

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN



IMPROVING WOMEN'S SAFETY IN NEPAL

Nepal has recently made strides in protecting women's rights and safety. In August, their parliament passed a bill that enhances several laws already put in place against ancient Hindu customs. One of these customs is the exile and isolation of menstruating women. This ancient practice is called chhaupadi, and has been outlawed for a decade. However, there were no penalties set in place, so the practice continued in parts of the country forcing menstruating women to seek refuge in huts and sheds where they could be exposed to freezing temperatures. This bill aims to end the inhumane practice by punishing offenders with up to three months in jail or a fine of 3 000 Nepalese rupees (29USD, N\$382). Krishna Bhakta Pokhrel, one of the lawmakers from the bill's drafting committee, said, "People will be discouraged to follow this discriminatory custom due to fear of punishment." However, a female parliamentarian from Doti, a district where the practice is still prevalent, commented, "Fear of punishment will not stop people from following this custom which relegates women as impure during menstruation." She herself was forced to practise the custom and has claimed that educating women

about good hygiene must take place for the law to be truly effective. The bill also addresses the harmful customs of slavery, acid attacks, and the marriage dowry system that negatively impact women. The law is set to go into effect in August 2018.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/nepal-womens-rights-menstruation-exile-law-bill-chhaupadi-acid-attacks-hindu-customs-dowry-a7885861.html>



STAMPING OUT CHILD MARRIAGE BY STARTING WITH THE WEDDING SINGER

In 2013 Gülmay of Turkey led a seminar on child marriage at a local high school in Erçek where teachers had reported this as a problem. During the seminar, the boys stood up and held a banner that read "They Are Marrying Us Off Too". Since then, Gülmay has travelled to 77 other towns and villages to hold similar events. She has especially focused on reaching out to boys. Through educating, fathers and relatives will not push young girls into premature marriages and help shift the way people think.

One of the best ways to combat child marriages is to target the economics of the practice. Families claim that because they are living in poverty, they are forced to send their under-aged girls into marriage so they can have a better

life. In Turkey, the wedding industry accounts for \$8,4 billion as of 2014. Gülmay proposes that the wedding industry boycotts these child marriages, even if they are already financially struggling. She appeals to the business' conscience and explains why profiting from child marriage services helps nobody in the long run and actually damages Turkey's culture. Gülmay has convinced dozens of wedding singers, hairdressers, and florists to not offer their services to brides and grooms under the age of 18.



REPEALED LAWS NO LONGER PARDON RAPISTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Legislation stating that a rapist can be pardoned if they marry their victim has been repealed in Lebanon and Jordan. Both laws state that rape is punishable by up to seven years in prison, but a loophole was created if the rapist and survivor were to get married for at least three years. This loophole has allowed 159 rapists between 2010 and 2013 to escape penalty in Jordan, according to Jordan's Ministry of Justice. These repeals have come after years of campaigning from organisations such as Equality Now and the Lebanese group, Abaad. One such campaign involved women from Abaad wearing wedding dresses stained with red paint that represented blood and protesting outside of Lebanon's parliament. Other countries that have repealed similar laws recently are Morocco, Tunisia, and Egypt, with changes pending in Bahrain. The success of these campaigns is historic, as these loopholes are still present in the laws of several countries in the region. However, the Middle East and North Africa Consultant for the feminist

campaign group Equality Now, Suad Abu Dayyeh, thinks that this success is not only a success for Lebanon and Jordan, but for the whole region, and will “send a positive message to the rest of the region.”

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/jordan-rape-law-vote-repeal-rapists-punishment-marry-victims-womens-rights-sexual-assault-violence-a7870551.html>

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/lebanon-marry-rape-law-repeal-womens-rights-sexual-assault-violence-men-attacker-a7898456.html>



FAST FACTS

WOMEN IN FEDERAL PRISONS ARE NOW GUARANTEED FREE TAMPONS AND PADS

The United States has recently created a policy in favour of women’s health. The Federal Bureau of Prisons is now requiring tampons and pads to be given free of charge to incarcerated women. It is true that some supplies have been available to women in the past, but often it was not enough to properly accommodate their needs. When they do not have what they need, women are forced to spend either what little money they have to purchase supplies or they plead with officers which can lead to conflict. The new law will allow women a variety of sizes and supplies.

This memo was released shortly after the Dignity For Incarcerated Women Act which requires prisons to provide sanitary napkins/tampons, bans shackling of pregnant inmates, bans putting pregnant women in solitary confinement, and makes it easier for contacting families, was signed into law. While this is a great start, it needs to be put to the test and actually implemented in the prisons.

This policy will affect about 12 747 women who are currently detained in Federal prisons. Unfortunately though, most women are prisoners in state prisons and local jails, meaning there is still a need for change.

A 2015 report states that in New York over half of the women in prison are not given enough sanitary pads each month. Often it is not that they aren’t in the budget but rather women must jump through hoops to access them. This policy is a matter of health, gender equality, and human dignity.

PROGRESS FOR WOMEN’S RIGHTS IN TUNISIA

A spokeswoman for Tunisian president Beji Caid Essebsi made the announcement that Tunisian Muslim women are free to marry non-Muslims. Until now, a non-Muslim man who wished to marry a Tunisian Muslim woman had to convert to Islam and submit a certificate of his conversion as proof.

The new law comes after president Essebsi pushed for the lifting of the marriage restriction decree that was put in place in 1973. Many Tunisians see the removal of the marriage restriction as another landmark in guaranteeing women’s freedom in the country. It sets apart Tunisia as the first country in the Middle East and North Africa to remove the legal hurdles to marrying outside the official state religion. It is an important milestone in a region where religion in marital ties can be at the heart of many a family feud, and long struggles against state laws.

Unlike Muslim women, men can marry non-Muslim women without providing any religious documents. Scrapping the decree may not do away with the cultural and traditional obstacles women face with their families in cases of inter-faith marriage, but it now offers Tunisian women greater freedom of choice from a legal perspective

In July, the Tunisian parliament also introduced a new law that abolished a clause that allowed rapists to escape punishment if they married their victims.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-41278610>

- The Philippines is the only country in the world where divorce is illegal.
- Each year, an estimated 800,000 people are trafficked across borders – 80 per cent of them women and girls.
- **40 MILLION IN MODERN SLAVERY AND 152 MILLION IN CHILD LABOUR AROUND THE WORLD.** New data reveal that the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal Target 8,7, will not be achieved unless efforts to fight modern slavery and child labour are dramatically increased.
- From 1990 to 2010 **MATERNAL MORTALITY** declined by 47% worldwide.
- The UN estimates that approximately five thousand women are murdered each year as a result of honour killings, but many women’s groups in the Middle East and south-west Asia suspect the number is at least four times higher.
- 102 countries have no specific legal provisions against domestic violence, and in at least fifty-three countries, marital rape is not a prosecutable offence.
- **THE BIRTH CONTROL PILL** was introduced in 1960.
- The term “feminism” appeared in the English language in the 1890s, though women’s conscious struggle against discrimination and sexism is much older