

Quote/Unquote

"The legal pluralism in family law has led to an absence of an 'equality before the law' standard in Lebanon. Women and children of different religious sects face very different legal choices and possibilities in terms of marriage, divorce, child custody, and inheritance... Women and children have been disproportionately disadvantaged by the delegation of family law to religious sects. Women are more likely than men to forfeit their religious heritages when they marry out. Women, although not legally required to do so, have been expected to follow the religion of their husbands. Women who marry out of their religious community may not pass on to their children their own religious heritages – a right reserved for men." (Suad Joseph, *Gender and Citizenship in the Middle East*, 130-131)

"... she and her husband were at lunch. They were having an argument. She had said again that she wanted a divorce and he had refused. That is all I know. She ran from the table and locked herself in the bathroom. He had had no idea, he said later, weeping out loud, that what she was doing was climbing out the window. I remember going to their apartment the day after her death for 'aza (condolence). She had survived for only a few moments on the pavement, a crowd forming round her as she moaned in great pain, and then had died, no one she knew at her side. She was buried the same day. She was 42. I almost could not bear to offer my sympathies to her husband, as I was required to do, going into the room where he sat with the men, receiving condolences, his face looking stricken and shriveled. And I found myself angry also at her sisters, my mother and aunts, their eyes swollen and red, receiving condolences in the rooms for women. Why are you crying now? I thought. What's the point of that? Why did you do nothing to help her all this time, why didn't you get her out of that marriage? I thought it was their fault, that they could have done something. If they had cared enough they could have done something. That is what I thought then. Now I am less categorical." (Leila Ahmad, *A Border Passage*, 120)

"There was apparently an increase in violence against women. At least six women were killed during the year, mostly by male relatives, as a result of family crimes or other forms of violence against women. Such crimes continued to be committed by men with near impunity facilitated by lenient sentences for killings carried out in a 'fit of fury.' Information was received on alleged torture, including rape, of Filipina maids working in Lebanon. ... A 27-year-old Palestinian man killed his sister by cutting her throat for allegedly having pre-marital

sexual relations with her fiancé. The attack reportedly took place in October in a Beirut hospital where the woman worked. The man handed himself to the authorities. ... Seventeen-year-old Fadela Farouk Al-Sha'ar died on February 5 in Tripoli apparently after being strangled, allegedly by her brother. He was said to have confessed to the murder before disappearing. She was apparently killed for allegedly eloping with a man she wanted to marry without the consent of her family. ... A Filipina woman, Catherine Bautista, one of thousands of maids reportedly working in difficult conditions in Lebanon, died on May 4. Her body was found almost naked in the garden of the building in Beirut where she worked. An investigation ordered by the authorities closed the case in July apparently after concluding that she had died after jumping out of her employers' apartment." (Amnesty International, Report 2005, *The State of the World's Human Rights*, 160)

"In Saudi Arabia strict customary rules discourage contact between members of the opposite sex. As a result, many young couples do not have the opportunity to get to know each other well before marriage. Yet with both secular and Islamic education for women being provided on a large scale by the government, Saudi women are well aware of their rights in Islam, one of which is the right to meet their potential husband before marriage and to give or withhold their consent to the union. Increasingly, Saudi women demand to not only meet but also to know their husbands before marriage... One method by which couples get to know each other without breaching Saudi standards of propriety is by talking over the phone. 'Dating by phone' is a new phenomenon which is growing rapidly in Saudi Arabia. I know many young Saudi women who have met young men (through friends at the mall, at private mixed parties and so forth) and exchanged phone numbers. They talk frequently on the phone and in several cases these conversations have led to marriage proposals." (Lisa Wynn, Special Dossier: *Shifting Boundaries in Marriage and Divorce in Muslim Communities, Women and Law in the Muslim World Programme*, 112-113)

"It had never occurred to me that I was not a real citizen! My daughter is Egyptian, same as her father. She is considered to be an alien. Aside from the excruciating process of securing her annual residency permit, we have to put up with prejudice. I do not understand! When they said that nationality can be passed on through blood, did they mean only men's blood! In this day and age in Lebanon, only men are considered to be full citizens." (Zahra, Lebanese, married to an Egyptian)