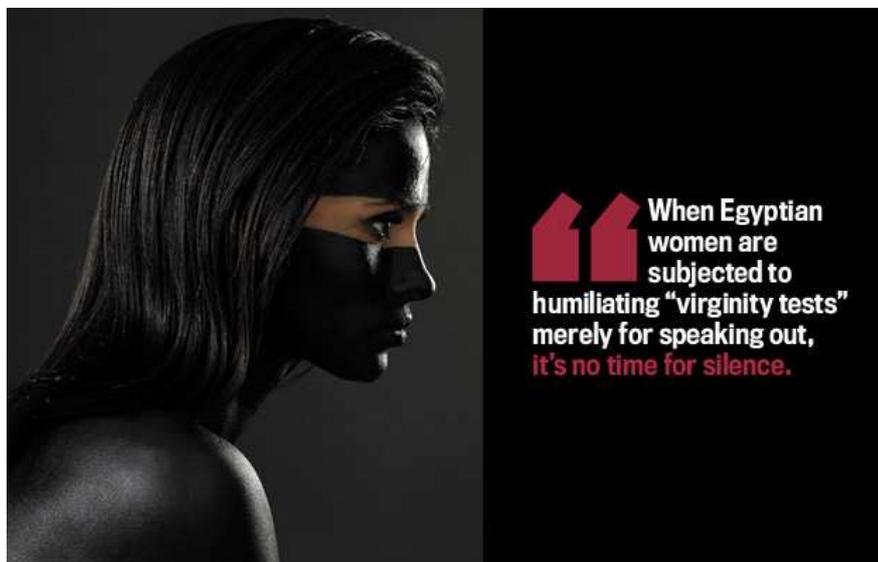
"Why extremists always focus on women remains a mystery to me," U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton **said recently**. "But they all seem to. It doesn't matter what country they're in or what religion they claim. They want to control women." (And yet Clinton represents an administration that openly supports many of those misogynistic despots.) Attempts to control by such regimes often stem from the suspicion that without it, a woman is just a few degrees short of sexual insatiability. Observe Yusuf al-Qaradawi, the popular cleric and longtime conservative TV host on Al Jazeera who developed a stunning penchant for the Arab Spring revolutions -- once they were under way, that is -- undoubtedly understanding that they would eliminate the tyrants who long tormented and oppressed both him and the Muslim Brotherhood movement from which he springs.

I could find you a host of crackpots sounding off on Woman the Insatiable Temptress, but I'm staying mainstream with Qaradawi, who commands a huge audience on and off the satellite channels. Although he says female genital mutilation (which he calls "circumcision," a common euphemism that tries to put the practice on a par with male circumcision) is not "obligatory," you will also find this priceless observation in one of his books: "I personally support this under the current circumstances in the modern world. Anyone who thinks that circumcision is the best way to protect his daughters should do it" he wrote adding, "The moderate opinion is in favor of practicing circumcision to reduce temptation." So even among girls' genitals are cut to ensure their desire is nipped in the bud -- pun fully intended. Qaradawi has since

2 new comments

issued a fatwa against female genital mutilation, but it comes as no surprise that when Egypt banned the practice in 2008, some Muslim Brotherhood legislators opposed the law. And some still do -- including a prominent female parliamentarian, Azza al-Garf.

Yet it's the men who can't control themselves on the streets, where from Morocco to Yemen, sexual harassment is endemic and it's for the men's sake that so many women are encouraged to cover up. Cairo has a women-only subway car to protect us from wandering hands and worse; countless Saudi malls are for families only, barring single men from entry unless they produce a requisite female to accompany them.



We often hear how the Middle East's failing economies have left many men unable to marry, and some even use that to explain rising levels of sexual harassment on the streets. In a 2008 survey by the [Egyptian Center for Women's Rights](#), more than 80 percent of Egyptian women said they'd experienced sexual harassment and more than 60 percent of men admitted to harassing women. Yet we never hear how a later marriage age affects women. Do women have sex drives or not? Apparently, the Arab jury is still out on the basics of human biology.

Enter that call to prayer and the sublimation through religion that Rifaat so brilliantly introduces in her story. Just as regime-appointed clerics lull the poor across the region with promises of justice -- and nubile virgins -- in the next world rather than a reckoning with the corruption and nepotism of the dictator in this life, so women are silenced by a deadly combination of men who hate them while also claiming to have God firmly on their side.

I turn again to Saudi Arabia, and not just because when I encountered the country at age 15 I was traumatized into feminism -- there's no other way to describe it -- but because the kingdom is unabashed in its worship of a misogynistic God and never suffers any consequences for it, thanks to its double-whammy advantage of having oil and being home to Islam's two holiest places, Mecca and Medina.

Then -- the 1980s and 1990s -- as now, clerics on Saudi TV were obsessed with women and their orifices, especially what came out of them. I'll never forget hearing that if a baby boy urinated on you, you could go ahead and pray in the same clothes, yet if a baby girl peed on you, you had to change. What on Earth in the girl's urine made you impure? I wondered.

Hatred of women.

How much does Saudi Arabia hate women? So much so that [15 girls died](#) in a school fire in Mecca in 2002, after "morality police" barred them from fleeing the burning building -- and kept firefighters from rescuing them -- because the girls were not wearing headscarves and cloaks required in public. And nothing happened. No one was put on trial. Parents were silenced. The only concession to the horror was that girls' education was quietly taken away by then-Crown Prince Abdullah

2 new comments

from the Salafi zealots, who have nonetheless managed to retain their vise-like grip on the kingdom's education system writ large.



This, however, is no mere Saudi phenomenon, no hateful curiosity in the rich, isolated desert. The Islamist hatred of women burns brightly across the region -- now more than ever.

In Kuwait, where for years Islamists fought women's enfranchisement, they hounded the four women who finally made it into parliament, demanding that the two who didn't cover their hair wear hijabs. When the Kuwaiti parliament was dissolved this past December, an Islamist parliamentarian demanded the new house -- devoid of a single female legislator -- discuss his proposed "decent attire" law.

In Tunisia, long considered the closest thing to a beacon of tolerance in the region, women took a deep breath last fall after the Islamist Ennahda party won the largest share of votes in the country's Constituent Assembly. Party leaders vowed to respect Tunisia's 1956 Personal Status Code, which declared "the principle of equality between men and women" as citizens and banned polygamy. But female university professors and students have complained since then of assaults and intimidation by Islamists for not wearing hijabs, while many women's rights activists wonder how talk of Islamic law will affect the actual law they will live under in post-revolution Tunisia.

In Libya, the first thing the head of the interim government, Mustafa Abdel Jalil, promised to do was to lift the late Libyan tyrant's restrictions on polygamy. Lest you think of Muammar al-Qaddafi as a feminist of any kind, remember that under his rule girls and women who survived sexual assaults or were suspected of "moral crimes" were dumped into "social rehabilitation centers," effective prisons from which they could not leave unless a man agreed to marry them or their families took them back.

Then there's Egypt, where less than a month after President Hosni Mubarak stepped down, the military junta that replaced him, ostensibly to "protect the revolution," inadvertently reminded us of the two revolutions we women need. After it cleared Tahrir Square of protesters, the military detained dozens of male and female activists. Tyrants oppress, beat, and torture all. We know. But these officers reserved "virginity tests" for female activists: rape disguised as a medical doctor inserting his fingers into their vaginal opening in search of hymens. (The doctor was sued and eventually **acquitted** in March.)

What hope can there be for women in the new Egyptian parliament, dominated as it is by men stuck in the seventh century? A quarter of those parliamentary seats are now held by Salafis, who believe that mimicking the original ways of the Prophet Mohammed is an appropriate prescription for modern life. Last fall, when fielding female candidates, Egypt's Salafi Nour Party ran a flower in place of each woman's face. Women are not to be seen or heard -- even their voices are a temptation -- so there they are in the Egyptian parliament, covered from head to toe in black and never uttering a word.

And we're in the middle of a revolution in Egypt! It's a revolution in which women have died, been beaten, shot at, and sexually assaulted fighting alongside men to rid our country of that uppercase Patriarch -- Mubarak -- yet so many lowercase patriarchs still oppress us. The Muslim Brotherhood, with almost half the total seats in our new revolutionary parliament, does not believe women (or Christians for that matter) can be president. The woman who heads the "women's committee" of the Brotherhood's political party said recently that women should not march or protest because it's more "dignified" to let their husbands and brothers demonstrate for them.

2 new comments



The hatred of women goes deep in Egyptian society. Those of us who have marched and protested have had to navigate a minefield of sexual assaults by both the regime and its lackeys, and, sadly, at times by our fellow revolutionaries. On the November day I was sexually assaulted on Mohamed Mahmoud Street near Tahrir Square, by at least four Egyptian riot police, I was first groped by a man in the square itself. While we are eager to expose assaults by the regime, when we're violated by our fellow civilians we immediately assume they're agents of the regime or thugs because we don't want to taint the revolution.

SO WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

First we stop pretending. Call out the hate for what it is. Resist cultural relativism and know that even in countries undergoing revolutions and uprisings, women will remain the cheapest bargaining chips. You -- the outside world -- will be told that it's our "culture" and "religion" to do X, Y, or Z to women. Understand that whoever deemed it as such was never a woman. The Arab uprisings may have been sparked by an Arab man -- Mohamed Bouazizi, the Tunisian street vendor who set himself on fire in desperation -- but they will be finished by Arab women.

Amina Filali -- the 16-year-old Moroccan girl who drank poison after she was **forced to marry**, and beaten by, her rapist -- is our Bouazizi. Salwa el-Husseini, the first Egyptian woman to speak out against the "**virginity tests**"; **Samira Ibrahim**, the first one **to sue**; and Rasha Abdel Rahman, who testified alongside her -- they are our Bouazizis. We must not wait for them to die to become so. Manal al-Sharif, who spent nine days in jail for breaking her country's ban on **women driving**, is Saudi Arabia's Bouazizi. She is a one-woman revolutionary force who pushes against an ocean of misogyny.

Our political revolutions will not succeed unless they are accompanied by revolutions of thought -- social, sexual, and cultural revolutions that topple the Mubaraks in our minds as well as our bedrooms.

"Do you know why they subjected us to virginity tests?" Ibrahim asked me soon after we'd spent hours marching together to mark International Women's Day in Cairo on March 8. "They want to silence us; they want to chase women back home. But we're not going anywhere."

We are more than our headscarves and our hymens. Listen to those of us fighting. Amplify the voices of the region and poke the hatred in its eye. There was a time when being an Islamist was the most vulnerable political position in Egypt and Tunisia. Understand that now it very well might be Woman. As it always has been.

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Reuters

2 new comments

ron Goodman for FP

Mohammed Hossam/AFP/Getty Images

Mona Eltahawy is an Egyptian-American columnist. In November 2011, Egyptian police **beat her**, breaking her left arm and right hand, and sexually assaulted her. She was detained by the Interior Ministry and military intelligence for 12 hours.

1471 comments

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**mahmoudseireg**

I have been seeing some comments on the article in twitter, and it get me curious to actually read it. The article just lists examples of women abuse in the ME and fails miserably to reach a logical explanation for the problem. I think the sole purpose of providing a totally false title was to catch the eyes of the western audience since it agrees with their preconceived judgement. I think the proper explanation for most of the mentioned examples is simply the lack of proper raising in cases of sexual harassment and miss-interpretation of religious texts in cases of oppression.

2 HOURS AGO

**JamesTitcomb**

Yes, of course, Sahib, because as we all know Islam is a religion of peace. The 9/11 attacks are a miss-interpretation of events. And forced clitorectomies are merely the result of a poor upbringing.

1 HOUR AGO

**myekan**

As an Iranian-American who has campaigned for democracy in Iran I have reluctantly supported the Arab "Springs" because I don't believe will bring democracy to these countries but will allow gaining of power by Islamists who are opposed to democracy. The Egyptian, Libyan, Tunisian, or Syrian Islamists are no different than the Islamists who run Iran now. They usurped the power under the guise of democracy and now has created a brutal dictatorship. The same will happen in the Arab countries. Islam and democracy are not compatible. I'm afraid that the path that Iran has taken has to be taken by these Arab countries, go thru Islamist rule so that the people clearly understand thir true nature then there will be true uprisings for democracy. Iranians are now best prepared for democracy because they have been thru a brutal dictatorship if Islamists. In the process women will suffer the most. Hopefully, there will be light at the end of this dark tunel.

3 HOURS AGO

**DerekMarlowe**

Middle Eastern men are superstitious and cant accept blame. They have big egos and are easily angered. They would rather find an easy way to get money than work and are extremely promiscuous.

None of their countries have any decent standard of living if you take oil out of the picture. The people havnt contributed anything worthwhile to civilization for a thousand years. Immigration should be cut off to all Western countries.

5 HOURS AGO

**Mycos**

While Europe was mired in the religious extremism known as the Dark Ages, it was the Islamic world that kept alive and improved upon the progresive ideas began during the Greek and Roman empires. Without them the Renaissance would have had to start from scratch, or may even have never happened at all.

3 HOURS AGO

2 new comments

umabdulla



DerekMarlowe Wow - no stereotypes, there, huh? It sounds like how many white people talked about blacks when I was growing up in the U.S.

2 HOURS AGO



Persian Gulf Reply

@DerekMarlowe : You better get some reading before comenting like an idiot. The human civilisation has started in Iran (Persian) and in the ME and not somewhere in Texas.

38 MINUTES AGO



sass31

Fact, in the Islamic world a husband cannot even be accused of raping his wife! Why? The wife has NO RIGHT to say NO!

8 HOURS AGO



LifelsAjoke

sass31 go get a life <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QrG8ooymBKA&feature=related>

may be you are unaware of Jew women who can not divorce ever...or Catholic Christian women who can not remarry after divorce..



8 HOURS AGO



sass31

LifelsAjoke Actually, we in the west no longer live in the Dark Ages and are not guided by religious law. We have something called SECULAR society. And this INCLUDES Israel. Sorry your nonsense simply is FALSE.

8 HOURS AGO



Mycos

sass31 **LifelsAjoke** Not all Third World countries ruled over by religious despots and kooks happen to be found in the Middle East or are ruled over by Muslim clerics, you know? As for Israel, widespread torture is well documented, as is their allowance into high positions of rabbis with such extremely racist beliefs oozing from their mouths I've little doubt they'd make some of our Christian Identity skinhead types blush if they heard them.

The point is....when you make such sweeping claims about everyone who, because they happened to be born in a country where Islam is the dominant religion, check the box beside "Muslim" on census or questionnaires, but like many in the West in the habit of ticking "Christian" or "Jewish", only put as much thought into any of these religions as is necessary to help them get a desired job, clear background checks by military or police officials, or please the in-laws for their spouses sake.

(What is it about wingnuts from one religion who insist everyone belonging to another religion are just as kooky as they are?)

3 HOURS AGO



ummabdulla

sass31 Then why the 'chained' women in Israel, sass31?

2 HOURS AGO



LifelsAjoke

sass31 so how does your secular society treat your women, and most of all, any woman? see this write up Wendy Brown<http://differences.dukejournals.org/content/15/2/1.full.pdf+html>

please be informed first and then come to public place with evidence rather than cheap media based statements..to have an argument

4 MINUTES AGO



LifelsAjoke

sass31 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2-hTxDvRVlo&feature=related> food for thought



8 HOURS AGO

2 new comments

rehanakn

sass31 CORRECTION: You mean to say... in the ME culture, not Islam.



Islam doesn't allow force when it comes to sex between a husband and wife. Each gender has a right to say no but for important reason. If you say no and don't have an excuse, and are denying your significant other pleasure, In Islam, the angels curse you. So dont get culture and religion mixed bro.

2 HOURS AGO



ummabdulla

[sasses31](#)

Do some research. In many countries, including the U.S. until very recently, there is no such thing as marital rape..

2 HOURS AGO



MoizuddinGMuqri

[sasses31](#)

I think the reason behind it is that when men and women agree to marry with one another; that agreement entails also permissibility to have 'sex' (husband with his wife and vice versa). So when a woman marries a man, she knows that 'sexual relationship' is also part of it. How can a 'husband' be charged as 'guilty' for having sex with his wife? If a husband forces his wife to have sex then should it not be deemed as 'domestic violence'? If yes, then I would request you to please study the reasons behind an alarmingly high rate of divorces taking place in the Arab world.

However, women in the Non-Arab Muslim world, are a lot worse off as their marriage is deemed unbreakable to the level of Catholics.

6 MINUTES AGO



pingpongtee

One Law for All in UK:

<http://www.onelawforall.org.uk/about/prominent-signatories/>

9 HOURS AGO



sunilthacker

[pingpongtee](#)

quite interesting link out there, just going to start reading the declaration

3 HOURS AGO



pingpongtee

"You can expect threats if you discuss Sharia"

Religion in power is the end of any form of democratic politics"

<http://freethoughtblogs.com/maryamnamazie/2012/02/07/religion-in-power-is-the-end-of-any-form-of-democratic-politics/>

9 HOURS AGO



ummabdulla

Mona, habibti, while it's true that you are hated, it's not part of a general hatred by all Muslim/Arab men towards all Muslim/Arab women. It's particular to you, and you know every well that most Muslim/Arab women are not fond of you either - not surprising since you show contempt towards us. You might be able to convince the average Westerner of this; they think that since you have some Middle Eastern background and think the way they do, that whatever you say you must be right. But we know better.

11 HOURS AGO



pingpongtee

[ummabdulla](#)

Thank you for proving her right. At least you are honest.

11 HOURS AGO



ummabdulla

[pingpongtee](#)

Yes, I'm being honest. Mona is widely disliked, and you certainly couldn't accuse her of being honest.

10 HOURS AGO



Najeeb

[ummabdulla](#)

[pingpongtee](#)

ummabdulla, I don't know how you can say what you are saying. Are you in approval of police beating women and then subjecting them to forced "virginity tests"? Would you like that to happen to you, or your daughters, sisters, etc? And were it to happen to you or your relatives, would you shower them with such callous comments, as you are doing here?

10 HOURS AGO



ummabdulla

[Najeeb](#)

Did I say I was in favor of virginity tests? If she was simply complaining about that, there would be no argument.

10 HOURS AGO

2 new comments

**sasss31**[ummabdulla](#)[Najeeb](#)

The problem with people like you and with large portions of the Islamic world in general is that you don't confront the barbaric nature of parts of your culture. Instead of looking introspectively and making yourselves better - you blame outsiders for all your problems and ignore the truly abhorrent parts of Islamic culture.

8 HOURS AGO

**mabdalla**[sasss31](#)[ummabdulla](#)[Najeeb](#)

To sasss31: There is nothing abhorrent of Islamic culture, as a matter of fact, Islamic culture you are mocking here is the seed of every scientific discovery the west has made use of. You are actually using Ur laptop to type these words because of some Muslim Arab who invented mathematics in the first place. The woman who wrote this article is one that mock's her own mother and sisters. Why would you believe someone who mocks and disgraces her own mother? How grateful do you think she is to those who brought her up, fed her, took good care of her until her twisted soul drove her to mock her own family! How proud of her would you be if she was your sister? Think!

3 HOURS AGO

**Mycos**[sasss31](#)[ummabdulla](#)[Najeeb](#)

Precisely the problem with the majority of liberal Jews who allow the extreme policies of Likud and the IDF to continue because they refuse to publicly criticize right-wing extremism within their own faith-ethnicity.

3 HOURS AGO

**ExtremistIslamBS**[mabdalla](#)

Islamic culture is not the seed of every scientific discovery. How could it be when there is clear proof of advance mathematics as well as mechanical computers before the birth of Muhammad in the 6th century.

Lies do not win the hearts of men, they fool those without knowledge of God's Word and works of those in his name.

To take a stand against inequality even when she knows the danger she brings upon herself is courage. Courage is something that needs to be seen with greater occurrence within the good Muslim people in order to stand out against the extremists in Islam.

Should someone kill her because it would be the honorable thing to do? No, God is the only one who shall judge. Man is imperfect, and should not be making a decision to destroy something God has made. God created human life, and only he has the right to destroy it.

2 HOURS AGO

**lucidbee**[ummabdulla](#)

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/04/25/210198.html>

There is an article in Al Arabiya news today which offers a rejoinder to all those who have tried to reprimand Mona Eltahawy for publishing this article.

This article shows that the time for urgent attention to the rights of women in the Middle East is NOW.

There are laws being proposed NOW in Egypt to roll back the small rights women have.

The Islamists are using religion to deprive women of dignity, safety, education, and rights. The Islamists are proposing to legalize marriage for girls of 14, among other things.

Those 'feminists' who are arguing that Eltahawy should be quiet should instead fight the Islamists before it is too late.

Here is more:

"Many members of the newly-elected, and majority Islamist parliament, have been accused of launching attacks against women's rights in the country. They wish to cancel many, if not most, of the laws that promote women's rights, most notably a law that allows a wife to obtain a divorce without obstructions from her partner. The implementation of the Islamic right to divorce law, also known as the Khula, ended years of hardship and legal battles women would have to endure when trying to obtain a divorce. Egyptian law grants men the right to terminate a marriage, but grants women the opportunity to end an unhappy or abusive marriages without the obstruction of their partner. Prior to the implementation of the Khula over a decade ago, it could take 10 to 15 years for a woman to be granted a divorce by the courts. Islamist members of Egyptian parliament, however, accuse these laws of "aiming to destroy families" and have said it was passed to please the former first lady of the fallen regime, Suzanne Mubarak, who devoted much of her attention to the issues of granting the women all her rights."

10 HOURS AGO

**ummabdulla**[lucidbee](#)

I think the Egyptian parliament should follow sharia, which allows women to get a divorce, and without waiting 10 or 15 years.

2 new comments

But if you're worried about that issue, I hope you're advocating on behalf of the women who live under Jewish law, where

women cannot get a divorce if the husband does not agree - not in 10 or 15 years, not ever. (Look up 'agunah' or 'chained' marriage.)

And I hope you're advocating for Egyptian Coptic Christian women (and men), because they're only allowed divorces in cases of adultery or the spouse leaving the church.

Then of course, the Roman Catholic church doesn't allow divorce either (or at least remarriage afterwards, and some countries (like the Phillipines, for example) have laws based on that.

So why do you focus on the question of divorce in Islam, when Islam has a very rational attitude towards divorce - i.e., that it's not encouraged but is allowed as a last resort.

10 HOURS AGO



MarianHennings

What is needed is civil marriage and civil divorce because all religious marriage laws discriminate against women.

ummabdulla

lucidbee

8 HOURS AGO



sasss31

ummabdulla lucidbee Guess what? Israel civil society is NOT RUN by Jewish law. And we no longer live in the Dark Ages. The west is RUN BY SECULAR LAWS, not religious laws. Your problem is you are comparing the current state of Islamic affairs to that of the west during the Dark Ages.

7 HOURS AGO



cornelius1978

ummabdulla lucidbee Ummabdulla, very good points, and all present and correct if i'm not mistaken. But, you present here the central dichotomy of the issue. Whereas the laws pertaining to divorce may have negligible difference between each other, the culture that is derived from them is, in the present age, entirely different. For example, i have lots of friends and acquaintances of various persuasions, all with friends and families of their own; though islam has the most rational rules around divorce, the cultural practice (i.e. the taboo nature of divorce, the preponderance of men initiating the divorce, the stigma attached to women who initiate a divorce) is almost ALWAYS of a unequal nature. A catholic women who gets a divorce can expect to live a normal life. A muslim women who gets a divorce (even here in the UK, nevermind Egypt) will face so many more problems than a catholic woman will. This is not based on the religious 'laws', but on how these religions have adapted to, and accommodated for, modern culture and how we live our lives today. This is the assimilation of culture, not the interpretation of holy texts. On a final note, a few questions; do you think that the article is a fabrication? Do you think that the author's female relatives were not 'circumcised'? Do you think that female circumcision is the same as male circumcision? If you do, can you explain why?

2 HOURS AGO



ummabdulla

lucidbee And where do you get the idea that "The Islamists are using religion to deprive women of dignity, safety, education, and rights"? You really have no clue if you think that Islamists in Egypt - who include many women, by the way, many of whom are highly educated - are going to stop women from being educated or work against their dignity or safety.

10 HOURS AGO



Mycos

lucidbee ummabdulla Absolutely every single desire you mention as being the way Muslims in general want to abuse and dominate women can be found by looking through websites devoted to "returning to good, Christian family values" as they are perceived to be by members of groups like the American Family Association, Council of Conservative Citizens, or the dozens of other organizations who say they need to save America from homosexual marriage, family planning and stealth sharia laws they know to be undermining the US Constitution itself as we speak (although that's hardly a compliment about the strength of the document and its ability to stand on its own merits, one would think....although we know thinking isn't their strong suit either, eh? lol)

2 HOURS AGO



Abdul Ameer

@maya_b No..you are wrong. You fail to distinguish between Judaism as a religion and Jews as an ethnic group. Jews may or may not be religious. It is O.K. to criticize the belief system of Judaism, just as it is O.K. to criticize the belief system of Islam. And, that criticism would include those Moslems and those Jews who follow the doctrines you are criticizing. But, it is NOT o.k. to criticize Jews as an ethnic group. That is racism. That is very different from Islam. Islam is ONLY a belief system and not an ethnic group. Therefore, it is O.K. to criticize Islamic beliefs and all those Moslems who adhere to those beliefs. It is a lie to speak about Jews "inflecting" "racism" on the Palestinians. There is no racism involved. The "Palestinians" have been in a perpetual state of war with Israel and with Jews. It should surprise no one that, on occasion, Israel takes measures to defend itself.

11 HOURS AGO



sasss31

Abdul Ameer Spot on my friend. :) In addition, it would surprise some to learn that an estimated 15-30% of Israelis inside of Israel are atheist Jews. What happens to all the rationalists and free thinkers inside of Islamic countries? They are either executed, must remain silent, or except the country. In contrast, Israel produces great contributions to science and the advancement of humanity. Simply look at the Nobel

2 new comments

Laureate list of the past half century.

7 HOURS AGO



ummabdulla

sass31 Oh, yes, when I think 'advancement of humanity', the first place I think of is Israel! You're serious?!?

2 HOURS AGO



LifelsAjoke

sass31 **Abdul Ameer** sorry but you are judging islamic countries just as having an image of talebani system..there are lots of islamic countries with loads of atheist and deist who are well established in societies and contributing intellectually.

people only deny the so called 'atheists' when they got phobic towards any faith and starts criticizing with over simplification....which in fact attack other people's faith and value

and to talk about Noble? that is the big joke and humiliation of Mr. Alfred Noble...specially in the name of peace...

29 MINUTES AGO



LifelsAjoke

What is the point to publish a nude female figure to portray 'islamic version of a woman'?

Stupid model does not understand the Misogynist editor's idea of double objectifying of women by using the idea of liberalism.

and to Mona, I thought you would have improved your intelligence after this debate.<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kWJRam64dQY>.but i forgot you 'write for a particular group of audience' rather than truly 'observing and knowing' the fact

may Allah bless you



13 HOURS AGO



Dianna Wilson

LifelsAjoke Who on Earth would choose to dress like that other than someone who has been brainwashed into hiding their individuality? It is worse than what slaves have been forced to wear.....Let women choose!!!

12 HOURS AGO



Dianna Wilson

LifelsAjoke But it seems like France had to ban it because there were too many brainwashed women there.

12 HOURS AGO



LifelsAjoke

Dianna Wilson **LifelsAjoke** well it is still 'who decides who is brain washed' ?

'if some one does not feel oppressed by their own practice' there should be no mandate for some one else to make them learn that 'they are oppressed'...otherwise, it will also be another form of 'brain wash'.

Unless any one feels that 'she should be rescued'...and Niqab is something, you can hardly impose to wear it over some one, as this is really difficult to carry such distinct feature of dresscode....untill you are confident enough with what and why you are wearing this...so i do not believe any way, tha niqab has got something with empowerment

12 HOURS AGO



LifelsAjoke

Dianna Wilson yes this is fact, let women choose and there are thousands of women who wear this by choice.

Hebbah is mechanical engineer (the woman in the debate with Mona), i guess she is not less intelligent than you, that some one can brainwash her to wear this??

2 new comments

And finally, do not be quick to judge to see some thing different. i find girls wearing artificial boobs+ 3 inches of blush on chicks to look pink (eventhough they are WHITE) to attract men/women Worse than slaves. As if your personality based on

intelligence and knowledge is not enough to impress!!!

12 HOURS AGO



sasss31

[Dianna Wilson](#) [LifelsAjoke](#) In addition in France, it was a security issue. In the United States, our Muslims don't dress in burqas but simply scarves. In France, you have the type of extreme and vile Muslims covering from head to toe.

7 HOURS AGO



ummabdulla

[sasss31](#) There are many more women wearing niqab in the U.S. than there are in France. It was purely a political issue in France. So women who wear niqab are 'vile'?

2 HOURS AGO



LifelsAjoke

[ummabdulla](#) [sasss31](#) this was among the other steps to save so called 'mono-cultural' europe from the grasp of 'multicultural'ism, particularly 'islamization' of 'gonna be euroarabia'...indirectly

where in fact europe was never ever any single cultural country in its course of history.

some how, the west feels threaten by islam. may be because, they had to preach and bribe to convert people to chirstanity...where as people are self motivated to be muslim which makes islam a fastest growing religion these days.

21 MINUTES AGO



ummabdulla

[LifelsAjoke](#) I also wonder why they keep showing the photo of the woman whose abaya was pulled off to show her bra? Why don't they afford her some respect and not show it over and over again?

10 HOURS AGO



LifelsAjoke

[ummabdulla](#) i guess because, a cheap exposure to certain poor wit audience who knows nothing except 'what media offers to them' to sell their hugely sponsored publications.

10 HOURS AGO

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2 new comments