

Al-Raida Explores Female Criminality in the Arab World

■ Omar Nashabe

Criminologist

Criminal activities are usually attributed to men, whereas women are often considered victims, and there are fewer women in prisons and who violate the law, especially in the Arab region. This issue of *Al-Raida* explores women as perpetrators of crime. However, it seems that female criminality cannot be explored without first understanding female victimization.

Throughout the Arab region, the crimes women commit are different – less serious, less professional, and less likely to be repeated – than the crimes committed by men, and from the crimes committed by women in the West. However, female participation in criminal behavior is increasing in Egypt, Lebanon, and some Gulf countries and some patterns of male and female criminality appear to be converging especially in corporate and white-collar crime.

As more women are attaining better social positions due to increasing female employment in the Arab region, their pattern of criminality is also increasing. Nevertheless, female criminality is not exclusively occupational.

The pertinent role of the overwhelming legacy of sexism is central when seeking an understanding of female criminal behavior in the Arab World. The articles in this controversial issue of *Al-Raida* evoke the man-made constructions of female criminology and contribute to the discussion on the failure to view female crime as "purposive action," as opposed to innate weakness and irrationality.

Do women offenders in the Arab World feel a new public fear of the "violent female"? Is there evidence that the

social and justice system responses to women offenders are changing, and not the nature of female behavior itself?

While this issue of *Al-Raida* may not succeed in providing full and concrete answers to these questions, we will try to provide an introduction and an overview that may contribute to the beginning of an enduring search for the truth about female crime.

Keeping in mind that women are subject to greater social control both within the family and in Arab society in general and that females are more closely "supervised" and more willing to accept conventional values and less likely to be involved with delinquent groups, contributors from various and diverse backgrounds attempt to provide an understanding of the female criminal mind.

Two high-ranking Lebanese police officers contributed two separate texts to this issue including raw data without further analysis. These texts are translations and are published in this issue "as is" regardless of some of the views they present, which may seem to challenge the views of many of the readers of *Al-Raida*.

This issue will not present a psychological perspective on female criminality in the Arab World, however, a review of general psychological Western interpretations of female crime are discussed.

This is one of the very few publications on female criminality in this part of the world and we hope that many other publications commenting, criticizing, and even contradicting the contents of this issue will follow.