

FROM LEBANON

Farewell to a Pioneer

On May 25, 1997, Maître Laure Moughaizel, Lebanese lawyer and advocate of Human Rights, died after a three year's battle with cancer. (See p. 42 for a special feature.)

Reference: An-Nahar newspaper: Monday, May 26th, 1997. P.1

The Formation of the Lebanese Council to Resist Violence Against Women.

On March 24, 1997, 17 Lebanese non-governmental organizations met to announce the creation of the Lebanese Council to Resist Violence against Women.

The goals of the Committee are:

- to promote awareness regarding discriminatory laws;
- to encourage campaigns for eradicating illiteracy among women;
- to call upon the State to improve current laws and to adopt new ones that will protect women's rights;
- to call for the implementation of international agreements that condemn discrimination and violence against women;
- to provide legal consultation and juridical assistance to abused women.

Reference: An-Nahar newspaper: Tuesday, March 25th, 1997. P.20

FROM CAIRO

Circumcision: Legal and Social Perspectives

The Egyptian Supreme Administrative Court has legitimized female circumcision without considering it a religious duty, thus leaving the final decision in the hands of the girl's family. A juridical source said that Parliament has forwarded to the Administrative Court in Cairo a report calling for cancelling the decision by the Minister of Health in summer, 1996, to prohibit female circumcision in public hospitals.

In the meantime, the National Population Council has revealed that female circumcision is widely practiced. According to a survey conducted by the Council and that covered 14,000 married women (aged 15-49), 97% of Egyptian women are circumcised. There appears to be no major difference between rural and suburban areas. Ninety nine percent and a half of women in rural areas are circumcised, as compared to 94% in suburban areas.

The survey also indicates a strong association between a woman's attitude towards female circumcision and her educational level. Only 56% of women with a secondary

education support circumcision, as compared to 91 percent among illiterate women. Moreover, 29 percent of Egyptian women agree that circumcision affects their sexual pleasure, but three women out of four feel that husbands would prefer their wives to be circumcised.

Reference: An-Nahar newspaper: Thursday, February 6th and May 22nd, 1997. P.24

FROM TURKEY

The Army Warns the Prime Minister against Allowing Women to Wear the Veil

The Turkish army, which considers itself the guardian of secular principles in Turkey, has warned the Turkish Prime Minister against allowing women to wear the veil in universities and governmental institutions.

Wearing the veil in these institutions has been prohibited since the 1920s, in accordance with the secular principles of Kamal Ataturk, the founder of modern Turkey.

While the El-Rufah Islamic Political Party, which heads the governmental coalition, sees this prohibition as a violation of human rights, supporters of secular ideas see in El-Rufah's calls for allowing women to wear the veil a hidden desire for implementing Islamic legislation in the country.

Reference: An-Nahar newspaper: Saturday, February 1st, 1997. P.17

FROM HONG KONG

Contraceptive Pills for Men

According to a report issued by the Immunity and Biology Section of Hong Kong University, pioneering scientists in Hong Kong, Rome, and New York are currently working on the development of contraceptive pills for men without side-effects for men.

A professor in the Animal Section of Hong Kong University, said that the project is based upon the discovery of two new proteins that regulate the formation of the sperms. The idea is to use an anti-cancer drug such as leonidamine or a similar substance to stimulate the early release of non-fertilized sperms.

It is worth noting that leonidamine is known to have negative or side-effects on the kidneys and intestines. However, no drug can be produced before it has been subjected to lengthy tests. Thus, a license from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to commercialize a new drug is usually issued only after five to ten years.

Reference: An-Nahar newspaper: Friday, February 14th, 1997. P.20