

“... a woman is deprived of her genitals and denied the most basic element of life. Her life becomes one complex on top of another ... Denying a woman the ability to share the pleasure makes her more negative. Denying her relaxation of nerves which accompanies proper sexual intercourse creates in her feelings of great anxiety and loss. In turn, such ... feelings ... give rise to psychological, physical and sexual disorders. An inferiority complex ... and an awareness that the man is the dominant master, ... gradually cancel her role in society. At the same time, feelings of weakness, negativity and pain in the marital bed are certain to make her experience various sexual problems, such as sexual frigidity, which is nowadays a real crisis and the root of many domestic problems.” (*Gender and Development Training Source Book*, p. 24)

“They made all the other girls leave and the terrorists came in with me carrying their arms. One ordered me to take off my pants. I refused, saying that what he wanted to do was not good and that God condemned it and we were not married. He threatened me with his knife saying that he would slash me and that he would do whatever he wanted to as God would permit him because he is a mujahid and he would marry me later ... I was really afraid when he placed the blade of his knife against my cheek. I took my pants off, crying. He told me to take off my underpants. I screamed and refused. I begged him, saying that this was shameful in God’s eyes but he took a cigarette and lit it and began burning me on the thighs. I screamed and closed my eyes with my back to the wall. He burned me again and I fainted. I did not feel anything else. When I regained consciousness, I was on the ground covered in blood.” (*Women Living Under Muslim Law*, Dossier 18, July 1997, p. 36)

“One night he severely beat me, so I tried committing suicide. Instead of driving me to the hospital, he made love to me while I was close to a coma. Soon afterwards, he locked the bedroom and went back to the living room to resume drinking. It so happened that my parents came to visit me that night; they doubted the story of my sleeping early and saved me ... The court did not rule that I get an alimony, because my husband claimed to be poor, although he had already sold our house with all its furniture. My family and I cooperated in raising the kids for three years. However, when my eldest daughter reached the end of her nurture age, he took her and started setting her against me. He distorted her mother’s image, something that deeply hurt me.” (*Arab Public Hearing on Legal Violence and Equality in the Family*, p. 44)

“You see, I was brought up to see FGM [Female Genital

Mutilation] as a positive thing, my initiation into womanhood. One man held me down across my chest and four others held my legs and arms. Using a knife, the circumcision removed my clitoris, cleared the inside of my vagina and left it plain. I was made to do a vigorous dance to show that I was a brave girl and happy about the operation. I got infected and there was a ‘growth’ where my clitoris had been. I had to be cut again twice to remove it. Afterwards I had no feelings towards men at all. It took me a very long time to get pregnant - about six years. You see, I have never enjoyed sex because it was always so painful. When I got pregnant for the first time I had such a very difficult labor. The scar tissue made it so hard for the baby. The child did not survive. I am 35 now and I have three children, twin boys and a girl. I have suffered much and wouldn’t dream of even whispering the existence of this practice to my daughter.” (*Index on Censorship*, No. 2 March/April, 2000, p. 73)

“The tension between pleasure and danger is a powerful one in women’s lives. The exercise of our sexuality can be pleasurable, a joyous exploration; it can also be fraught with guilt, repression and sanction. The negative side of our sexuality is that which victimises us, which makes us vulnerable to all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse, such as rape and incest and bondage against our will. This vulnerability makes us aware, sometimes too aware, of the potential dangers of exercising our sexuality. The threat of sexual attack is one of the most powerful tools of control of women in contemporary society.” (*Women in Action*, 1999, p. 11)

“Someone called me a housewife recently and it was really shocking. But I guess I am - actually that’s why it was upsetting. You have to ask yourself why it is that perhaps the most worthy and necessary and admirable profession there is ... why doesn’t it command respect? Why do I not even feel good about it a lot of the time? I think traditionally people lived in extended families, so children were raised sort of communally. The nuclear family isn’t a viable unit. The two-parent or one-parent family doesn’t work, you need more support than that. I don’t regret doing this at all. I had a career I gave it up to stay at home with my kids because I thought that was important. Even if I never get that career back, I still think it was worth it. My kids aren’t always angels but they’re loud and lively and happy. And that’s because they’re around somebody who loves them all day. [laughs] Even if that somebody is kind of worn out” (*Ms. Magazine*, June/July 2000, p. 40)