

**INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF WOMEN  
ALLIANCE INTERNATIONALE DES FEMMES**



IAW website: <http://www.womenalliance.org>

**Equal Rights - Equal Responsibilities  
Droits Égaux - Responsabilités Égales**

**IAW NEWSLETTER May/June 2012, no. 5**

**Equal Rights**

*Dear members,*

*Two main issues in this May newsletter: the Second Round of Rio+20 and the Arab Spring. IAW members who were at CSW will recognise the same laborious process at Rio+20, the changing clusters of countries, endlessly discussing paragraphs. Another laborious process is happening at the Arab Spring, where women in politics in Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, etc. are struggling to get recognition during elections. An article on 'Marriage of Minors' in Morocco also tells of the struggle of women with the interpretation of religion in fatwas.*

*Congratulations to Joanna Manganara and Pat Richardson! Congratulations also to Afshan Khan from UNICEF and Jane Karuku from the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa, or AGRA. Don't forget to look at the charming AGRA website.*

*There is praise for the FAO to publish global guidelines to protect the rights of people, especially the poor, to own or access land and other natural resources.*

*There is also UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, who called on Moldavia to follow up on its commitment to adopt a comprehensive anti-discrimination law.*

*At the end of the newsletter: a book on the first woman to become Doctor of Medicine (India) and an ironic video on women's voting's rights (with Lady Gaga).*

**INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF WOMEN**

**An e-mail from Irimi Nike Sarlis, IAW New York**

Dear Colleagues,

The **UNCSD Rio+20: "The Future We Want" Intersession** al concluded without agreement on 400 paragraphs (90%) of the Zero Draft, so there will be another negotiation meeting May 29-June 1, in New York. There is a goal of establishing Sustainable Development Goals, as the Millennium Assembly established the MDGs.

**Unprecedented happening**

At the closing meeting, when the Major Groups read their statements, an unprecedented happening astonished me: all of the presenters of the papers in a conference room filled to capacity- overwhelmingly by men, with a few women sprinkled among them- were women.

It may be a token, but it is a beginning.

An interesting occurrence this year has been the notion of a "human rights approach" to sustainable development. This is probably derived from the notion of the Right to Development argued on in years past, at other conferences.

**Written Statements**

A pleasant surprise, recently, in the booklet published by the UN last Fall, "Working with EcoSoc: an NGOs Guide to Consultative Status" <[www.un.org/ecosoc/ngo](http://www.un.org/ecosoc/ngo)>; page 19 outlines that written statements may be submitted online at [www.un.org/ecosoc/csonet](http://www.un.org/ecosoc/csonet), and to Commissions and Functional Committees (up to 2000 words). Under Oral Statements it lists the IAW (General, 1947) among others, as having made a statement at the High-Level Segment in New York.

*Irimi Nike Sarlis*

**Joanna Manganara**, IAW Regional Vice President Europe and IAW representative at the European Women's Lobby, has been elected to the Board of the European Women's Lobby.

*Congratulations to Joanna and to IAW!*

**Pat Richardson**, our busy Membership Officer and Representative for Individual Members, received a Grant to publish another book. We do hope we can see at least a copy of the manuscript during the International Meeting in Melbourne, 8-12 October 2012.

### **Possible 5th World Conference of Women 2015 ?**

In 2014 a Nordic Forum will probably be held as a kind of preparation, whether there will be a 5th World Conference or not. The focus will be on the status of women in the Nordic countries.

*Mailed to us by IAW Secretary General Lene Pind*

## **UNITED NATIONS**

### **Note for the Commission on the Status of Women 2013:**

**Communications regarding human rights of women violations, to CSW.** [Any person or organisation with a communication should write by 1 August 2012.](#)

The Commission on the Status of Women considers such communications as part of its annual programme of work in order to identify emerging trends and patterns of injustice and discriminatory practices against women for purposes of policy formulation and development of strategies for the promotion of gender equality.

More on: [http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/communications\\_procedure.html#where](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/communications_procedure.html#where)

*Sent to us by IAW Honorary President Rosy Weiss*

### **Negotiations Rio+20**

At the conclusion of the negotiations on 4 May, 21 paragraphs of the document had been agreed ad referendum, and 400 remain to be agreed. On the final day of negotiations, the Bureau decided that a [third round of "informal-informal" negotiations](#) will be held 29 May through 2 June. The negotiations can be followed on <http://www.un-ngls.org/spip.php?article3859>.

*Note: in the NGO Major Group Statement at the Closing Plenary Session, Friday 4 May, Sophia Garcia, Consumers International, stated the utter disappointment of the removal of the phrase "consider legally binding framework" as suggested text for clause 58.*

See: <http://www.uncsd2012.org/rio20/content/documents/817NGO%20MG%2005.04%20Closing%20Plenary%20Session.pdf>

### **Online dialogues on RIO+20 for civil society for June 16-19 2012**

Jointly implemented by the UN, UNDP and the Brazilian Government, the Rio+20 [online dialogues](#) aim to generate an open, democratic discussion. Open through 3 June, the dialogue platform provides a unique opportunity for civil society, youth, academia, local governments, and the private sector to engage in the Conference June 16-19. Facilitators from top international academic and research institutions are leading the dialogues on the ten themes at the heart of sustainable development.

*More on: <http://www.un-ngls.org/spip.php?article3863>*

*Note: IAW member Natalie Kostus and at least two other IAW members will attend Rio+20*

### **FAO - Governance of Tenure**

May 11, 2012 - A United Nations-backed committee today endorsed a set of far-reaching global guidelines to help governments protect the rights of people, especially the poor, to own or access land, forests and fisheries.

“Giving poor and vulnerable people secure and equitable rights to access land and other natural resources is a key condition in the fight against hunger and poverty,” [said](#) the Director-General of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), José Graziano da Silva.

“It is a historic breakthrough that countries have agreed on these first-ever global land tenure guidelines,” he added. “We now have a shared vision. It’s a starting point that will help improve the often dire situation of the hungry and poor.”

The new [Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security](#) was adopted by the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) – the leading global platform for discussions on food security issues – in Rome earlier on Friday.

### **Land-grabbing**

Among the issues dealt within the guidelines is the so-called ‘land-grabbing’ phenomenon, according

to a news release issued by FAO. It recommends that safeguards be put in place to protect tenure rights of local people from risks that could arise from large-scale land acquisitions, and also to protect human rights, livelihoods, food security and the environment.

The guidelines also address a wide range of other issues such as recognition and protection of legitimate tenure rights, even under informal systems; best practices for registration and transfer of tenure rights; making sure that tenure administrative systems are accessible and affordable; managing expropriations and restitution of land to people who were forcibly evicted in the past; and the rights of indigenous communities.

The guidelines are based on a consultation process started by FAO in 2009 and then finalized through CFS-led intergovernmental negotiations that included the participation of government officials, civil society organizations, private sector representatives, international organizations and academics.

*More on:* <http://www.fao.org/nr/tenure/voluntary-guidelines/en/>

### **Afshan Khan to be the new chief executive officer of UNICEF**

Monday, April 30, 2012 - The Board of Directors of Women for Women International announced the appointment of Afshan Khan as the new Chief Executive Officer of the organisation. Ms Khan commences her new position on June 18, 2012.

Ms Khan has served in numerous capacities over her 25-year career equally spread across working in challenging field office postings and at the executive level. She has strong experience in developing and managing highly effective public-private partnerships aimed at initiatives as varied as containing disease outbreaks, combating child labour, and supporting households affected by HIV/AIDS.

### **Human Rights Council**

11 May 2012 - UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, called on the Moldavian Government to follow up on its commitment to adopt a comprehensive anti-discrimination law. Under the auspices of the Geneva-based Human Rights Council, the UPR process involves a review of the human rights records of all UN Member States once every four years.

#### **Discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation**

The law has been under preparation since 2008 and is currently being debated in the country, pending consultations with the Government – one of the most contentious provisions of the law is that it will outlaw discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

Acts of discrimination and violence against lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgendered people are violations of international human rights law and must be outlawed. More on:

<http://www.rttnews.com/1884227/un-urges-moldova-to-adopt-anti-discrimination-law.aspx>

*IAW Chief IAW Representative to the UN in Geneva, Hélène Sackstein*

### **UN recognizes women's leadership in information and communication technologies**

9 May 2012 – The President of Argentina, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner; the Chairperson of the Chinese company Huawei, Sun Yafang, and United States Oscar-winning actress and rights advocate Geena Davis, will be awarded the World Telecommunication and Information Society Award for their significant contribution to the ongoing digital revolution in ICTs, the UN International Telecommunication Union ([ITU](http://www.itu.int)) has announced. The awards ceremony has taken place in Geneva on 16 May. On: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=41955&Cr=Technology&Cr1=>

*Sent to us by: IAW President Lyda Verstegen*

## **THE ARAB SPRING**

### **TUNISIA must prioritize right to education as it proceeds with reforms**

9 May 2012 - "Tunisia is at a turning point in its history," the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to education, Kishore Singh, stressed at the end of his first fact-finding mission to the country.

It was the people of Tunisia that inspired the region last year when they stood up to demand democracy and freedom, sparking a wave of popular uprisings across North Africa and the Middle East, that became known collectively as the Arab Spring.

These movements have led to changes in government in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen, and to uprisings in Bahrain and Syria, among other countries.

#### **Progress in the field of education**

Mr. Singh reminded the Government of its obligation to guarantee and protect academic freedom in a country where violence perpetrated by extremist religious groups has recently taken place in universities, and pointed to the disparities between urban and rural areas with regard to access to education.

The expert welcomed Tunisia's progress in the field of education since its independence in 1956, noting in particular the country's national laws on education and the level of access to primary education shown by "remarkable" school enrolment rates.

He also commended the important level of funding assigned to education, and was pleased to note that females account for almost two-thirds of students enrolled in secondary education.

*More on:* <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=41960&Cr=tunisia&Cr1=>

### **EGYPT approaches first free presidential election with trepidation**

Egypt's first free presidential election has been a long time coming. Ever since the 1952 revolution and the overthrow of the monarchy its leaders have come to power by military coup or in carefully staged polls whose result was always clear long before any ballots were cast.

Now a genuine contest with an unknown outcome has been fought at rallies, on billboards and leaflets from Aswan to Zagazig. Cliff-hanging drama, bitter rivalries and high stakes have combined into a riveting story that is being closely watched as the most populous – and formerly the most influential – country in the Arab world prepares to move to civilian leadership.

Having played a pioneering role in the Arab spring – its own revolution inspired by the events in Tunisia – Egypt's fledgling democracy is coming to life amid bouts of violence and former suspicions that even the election itself could yet be postponed.

Not least is the question of what powers the president will have since a new post-revolution constitution with his job description has yet to be written. Linked to that is the position of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (Scaf), guardians of the state since Mubarak quit.

*More on:* <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/may/18/egypt-first-free-presidential-election>

### **ALGERIA - Ban praises Algerian elections and greater representation of women**

14 May 2012 –Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon congratulated the people and the Government of Algeria for the peaceful conduct of legislative elections last week, and welcomed the increased representation of women in the new parliament, according to his spokesperson.

According to media reports, Algeria's main ruling party, the National Liberation Front, won almost half of the seats in the 462-seat legislative body, with the National Democratic Rally reportedly finishing second.

*More on:* <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=41998&Cr=algeria&Cr1=>

### **MOROCCO still Divided over Marriage of Minors**

Casablanca, May 2, 2012 - The widespread practice of marrying minors continues to be one of the most incendiary legal and political issues in Morocco today, causing open confrontations between hard-line Islamists and moderates throughout the country.

Speaking on national television last month, Mohammed Abdenabawi, an official of the Ministry of Justice, declared that 30,000 minor girls are married every year – roughly 10 percent of the 300,000 marriages recorded every year in this country of 32 million inhabitants.

#### **Widespread phenomenon**

The phenomenon is widespread, the [consequences for young women and girls severe](#), and the efforts of civil society sustained, though maintaining momentum against a tide of cultural and religious conservatism is challenging. A campaign to gather one million signatures to forbid the marriage of minors is already in progress, sparked by the death of Amina Filali, a 15-year-old girl who committed suicide after being forced to marry her rapist.

Supposedly to protect family and female "honour", a court evoked legislation in the penal and family codes to force Filali to marry the man 10 years older than she who forced her, at knife point, to submit to him. Both the court case and Filali's suicide opened the floodgates to a deluge of public debate and activism around the issue, which had hitherto been a taboo topic in traditional Moroccan society.

#### **Article 475, for rapists, marrying their victims**

Activists, rights groups and members of the opposition have been clamouring for the abolition of article 475 of the penal code, which allows rapists to get off scot-free if they agree to marry their

victims; as well as articles 20 and 21 of the family code, which allows the marriage of minor girls. But the root of the problem runs deep, and will require more systemic change than the abolition of one or two laws.

"The culprit is **archaic jurisprudence implemented by ignoramuses**," Chakib Khetrou, a citizen of Casablanca, said, referring to the Muslim law allowing the marriage of girls older than nine years, according to traditional law.

Back in 2008, Sheik Mohamed El Maghrawi, a well-known Moroccan Muslim scholar, published a Fatwa reiterating families' right to marry off their daughters over the age of nine. His position provoked a major scandal but the scholar suffered no consequences. During a press conference in the city of Marrakesh last April, El Maghrawi even expressed his attachment to his position, "based on the Quran and the words of the Prophet " according to him.

However, opposition to this particular reading of Sharia law has become widespread.

Ahmed Faridi, a teacher who holds a licence degree in Sharia law, said: "Nothing in the Quran allows marrying a nine-year-old girl," he explained. *Even if it turns out that the Prophet of Islam himself had married a minor girl, "he is in that case an exception and cannot be a rule," Faridi stressed.*

Minister of Justice and Liberties, Mustapha Erramid, is not as moderate as some of the activists pushing for the marriage ban. In a national televised address last March, the Minister said, "The marriage of minor girls is not forbidden by the law."

#### **Spirit of the new constitution**

The second chamber of parliament held a meeting on the subject last week. The president of the chamber, Mohamed Cheikh Biadilah, said the proposed amendments should be viewed in "the spirit of the new constitution", adopted during the turbulence of the Arab Spring, which "commits the State to guarantee the social and economic rights of the family" and "to protect minors (regardless) of their family or social position" and "**forbids any shape of discrimination based on gender.**"

Biadilah also said, "The legislative power has the obligation to intervene every time it notices that a law has become incompatible with the development of the society. All the laws that go against the dignity of women must be amended or even abolished ", he said in Moroccan parliament.

*By Abderrahim El Ouali. More on: <http://ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=107644>*

*IAW Regional Vice President Arab Countries, Horeya Mogahed*

## **AROUND THE WORLD**

### **Women Farmers Are Key to a Food-Secure Africa**

According to the UN (FAO), women are the majority of the world's agricultural producers, supplying more than 50 percent of the food that is grown globally. And in sub-Saharan Africa the number is higher, as women grow 80 to 90 percent of the food in the region. FAO says that although across the globe women are responsible for providing the food for their families, they do this in the face of constraints and attitudes that conspire to undervalue their work and responsibilities and hinder their participation in decision and policy making.

But it is a situation that the new Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) and first woman boss, Jane Karuku, says must change in order for Africa to feed itself.

AGRA works to achieve a food secure and prosperous Africa through the promotion of rapid, sustainable agricultural growth based on smallholder farmers.

Smallholders--the majority women--produce most of Africa's food, and do so with minimal resources and little government support. AGRA aims to ensure that smallholders have what they need to succeed: good seeds and healthy soils; access to markets, information, financing, storage and transport; and policies that provide them with comprehensive support.

Through developing Africa's high-potential breadbasket areas, while also boosting farm productivity across more challenging environments, AGRA works to transform smallholder agriculture into a highly productive, efficient, sustainable and competitive system, and do so while protecting the environment. *AGRA has a good website on: <http://www.agra-alliance.org/>*

### **For Native American Women, Scourge of Rape, Rare Justice**

May 22 2012 - Emmonak, Alaska — She was 19, a young Alaskan Native woman in this icebound fishing village of 800 in the Yukon River delta, when an intruder broke into her home and raped her.



One in three American Indian women have been raped or have experienced an attempted [rape](#), according to the Justice Department. Their rate of sexual assault is more than twice the national average. And no place, women's advocates say, is more dangerous than Alaska's isolated villages, where there are no roads in or out, and where people are further cut off by undependable telephone, electrical and Internet service.

#### **Violence of Women Act 1994**

The issue of sexual assaults on American Indian women has become one of the major sources of discord in the current debate between the White House and the House of Representatives over the latest reauthorization of the landmark [Violence Against Women Act of 1994](#).

House Republicans, and some Senate Republicans, oppose the provision as a dangerous expansion of the tribal courts' authority, and it was excluded from the version that the [House passed](#) last Wednesday. The House and Senate are seeking to negotiate a compromise.

#### **Allocation is insufficient**

Here in Emmonak, the over-worked police have failed to keep statistics related to rape.

A national study mandated by Congress in 2004 to examine the extent of sexual violence on tribal lands remains unfinished because, the Justice Department says, the \$2 million allocation is insufficient. But according a survey by the [Alaska Federation of Natives](#), the rate of sexual violence in rural villages like Emmonak is as much as 12 times the national rate.

By Timothy Williams. More on:

[http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/23/us/native-americans-struggle-with-high-rate-of-rape.html?nl=todaysheadlines&emc=edit\\_th\\_20120523&pagewanted=print](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/23/us/native-americans-struggle-with-high-rate-of-rape.html?nl=todaysheadlines&emc=edit_th_20120523&pagewanted=print)

*Mailed to us by IAW member Anjana Basu*

### **A BOOK AND TWO VIDEOS**

#### **First woman to receive the Doctor of Medicine in any country**

Anandibai Joshee, MD, sailed from Calcutta, India for America in 1883. She graduated in medicine from the Women's Medical College of Philadelphia in 1886 and became the first woman Doctor of Medicine. She was appointed in 1886 to the position of Physician-in-Charge of the Female Ward of the Albert Edward Hospital in the City of Kolhapur, India and died in Poona, India in 1887.

A book, called "High-Caste Hindu Woman" was translated for an American audience and much of it is still relevant today as you will see if you take the time to read it.

*Mailed to us by IAW member Anjana Basu*

#### **Bad Romance: Women's Suffrage (with Lady Gaga)**

To be found on Ning and on: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IYQhRCs9IHM>.

#### **Note**

We are sending this Newsletter as an attachment, saved in .pdf. An attachment saved in Word 97 is available, if you cannot open it.

Please be so kind to advise Pat Richardson if you know of any IAW members or affiliate/associate organisations with an e-mail address, so we also can mail them this Newsletter.

IAW Newsletter / News Flash	: Joke Sebus	<iaw.newsletter@inter.nl.net>
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