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Language

, [Saudi Women: Fatwa is a feminist issue: Female Islamic scholars are demanding equality](#) [1], Economist, 2018

Brief overview on the recent rise in feminist activity, on the advances of women in jobs and their role within the judiciary. It focuses especially on the new role for women religious scholars.

, [Thomson Reuters Foundation's survey on the 10 most dangerous countries for women in 2018](#) [2], Thomson Reuters Foundation, 2018

The survey reports on the worst countries in the world for women in terms of health (e.g. maternal mortality, lack of access to health care facilities, lack of control over reproductive rights); discrimination (e.g. over land rights, job rights, property or inheritance); culture and religion (e.g. acid attacks, FGM, forced marriages); sexual violence (e.g. Rape, rape as a weapon of war, domestic rape or by a stranger); non-sexual violence (e.g. domestic violence); and human trafficking (including domestic servitude, forced labour, sexual slavery and forced marriage). The methodology is outlined and each listed country is fully described in each of the categories explored by the survey.

Al-Rasheed, Madawi, [Finally Saudi women can travel solo – but progress is still fragile](#) [3], Guardian Weekly, 2019

This article assesses women's progress in Saudi Arabia since the lifting of the driving ban in 2018, and reports on the official decision to grant women passports to travel abroad without a male guardian's consent. This is a step towards reversing the deprivation of women's legal, political and human rights unique to Saudi Arabia's Wahhabi version of Islam as interpreted by conservative clerics. But women still cannot marry, or leave domestic violence shelters or prison without a male relative's consent. Moreover, Al Rasheed notes, prominent feminist activists had been imprisoned. However, Saudi feminists are still discreetly and effectively engaging within civil society to help women.

See also 'Women in Saudi Arabia: Changing the Guard', *Economist*, 20 July 2019, p.42.

Reports official plans to lift some restrictions on women, but also notes fears that a right to travel would increase the number of women fleeing abroad and seeking asylum. The article contextualises possible reforms to free women in the conflicting politics of liberalisation and repression being practised by the Crown Prince.

AP, [Palestinian-American brings #MeToo campaign to West Bank](#) [4], Arab News, 2018

This article describes the initiative a young Palestinian-American took to confront patriarchy and sexism in the West Bank and the lack of protection for women, despite legal reforms formally taking place in its territories. Yasmeen Mjalli is the inventor of T-shirts, hoodies and jackets with the slogan 'I Am Not Your Habibti (darling)', an expression typically used for catcalling women and young girls. Sexual harassment is a taboo subject in Palestine, which is still dominated by a culture of victim blaming, like many other parts of the Arab World. It is moreover not considered a priority amongst Palestinians in comparison to the fight against Israeli occupation. The article also briefly cites minor reforms that occurred in Egypt, the Gulf Arab Region and Saudi Arabia.

Ardemagni, Eleonora, [Building New Gulf States Through Conscription](#) [5], Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2018

The author explores the introduction of conscription in the Gulf States through the lens of promoting national identities and instilling a spirit of sacrifice.

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See also: Alterman, Jon and Margo Balboni, *Citizens in Training: Conscription and Nation-building in the United Arab Emirates*, Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) - Middle East Program, 2017, pp. 57.

<https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/180312-Alterman-UAS-conscription.pdf>

This report analyzes the broad implications of introducing conscription for the wider society, such as the militarization of nationalism, gendering citizenship and social hierarchy.

el-Baghdadi, Iyad, [Interview with Jan-Peter Westad](#) [6], *New Internationalist*, 2020, pp. 52-54

Palestinian activist el-Baghdadi, based in Oslo, speaks about his role in providing news about the Arab Spring to the international media, and publishing his ideas about securing radical change in the longer term. He also explains why he now seeks to counter disinformation online and to campaign in particular against the autocratic model of Mohammed bin Salman in Saudi Arabia.

Gharib, Malak, [#MosqueMeToo gives Muslim women a voice about sexual misconduct at Mecca](#) [7], NPR, 2018

Malak Gharib reports the story of Egyptian-American activist and journalist, Mona Eltahawy, who was sexually assaulted during a pilgrimage at Mecca in 1982 when she was 15. Eltahawy initiated the hashtag #MosqueMeToo after other Arab women shared similar stories on social media. (For further reading, see also <https://stepfeed.com/women-are-speaking-out-about-being-sexually-harassed-during-haji-8156#.WnjdMR8gzo0.twitter> [8])

Jin, Zhixin, [How Do Anti-abortion and Abortion Rights Groups Deploy Ideas About Islam in Their Activism Regarding Abortion](#) [9], *Journal of Politics and Law*, Vol. 12, no. 1, 2018, pp. 38-47

Abortion is a hotly debated topic among Muslim communities. In this paper, the author examines how both anti-abortion and abortion rights groups deploy ideas about Islam. She analysed the language used by these groups when describing Muslim communities and Muslim views and found that a majority of them did not include arguments from both sides. Almost all the Anti-Abortion Websites included generalizations about the Muslim community, and also used the conservative elements in Islamic Religion to persuade more Muslims to join their stance on abortion.

Mack, Daniel ; Wood, Brian, [Civil Society and the Drive towards an Arms Trade Treaty](#) [10], background paper published by UNIDIR, 2012, pp. 1-29

An informative and detailed account of how the proposal for an Arms Trade Treaty to set international standards and controls upon the sale of arms, promoted in the 1990s by NGOs (such as Oxfam and Amnesty International) and by prominent individuals, for example Nobel Peace laureates, gained governmental support. The goal was not to stop all arms exports, but the more limited one of setting international standards for controlling sale of arms to strengthen national rules and to prevent weapons from intensifying conflicts or worsening human rights abuses. The Treaty was agreed at the UN General Assembly in April 2013 by 157 states, including the US under President Obama.

See also: Campaign Against the Arms Trade, 'Issues - Arms Trade Treaty' <https://www.caat.org.uk/issues/att> [11]

CAAT notes that the Arms Trade Treaty came into force in December 2014 when ratified by 50 states (including the UK), but explains their scepticism about the concept of a 'responsible' arms trade. CAAT claims the UK approves licenses which contravene the approved guidelines. and it should stop promoting arms sales A number of other sources sceptical about the Treaty are listed.

See also: 'Canada, 'Canada joins the Arms Trade Treaty while still selling arms to Saudi Arabia', *Oxfam*, 16 May 2019



<https://www.oxfam.ca/blog/canada-joins-the-arms-trade-treaty-while-still-selling-arms-to-saudi-arabia/> [12]

Oxfam comments that whilst Canadian eventual accession to the Treaty is a major victory for civil society, the government has not made moves to cancel its \$15 billion arms deal with Saudi Arabia, despite the Saudi record on human rights (denounced by the Trudeau government) and the Saudi role in the war in Yemen.

See also: Pecquet, Julian, 'UN Approval of Arms Trade Treaty sets up Obama, Senate Showdown', *The Hill*, 2 April 2013

<https://thehill.com/policy/international/291401-un-adopts-obama-backed-arms-trade-treaty-opposed-by-the-nra> [13]

Commentary on the domestic political context of Obama's decision to back the Arms Trade Treaty, opposed by 53 Senators and the National Rifle Association. In the light of domestic opposition the Obama Administration had delayed support for the UN treaty in the run-up to the November 2012 election. Pecquet also notes that the treaty passed with 154 votes; three countries opposed – North Korea, Syria and Iran – and 23 abstained.

Ottaway, Marina ; Ottaway, David, [The New Arab Uprisings: Lessons from the Past](#) [14], Middle East Policy Council, Vol. 27, no. 1, 2020

The authors look back to 2011 and the varied outcomes in four different contexts which shaped the possibility of and the reactions to mass protest. These are: the Maghreb (Tunisia and Morocco); Egypt; the Levant (Syria and Iraq) - states created out of the Ottoman Empire and then dominated by the colonial powers Britain and France; and the Gulf Arab monarchies. They then discuss 'whither the second wave?' in relation to Sudan, Algeria, Labanon and Iraq and draw some provisional conclusions.

Perrone, Alessio, [The Saudi street artist speaking truth to power](#) [15], New Internationalist, 2019, pp. 68-70

Ms Saffaa is a Saudi artist who paints murals to support feminists in Saudi Arabia and transmits her art and political messages through the Internet. She is in exile in Australia (where she had a scholarship to study), having refused to return to Saudi Arabia to renew her passport, and campaigns against the 'guardianship laws', declaring 'I am my own guardian'. The article reproduces one of her murals.

Svetlova, Ksenia, [Rising from ashes of Arab Spring, women lead a first Muslim feminist revolution](#) [16], Times of Israel, 2019

Highlights important challenges that women face in the Kurdish part of Syria; Tunisia; Morocco; Egypt; and the Persian Gulf in the aftermath of the Arab Spring.

Taylor, Matthew ; Watts, Jonathan, [Special Issue](#) [17], Guardian Weekly, 2019, pp. 11-16

A Special Investigation by Matthew Taylor and Jonathan Watts on the role of fossil fuel companies in promoting the climate crisis. Includes list of the 'top five global polluters': Saudi Aramco, Saudi Arabia; Chevron, US; Gazprom, Russia; ExxonMobil, US; National Iranian Oil Co.

Wearing, David, [Why Britain's Relationship with Saudi Arabia is about to Change](#) [18], New Statesman, 2019

Article following the Court of Appeal judgement that the British government had unlawfully approved arms sales to Saudi Arabia despite a clear risk that they would be used in Yemen contrary to international humanitarian law. Wearing comments on the UK's historic support for Saudi Arabia since the 1920s and central role in providing military aircraft and weapons under both Conservative and Labour governments, despite a major fraud scandal under Mrs Thatcher over an arms deal.

See also:: Smith, Andrew, 'Saudi Arms Sales were Illegal Says Court', *Peace News*, 2632-26 33, Aug.-Sept. 2019,

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p. 5.

The media coordinator of the Campaign Against the Arms Trade (CAAT) sets out the case against arming Saudi Arabia to fight in Yemen - tens of thousands killed as result of bombing over previous four years and at least 4.7 billion pounds worth of fighter jets, bombs and missiles licensed for sale from the UK. Notes the British government has appealed against the verdict to the Supreme Court.

See also: 'About CAAT: Ending the Arms Trade', <https://www.caat.org.uk/issues/introduction/ending-the-arms-trade> [19]

Sets out aims of campaign and details of organization and provides links to the UK Court of Appeal ruling and other relevant issues

See also: 'Unions and NGOs Block Saudi Arms Ship', *Peace News*, 2630-2631, June-July 2019, p. 5.

Brief report on direct action by Italian dock workers from the CGiL union and activists from Potere al Popolo and peace groups in Genoa, who prevented generators being loaded onto the Bahri Yanbu, because they could be used in Yemen. The ship had previously been deterred from loading weapons in France by two court cases launched by human rights groups against the shipment.

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#### Links

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