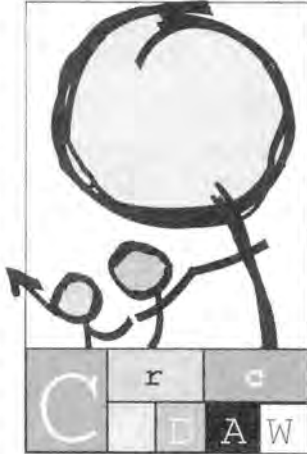


ARAB COUNTRIES AND CEDAW

The present file deals with the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). It starts off with a paper entitled "Rhetorical Strategies and Official Policies on Women's Rights: The Merits and Drawbacks of the New World Hypocrisy" which attempts a general overview of the issue at hand. The file also includes a number of important papers that were submitted to the Regional Workshop on the incorporation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) into the Curricula of Law Schools. The workshop, held on 14 to 16 October 1997 in Beirut, was organized by the Regional Office of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in the Middle East and North Africa and the Lebanese University. The workshop is the second regional event of a UNICEF project sponsored by the Swiss Government. It builds on a first regional workshop held in 1994 by the UNICEF Regional Office and the International Law Association. The meeting recommended the incorporation of CRC and CEDAW into the formal curriculum materials of law schools in selected Arab countries. These are Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia, and Sudan.



The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) entered into force on 3 September 1981. It is considered the most comprehensive treaty on the rights of women, as it covers a wide scope of issues related to women's rights. The Convention reminds the international community that all human rights treaties concluded by the United Nations and its specialized agencies entitle men and women to enjoy equally the rights they enshrine. To date, CEDAW has been ratified by 154 states including eleven out of the 22 members of the League of Arab States. These countries are: Jordan, Algeria, Camoros, Iraq, Kuwait, Morocco, Tunisia, Lebanon, Libya, Egypt, and Yemen. The reservations of the Arab countries are based on two counts: the

incompatibility of some of CEDAW's articles with religious laws as well as with legislation. The implementation of the articles of CEDAW is a requirement for all ratifying countries that report on the progress achieved to a committee that has been especially established for this purpose.

It is important to point out in this introduction the commonality between CRC and CEDAW:

The objectives of the Beirut Workshop were:

- to raise awareness, in and through universities, in participating countries on the two conventions - their content, implementation, and monitoring procedures;
- to review the current status of teaching the two conventions in law schools;
- to develop model syllabi and curricula for incorporation of the two conventions into law school curricula in participating countries.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989. The Convention quickly became the most widely and rapidly ratified of all UN treaties, and it is generally regarded as one of the most important human rights instruments ever. CRC is essentially a universal declaration that sets out the minimum that we can offer our children; through its universality, it establishes that all children have specific rights and that no child is less worthy than another.

- both conventions have many identical concerns, notably protection and assistance to children and women. However, many scholars do not agree with this commonality, since it puts women and children in the same category, which means marginality and submissiveness for women.

- both conventions highlight the same principles. Among these, we have the concept of the family as the main societal unit; the concepts of freedom, justice and peace; the concept of non-discrimination; and the differences among societies, cultures, and religious groups.

The papers selected for inclusion in this issue of *Al-Raida* are primarily those related to CEDAW, as they are of direct interest to the overall objectives of the magazine.

The recommendations of the workshop highlight the need to incorporate both conventions into, not only the curricula of law schools, but also that of other university faculties, notably Social and Political Sciences. It is only by instilling a spirit and a culture of human rights among young people that we can ensure these rights and work towards their translation into real practices.

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