

THE MEDITERRANEAN WOMEN'S FUND LAUNCHES THE 2011 PHOTO CONTEST



Nicolas Grangeaud

«THE WOMEN, THEIR REVOLUTIONS»

The objective of this contest is to record in the photograph the forms of expression used by women to affirm their rights, refuse injustice, and create new future horizons. The contest is restricted to amateur photographers who live in a country of the Mediterranean countries.

It is open from 5 July to 30 October 2011 at midnight. For more information about the photo contest... see www.medwomensfund.org

POST

We know, with the spectacular awakening of entire populations demanding dignity, justice, and liberty, that numerous women took part in the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt. Since then, they tirelessly and systematically have worked to raise the issue of equality between women and men in the constitutions and in future decision making bodies.

In their March manifesto, Tunisian women demanded that, "the issue of women's rights be integrated into the priority actions of political and civil society by guaranteeing the principle of separation of politics and religion in the new constitution, giving full form to the principle of equality, and by protecting the physical and moral integrity of women".

Egyptian women, large numbers of whom participated in massive demonstrations in July, are expressing their anger that so few women are members of the government and are demanding that women be represented at all levels of decision making bodies to fully reflect their role in society. They insist on the fact that women's participation in politics is not just a question of gender, but a question of the future of society.¹

'What kind of society do we want for Italy?' also was a question asked in February by a million women and – a few – men who demonstrated under the banner "Se non ora quando" (SNOQ -- If not now, when?) against cultural models

which diminish the dignity of women by turning them into simple sex objects. The question remains open and the SNOQ movement is growing.

A similar question also was raised in Morocco by the Feminist spring for democracy and equality coalition. In May, the coalition demanded, "a new constitution establishing the rules of a democratic system integrating effective equality with regard to women and men's access to fundamental human rights in all fields", and received only a partial response in June.

The society the indignant women protesters of the May 15th Movement in Spain are seeking to build, is "a society centered on people rather than financial markets, a society that rejects chauvinist violence and that integrates a feminist approach within economic and environmental policies and public services in order to emerge from the crisis".

And in their July declaration, "Equality now!", the "Feminists in Movement" associations in France echo this vision with: "Equality is an indispensable condition for social progress needed to advance society as a whole. Building equality is to combat oppression, domination, all forms of discrimination and attacks on secularism."

In their manifesto, the Italians note that, "It is time to show friendship to women." And to take seriously their hopes to profoundly change society throughout the Mediterranean. The time has come because if not now, when?

Caroline Brac de la Perrière

¹ See our special April 2011 edition : www.medwomensfund.org/publications

FROM THE START OF THE YEAR, THE MEDITERRANEAN WOMEN'S FUND HAS PROVIDED SUPPORT TO A DOZEN PROJECTS. THEY INVOLVE:

AWARENESS RAISING AND INFORMATION ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS THROUGH...

... CAMPAIGNS: AGAINST EARLY MARRIAGES



The Working Group for Equality in Personal Status Issues is a coalition of women's organizations

working to reform the status of Palestinian women who are Israeli citizens and subject to the religious and social codes of family laws. The working group sees a direct relationship between high rates of forced, early marriages (which leads a considerable number of young women to drop out of school every year) and the scarcity of Palestinian women in decision making bodies in Israel. The working group established that approximately one girl in 4 under the age of 18 is married off each year. This is a substantial portion of the population who will not finish school, who will remain unskilled, and who consequently will face difficulties in finding employment. This is a high risk group for divorce and single parenthood, without even mentioning the serious health risks involved in early pregnancy. The working group decided to tackle the problem at its roots by launching a campaign against early marriage in villages with direct awareness raising activities for young people, parents, and educators: 80 discussions were organized in 30 high schools in the country to reach approximately 2600 young women (or 5.4% of the group at risk in the country).



The association launched an ambitious educational communication campaign to generate a collective awakening and awareness building of the Tunisian public, particularly women, regarding the real issues at stake during this historic transition period in terms of the possible erosion of their status, rights, and fundamental liberties. Its main objective is to incite women and young Tunisians to be fully informed when voting for a society that reflects their aspirations and preserves their rights.

FOR POLITICAL PARTICIPATION



Engagement citoyen was established in April 2011 in the wake of the Tunisian revolution when it became critical to raise awareness among women and young Tunisians about the importance of vested rights and the risk of regression during the democratization process.



FOR THE RIGHT OF INHERITANCE



The objective of the **Zakher association for developing women capacities** is to improve women's lives in the Gaza strip with regard to motherhood, economic power, education, and training by reinforcing their skills and know-how. One of their priorities is to reinforce the economic power of women, particularly those who support their families, in the belief that financial independence induces independence in choices and directions.

Zakher launched a civil campaign, "My right to inherit" with the aim of making the issue of inheritance, which currently is neglected, a question considered by the entire society. They also seek to encourage women in Gaza who do not claim their rightful inheritance to demand their rights by creating an environment open to such demands.



The main objective of the **Centre d'information et de documentation sur les droits de l'enfant et de la femme** is to contribute to

changing laws and mentalities and to reinforcing the capacity of the associative movement. In addition to providing information and outreach activities on the rights of women and children, CIDDEF uses research to lobby public authorities.

Major themes such as women's participation in politics and violence against women continuously are addressed.

A case for equal inheritance between men and women has been developed to launch a public debate: a workshop with participants from the Maghreb is planned to consolidate results.

... CARAVANS



La Pléiade works to maintain access to rights and to combat all forms of exclusion and discrimination. Its project, "Caravan for equality and against all discrimination" is a means to build awareness and provide women information on their access to rights, as well as providing a place for exchange and debate between women from underprivileged neighborhoods regarding problems and possible solutions to better "live together".

By enabling women's rights activists from Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco to come to their neighborhoods in Nimes, the caravan allows women who often are captives of their environment or native culture in low-income housing estates to break out of their isolation and create a women's citizenship dynamic that may lead to a real participation of women in the affairs of the city.



IN 2011, THE MEDITERRANEAN WOMEN'S FUND IS REINFORCING ITS MISSION AND EXTENDING ITS FIELD OF ACTION TO OFFER SPACE FOR STRATEGIC REFLECTION AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF TOOLS FOR COLLECTIVE ORGANIZATIONS... TO BE CONTINUED!

... ACTING TRAINING



Etincelle organizes reflection and activities on individual and collective change, such as an educational authority that promotes the development of each individual and equal opportunities, establishes values of equality and respect in a tangible manner, the development of an open attitude and support between women and men.

In partnership with the Ligue démocratique des droits de la femmes de Casablanca (Democratic League for Women's Rights of Casablanca), it is organizing a two-week theatre training for activists from several areas of Morocco to form a group of women able to design and direct scenarios of the Theatre Forum which will be used for information and awareness building activities for women. The training first addresses themes such as violence against women, equal rights, solidarity.

THE LIBERTY TO MOVE ABOUT FREELY WITHOUT FEAR



The Association of Egyptian Female Lawyers (AEFL) works to disseminate values of gender equality, justice and liberty among civil society organizations to ensure that women's rights are defended. AEFL works to raise awareness regarding the political status of women, the importance of reinforcing their role in Egyptian society, and international conventions protecting human rights and particularly those of women. The association has built a front of lawyers who are both qualified and involved in political and public life.

Their project today is to establish a legal clinic for victims of sexual harassment to combat the increase of sexual harassment incidents in the greater Cairo area: while sexual harassment seemed to have ceased during the revolution, it has re-emerged as an important obstacle to women's ability to move about freely. This clinic will be staffed with specialized legal advisors and psychologists and will provide legal services free of charge to women and young girls who cannot afford legal representation.

THE CREATION OF BRIDGES BETWEEN WOMEN

AT THE SUB-REGIONAL LEVEL BETWEEN ARTISTS



The Nova Feminist Culture Center has been working since 2008 to counter the influence of patriarchal culture that upholds the oppression of women by reproducing gender stereotypes in education, the media, and the arts. Over the past twenty years, many feminist artists have emerged in Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia Herzegovina, and Montenegro and have reinforced, through their art, non-stereotypical female identities. They promote cultural and political pluralism, and in this way oppose the patriarchal and hegemonic discourse dominating the Balkans. The goal of the ASKA/WBWPAN project is to extend the impact of women artists on West Balkan policies and cultures by establishing a regional network of female artists.

AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL TO EXCHANGE EXPERIENCES



Marea is a forum to disseminate information, ideas, and materials of women and men who consider that one must see the world through the lenses of gender. The forum uses the journal Marea, the website www.mareaonline.it, the radio Radiodelladonna.org, conferences, seminars and meetings to promote women's culture, information, and knowledge. The conference entitled, "Punto G: gender and globalization", which gathered women from Italy and several other countries in Genoa from June 24 to 26, allowed a feminist analysis of international developments and politics. Women's proposals for peace, justice and equality were presented, with secularism a primary condition for democracy and development.

Meeting of the Marea women's Forum, in Genoa



To find out more about all of the projects, visit the information page of our website www.medwomensund.org

■ UN WOMEN JUST RELEASED

a report on the situation of women in 139 countries entitled: Progress of the world's women: in pursuit of justice. The report shows that domestic violence is outlawed in 125 countries but 603 million women live in countries where such violence is not considered a crime. Although 52 countries made conjugal rape a criminal offence in 2011, over 2.6 billion women live in countries where the crime is not explicitly punishable. Laws based on custom or religion, co-existing with state legislation, often restrict the rights of women within the family.

One hundred and seventeen countries have laws pertaining to equal pay, yet the salaries of women remains less than men (up to 30% less) in many countries. Around the world, women continue to shoulder more unpaid domestic work and care-giving than men. On the global level, 53% of working women – 600 million in total – hold insecure jobs which often are not protected by labor laws.

Lastly, in a vast majority of countries, less than 30% of parliamentarians are women.

Numerous women do not report crimes for fear of social stigmatization and because justice systems are weak and expensive. The rate by which women seeking reparations let their case drop is high, notably in the case of gender-based violence.

The report recommends that governments invest in one-stop services, which bring together police, legal and health services under one roof to reduce the number of steps a woman must take to access justice.

■ DO NOT CONFUSE WITH THE MEDITERRANEAN WOMEN'S FUND!

The Women's Foundation for the Mediterranean launched in Paris on June 14th was created in 2009 by the governments of France, Jordan, Lebanon, and Morocco and welcomed by the 43 member states of the Union for the Mediterranean which are at present members of its Board of Trustees and High Council. The Foundation's objective is to gather, share, and disseminate the energies and means to promote equality between the sexes and valorise the role of women. Its field of action covers Europe and the Mediterranean basin while including the countries of the Gulf.

■ A SURVEY OF THE FUNDING DEDICATED TO WOMEN BY EUROPEAN FOUNDATIONS

has just been released by Mama Cash, the Dutch women's fund, and the Foundation Center.

The analysis focused on 145 foundations of 19 countries of which 9 are among the 50 wealthiest foundations in Europe. These 145 foundations together hold assets of nearly 9 billion euros. Sixty of them have assets worth at least 50 million euros. Some, of which 7 of the 8 funds for women of the region, hold assets worth less than 500,000 euros. 90% of the foundations expressed interest in women's issues but only 37% intentionally choose to consecrate part of their funds to the cause of women and girls.

In 2009, the grants given to programs concerning women represented on average 4.8% of the total expenditures of 42 foundations polled on the topic: or 392 grants totaling 27 million euros granted within and outside of Europe.

Half of these 392 projects involved combating violence against women and access to education for women and girls, less than one quarter of the remaining grants went to the defense of women's human rights.

A FEW KEY STATISTICS CONCERNING THE FEMALE POPULATION OF SEVERAL COUNTRIES

	MOROCCO	LYBIA	SYRIA	GREECE	ITALY
Fertility rate	2.4 children /woman	2,7	3,3	1,4	1,4
Average age at marriage	26,5 years	29,2	25,4	26,9	30
Literacy rate*	44% (69%)	81% (95%)	77 % (90%)	96% (98%)	99% (99%)
Literacy rate of those between 15 and 24 years*	68% (85%)	100% (100%)	93% (96%)	99% (99%)	100% (100%)
Employment rate	26 % (80 %)	25 % (79 %)	21% (79 %)	43 % (65 %)	38 % (61 %)
Representation in national parliament	7%	8%	12%	17%	20%

Note: figures for men are given between parentheses.

* According to the estimates of the Statistical Institute of UNESCO

Sources : ■ « Untapped potential: European funding foundation for women and girls » issued by Mama Cash, the Foundation Center, and Weisblatt & associés in cooperation with the European Foundation Center. 2011 www.mamacash.org ■ UNWomen <http://progress.unwomen.org> ■ The World's Women 2010 Trends and statistics. United Nations 2010

WHY DO WE NEED A MEDITERRANEAN WOMEN'S FUND?

Belonging to the same cultural area, under the influence of three monotheistic religions, women from the Mediterranean region are subjected to a common form of patriarchy and despite living in apparently very different situations, share many similar aspects of their condition.

Whether they come from the southern or the northern shores of the Mediterranean, women know that they must not only fight to obtain equality but also to strengthen their existing rights which have been obtained thanks to their tenacity and their struggles.

They act in a climate of general regression which is the effect of radical conservative movements in societies undergoing changes and they are experiencing many difficulties in finding the necessary funding for their actions at a local or regional level.

This is why two years ago women from North Africa and Southern Europe have taken the initiative to create a Mediterranean Women's Fund whose aim is to help with improving women's condition and to promote gender equality throughout all those countries in the Mediterranean region.

NEWSLETTER FROM THE MEDITERRANEAN SHORES

Information letter from the Mediterranean Women's Fund (MedWomenFund)

Address: apt 74, 47, place du Millénaire
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Free monthly newsletter

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Women from the Mediterranean shores need your support!

I WISH TO DONATE TO THE MEDITERRANEAN WOMEN'S FUND

Apt 74 - 47 place du Millénaire - 34000 Montpellier France

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Thank you for your support and generosity

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