

Draft Labour Law in Jordan

This report which appeared in the Jordan Times, March 9, 1986, discusses the provisions regarding women in the new draft law.

For the first time in Jordan, the issue of women has been included in a national development plan, thus giving women the opportunity to discuss for themselves the status of women on a national level... The women's section committee, represented by specialists in the various fields of study, looked into the role of women in the labour force, (rural and urban), education and health to see what steps could be taken to help women in the future to be on an equal footing to men, not only in theory, but in practice... The Ministry of labour in cooperation with the ILO set about drafting the new Labour Law after the social security law was introduced in 1978.

The recommendations were submitted to a committee comprising the Amman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, trade unions and representatives from the Social Security Corporation, the Jordan Bar Association, the engineers association and the University of Jordan.

The committee held a total of 37 weekly sessions during which they debated these recommendations in depth.

This new draft labour law is still going through the constitutional process because of the «tripartite structure in national decision-making which makes it difficult to bring them altogether and to reach a conclusive decision on which all agree,» explained Dr. Mohammad Abdul Hadi, from the Ministry of Labour. However, it is hoped that before May 1, 1986 (Labour Day) a final decision will be reached to implement this long overdue law.

The new law set out to give equality to women in employment opportunities, wages, promotion and training. This principle is in effect but the minimum

training age has been raised from 13 to 16, thus guaranteeing compulsory education.

— Women are prohibited from doing dangerous or hazardous work and work that is detrimental to her health;

— Women are restricted from doing nightwork between 8 p.m. and 6. a.m. except in cases of emergency, for women in leadership positions and workers in social health and tourist services;

— Nurseries: The law has been changed to oblige establishments that employ 20 married women or more to provide suitable location for their children under 4 years of age.

— Maternity leave: The law has been changed to give not less than 10 weeks with at least 6 weeks after delivery on full pay. There is still no provision for an extension of maternity leave due to sickness resulting from pregnancy or delivery.

— Employers are prohibited from sacking women for marriage or maternity reasons.

— A working nursing mother is allowed one hourly breast feeding break per day. This principle is already in force.

— A woman is guaranteed her job back should she choose to take unpaid leave to accompany her husband on missions abroad, for a period not exceeding two years.

— A woman is guaranteed her job back should she choose to take unpaid leave to raise her children, for a period not exceeding one year.

The current labour law does not apply to establishments classified as «irregular» (i.e. employing less than 5 persons), nor to a large sector of the agricultural field.

The new draft labour law has set out to rectify this and any establishment operating in the national economy be they «regular» or «irregular» must comply with the terms of the law once it has been approved.

Many people expressed the view that sufficient supporting services for women are of vital importance if women are to be encouraged to take part in the socio-economic development of their country. Jordan has often acknowledged that its citizens are its most valuable natural resources and the role of women is seen as vital to the continuity of socio-economic development. Yet, the single and most repeated grievance of many women is the lack of adequate supporting services which would ease the burdens they face simply because they chose to exercise their rights to take part in this development process.

Rasha al-Sabah

Rasha al-Hamoud al-Sabah, is the dean of the languages department at Kuwait University. Her book, «Qadaya Fikriya», has recently won the prize of creative literature by ALECSO, Arab League for Education, Culture and Science Organization.



Sheikh Nasser and Sheikhha Hussa al-Sabah.

This prize has been a remarkable acknowledgment of the literary contributions of Arab women in general and women of the Gulf in particular. *Rasha* began pursuing a career as a diplomat in 1972, but the the Kuwait foreign ministry did not approve. She decided to continue her university education, and received her Ph.D. from Yale University in 1977.

Rasha, a pioneer and remarkable figure of contemporary Arab Womanhood, is also a member of the Institute of Mulsim Languages, and has many well researched publications on the European concept of Islam in the Middle Ages, orientalism, the role of the state in *Mciavelli's* thought, the philosophy of *Ibn Rushd* and its impact on the Middle Ages.

Islamic Art in Kuwait

The Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyya at the National Musuem of Kuwait houses one of the finest collections of Islamic art which is the private collection of Sheikh *Nasser* and Sheikhha *Hussa al-Sabah*.

Jassem al-Homeidhi has also an important private collection consisting of some rare Islamic metal objects. A book of this collection is going to be published soon.

The Sabah's collection has taken eight years to assemble, and the first piece was acquired in 1975. *Sheikha Hussa*, besides being the director of Dar al-Athar, gives lectures on Islamic art. Dar al-Athar has published a catalogue on the exhibition which was held under the theme of «Science in Islam». It has also published a children's guide on Islamic art, which marks an unprecedented event in the Arab world. Dar al-Athar held an exhibition of children's work to encourage cultural and educational endeavors.