

Women and the Arab Spring: Expectations and Concerns.¹

By Isam Shihada

Introduction

In December 2010, the world turned its attention to Tunisia after a young street vendor, Mohamed Bouazizi², set himself on fire to protest the government's unjust treatment of the Tunisian people. His self-immolation sparked what is now called the "Arab Spring"³ which led to the fall of dictators in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen while others may fall in Syria, Bahrain and Sudan. In the Arab world, thousands of women have taken to streets protesting for change and freedom after enduring centuries of oppression where, in several contexts, they have been deprived of social, economic and educational equality, freedom of speech and the right to participate in elections. Women's engagement in the Arab Spring negates the myths that Arabs cannot establish civil and democratic societies without resorting to violence and that they are incompatible with democracy⁴.

The Arab Spring seems to represent a new era of emancipation for women in the Arab world. Yet, it remains to be seen whether women will be afforded the opportunity to play substantial roles in the futures of their respective countries, or whether they will be marginalized, secluded and silenced. In other words, fundamental questions need to be answered regarding whether women will indeed benefit from the ongoing change in the Middle East. Hence, in this paper, I try to examine and chronicle roles played by Arab women during Arab Spring, the concerns and challenges they face and what strategies women should adopt to ensure their rights, in post-revolutionary periods.

Arab Spring: Causes

In the Arab world, dictators, from Hosni Mubarak⁵ in Egypt to Ali Abdullah Saleh in Yemen, have accumulated enormous wealth earned by plundering foreign aid budgets, lavish military weapons contracts and corruption. Power is also being centralized where they use secret police to terrorize, kill and counter any dissent to keep the people cowed and under complete control.⁶ For example, in Egypt, we find that feelings of humiliation, lack of democracy and endemic

destitution (or literally an absence of bread⁷), have driven them to rise up and revolt against the oppressive Egyptian regime which has deprived people of their freedom, dignity, and basic daily needs and violated their rights. Within this context, Ashraf Ezzat argues that Egyptians don't even have to get arrested to feel degraded; all they have to do is to,

queue up in a long line that could drag out for hours just to buy a loaf of bread or sign the endless papers to apply for an ID card or a driving license or wait their turn to get examined in a hospital which has no beds or medication for them.⁸

Moreover, the Egyptian regime has “a million and half well-trained soldiers whose sole mission is to keep the Egyptian people down.”⁹ For instance, during the Egyptian revolution, the military has killed protesters, persecuted and imprisoned thousands of them including women. We see that most of protesters, in Egypt, are young women, men and university students who find themselves with neither hope nor future since they are unable to find work and marry. Put differently, they are driven by “an untamable anger and a profound sense of injustice to change the regime.”¹⁰

In the Arab world, uprisings have really taken regimes by surprise since they have not paid attention to the sweeping technological transformation. Social websites like Facebook and Twitter¹¹ have been beneficial for political and social groups who can interact freely and even revolt when organizing and assembling on the streets would put people's lives at risk like facing detention and physical threats. In this regard, Alaa Al Aswany argues that in Egypt, demonstrations have been organized through Facebook “as a reliable source of information; when the state tried to block it, the people proved cleverer, and bloggers passed on ways to bypass the controls.”¹²

Furthermore, social media creates history by giving the world a new means of communication. In the past, while journalists had to be physically present on the ground to interview people about their experiences, Twitter and Facebook, today, have made numerous eyewitness accounts possible which have revealed “how fragile a totalitarian regime can be in the face of a widely used simple communication technology.”¹³ Besides social websites, channels like Aljazeera¹⁴ have played prominent roles in covering the sufferings of the ordinary Arab man and woman and shedding light on the oppressive means used by the dictatorships to keep their people down.

Women and Arab Spring

During the Arab Spring, we have witnessed women protest alongside men where they “were harassed, tortured, shot by snipers, and teargassed”¹⁵. We also find that female social media organizers and journalists tweeted, filmed and reported the revolutions. I argue that women have just been instrumental in bringing down dictators like Zin Din Ben Ali¹⁶ in Tunisia and Hosni Mubarak¹⁷ in Egypt. Their active participation in the revolutionary Arab Spring not only shatters the traditional stereotypes about Arab women, viewed as oppressed, passive and voiceless¹⁸, but also sheds light on their determination to chart and reshape their own destinies. Similarly, Soumaya Ghannouchi¹⁹ argues that the type of the woman that has emerged out of Tunisia and Egypt in the Arab Spring deconstructs “the perception of the Arab women as powerless enslaved, invisible and voiceless.”²⁰

Furthermore, none of the uprisings in the Arab countries can be possible without the participation of women. They were among the first to protest at the Avenue Habib Bourguiba²¹ in Tunis, Tahrir Square²² in Egypt and Pearl Roundabout²³ in Bahrain.

Tunisian women have indeed set an inspiring example to all women in the Middle East by toppling Ben Ali and taking part in building a new civil and democratic Tunisia. For example, in Tunisia, Saida Sadouni²⁴ has led the historic Kasbah demonstration that succeeded in forcing Mohamed Ghannouchi's²⁵ interim government out of office. During the Kasbah demonstration, Sadouni told protesters “I have resisted French occupation. I have resisted the dictatorships of Bourguiba and Ben Ali. I will not rest until our revolution meets its goals.”²⁶ In another case, one may say that the blogger Lina Ben Mhenni²⁷ is probably the first Tunisian woman to inform the world about the Tunisian uprising in December, 2010, and continues blogging despite being threatened, censored and terrorized.

One of the memorable scenes of the Arab Spring is that of female demonstrators donning headscarves or jeans, protesting, camping and sleeping in tents in front of government offices. Within this context, Magda Adly²⁸ states that during the Egyptian revolution we have seen women of all castes and ethnicities, wearing veils and jeans, come to rallies in thousands and leading what is happening on the ground. Concerning the participation of veiled women in the

Arab Spring, one may argue that this is yet another stereotype, one which falsely links the veil²⁹ with submissiveness, that is being dismantled. For example, we find many Arab women activists choose to wear the veil, yet they are “no less confident, vocal or charismatic than their unveiled sisters.”³⁰

If we take the example of the Egyptian revolution, we find that women assemble, organize, protest, guard tents and patrol streets for security at Tahrir square. It is the leader of the Egyptian revolution Asmaa Mahfouz³¹, a representative of her young generation, who has been inspirational in turning a one-day demonstration into a raging revolution. For instance, she has uploaded a short video on Facebook in which she challenges whoever says that women should not go to protests because they will get beaten.

In Yemen, demonstrations against the rule of President Ali Saleh have been led by a young charismatic woman, Tawakul Karman³². Karman has been campaigning since 2007 demanding political reform in Yemen. When she was arrested in January, 2011, the Yemeni authorities were forced to release her following a wave of angry protests in Sana. Speaking about her experience in jail, Karman says,

After a week of protests in the Yemeni revolution media outlets reported my detention and demonstrations erupted in most provinces of the country; they were organized by students, civil society activists and politicians. The pressure on the government was intense and I was released after 36 hours in a women’s prison, where I was kept in chains.³³

In a powerful statement of international support for the Arab Spring and the important roles played by women proclaimed by the peace Prize citation, “We cannot achieve democracy and lasting peace in the world unless women obtain the same opportunities as men to influence developments at all levels of society.”³⁴ Tawakul Karman has recently been awarded the Noble Peace Prize for her efforts to advance democracy and human rights, and equality for women in her country. We find that Karman has been honored for her nonviolent struggle for women’s rights in Yemen which represents the right moment for women to achieve basic and equal rights. As a liberal Islamist, Karman seems to represent the idea that Islam is not against peace and women Islamists can also fight for human rights, freedom and democracy³⁵ and will play a vital role in modernizing Arab societies. To be awarded the Noble Peace Prize can also be seen not

only as a message of support and endorsement for the Arab Spring which has empowered the disadvantaged women and down trodden people, but also as a victory for Arab women in their struggle to end oppression and dictatorship.

What has inspired Arab women and thrust them into the heart of protest is their yearning for change and political freedom. They have played crucial roles raising hopes that their meaningful contributions would translate into social, civil, democratic and political rights. Not only women participate in the protest movements raging in Arab countries, but also they assume leadership roles there. Arab women prove themselves through continuous action on the ground at Kasbah, Tahrir Square and Pearl Roundabout.

I argue that the new model of young women leaders like Ms. Karman, Mona Eltahawy, Saida Sadouni, Lina Ben Mhenni and Asmaa Mahfouz deconstructs the prevalent two narratives concerning the representation of Arab women. The first narrative centers upon notions of women's sexuality, family honor and reductionist interpretations of religion and conventions to justify women's subordination.³⁶ The second is the Orientalist narrative which views Arab and Muslim women as oppressed and miserable objects of pity in desperate need of Western intellectual, political and military intervention to save them from darkness and lead them to enlightenment.³⁷

Hence, we find that Arab women's participation in the Arab Spring deconstructs both narratives, where we find Arab women refusing to be degraded, isolated and silenced. Instead, we see women who are determined to liberate themselves as they liberate their societies from dictatorship. Put differently, they take care of their own future, a future which they seek for themselves and is thus an authentic one, defined only by their own needs, choices and priorities.

Arab Spring: Women's Concerns and Challenges

Historically speaking, women have been the most consistent and staunch advocates of democratic and civil society values across the Arab world. If we take the example of Tunisia, which has the most progressive personal status code in the region, we find that the Tunisian government abolished polygamy and enacted women's equality in marriage, divorce and child custody after independence in 1956.³⁸ Yet, women have tangible reasons to worry about their

future since national revolutions betrayed them in the past. If we take the case of the Algerian revolution against French colonialism, we find that women participated, fought and were killed beside men in war.³⁹ Yet, by the time the Algerian independence was won, women were sent back home by their revolutionary male fighters.

Though the Arab Spring certainly presents positive changes, there are many challenges women face. There is indeed more to be done when it comes to supporting women's rights throughout the Arab world and there are also reasons for intensifying efforts to ensure that women's rights are not compromised during political transitions. In the Arab world, the rise of Islamists⁴⁰ to rule and sexual assaults against women demonstrators have made women not only feel afraid about their safety but also concerned about their hard-earned rights obtained under previous toppled dictatorships.⁴¹ The challenges women face, in fact, pose crucial questions about what will the status of women be in post-revolutionary societies like Egypt, Tunisia, Libya and Yemen? And what roles can women play to protect their rights? In other words, will the women who supported and participated in the 2011 revolutions “be pushed aside by military, Islamist, or other leaders, or will they be allowed to take part in governing in the judiciary, and in making autonomous decisions about their own lives?”⁴²

The disturbing reports of virginity tests and the sexual assaults on women protesters in Cairo's Tahrir Square have intensified women's fears. For example, at Tahrir Square, Mona Eltahawy⁴³ has been held for hours while blindfolded, sexually groped and one of her arms broken.

Recounting her painful trauma, Eltahawy writes:

Besides beating me so monstrously, my left arm and right hand were broken; the dogs of (central security forces) subjected me to the worst sexual assault ever. Five or six surrounded me, groped and prodded my breasts, grabbed my genital area and i lost count how many hands tried to get into my trousers.⁴⁴

In another case, we find that the scene of dragging the unconscious young woman in the blue jeans,⁴⁵ with her upper-half stripped, through the streets of Egypt testifies to the brutality of the military in Egypt using the weapon of shame to subjugate women. Yet, sexuality can no longer be used against women due to rising levels of feminist consciousness in Egypt in particular and in the Arab world in general. For instance, when the military in Egypt has subjected young

women to degrading virginity tests⁴⁶, women sued them⁴⁷ and used social media like “Facebook and Twitter to expose their brutal actions, an endeavor which demonstrates women’s persistence to continue their struggle for freedom.⁴⁸ In her article, “the unknown woman shows the struggle is not over,” Ahdaf Soueif points out that one of the disgusting patriarchal techniques used against women is groping them sexually in a way to insinuate that “females who took part in street protests wanted to be groped,⁴⁹” which consequently led women to develop counter techniques like wearing multiple layers of light clothing without buttons to avoid sexual harassment while protesting.

To add more, it is deplorable and outrageous to see that women, in Egypt, have been left out of the political dialogue since Hosni Mubarak’s fall. For example, the committee assigned to rewrite the constitution in Egypt does not even have one single female legal expert. In this regard, Nawal El Saadawi argues to counter any attempt to exclude women from being part of ongoing changes in the new Egypt, it is very important for women to unite as a strong political power.⁵⁰

In the Arab world, women still continue to face public and private discrimination on a daily basis. If we take Saudi Arabia as an example, we find that Saudi women still suffer from gender segregation, unequal educational and economic opportunities and the prohibition from driving.⁵¹ Though King Abdulla's announcement that women will be granted the right to participate in the 2015 local elections, this reform can be seen as only one positive step out of many necessary steps that the Saudi government must make to ensure equal rights for Saudi women. Yet, the vast majority of Saudi women are still waiting for their Arab spring. Within this context, Christoph Wilcke argues that “women are even forcing change in calcified Saudi Arabia, where the so-called guardianship system requires them to obtain permission from a male relative to travel, work, study, or take part in public life.”⁵²

On the other hand, in Tunisia, the Islamists under Rashid Ghannouchi⁵³ try to appease the fears of women by making it clear that there is no contradiction between Islam and women’s rights and they would not seek to reverse women’s equal rights. They are also neither interested in polygamy nor in forcing women to wear the veil. They also intend to take progressive, modern and moderate Turkey as an example to follow. However, Shirin Ebadi,⁵⁴ drawing on the bitter experience of women and the Iranian Revolution⁵⁵ in 1979, warns that women should demand

their rights now during the popular uprisings sweeping the Arab world to “avoid being short-changed by post-revolutionary governments,”⁵⁶ since if women cannot gain equality now, then this cannot be a real revolution and won't lead to democracy.

In order to avoid past errors committed by feminist and political groups during the period of nationalism in 1950s and the Iranian revolution, where they put off their demands for equality until after the overthrow of regimes, the women's rights movement should move fast to secure constitutional rights. Hence, women must sustain an uprising before it is too late and redouble efforts to ensure that their rights are not sacrificed during political governmental transitions.

They should also persevere in forming political parties with clear programs, run in elections and demand their quota according to international law.

Women, in fact, must adopt a new political discourse based on emphasizing women's leadership. Ideally, male revolutionaries should not stand by or shy away but support and recognize the right of women to dignity, equal rights and freedom of expression since it will not be possible to develop Arab societies without women. It is, undoubtedly, foreseen and expected that there will be real challenges to this process of women's emancipation, as recent attacks on female demonstrators indicate. But the dynamic process of revolutionary change is irreversible and those who have started the Arab Spring will continue in rebuilding their new societies. Finally, there is no doubt that this is the right moment of transformation in the Arab world for women and men, but any revolution that fails to achieve equality for women will be incomplete.

¹ References for this articles were updated in October 2012 to include substantial new academic treatments of the Arab Spring.

² Mohamed Bouazizi was a Tunisian street vendor who set himself on fire on 17 December 2010, in protest of the confiscation of his wares and the harassment and humiliation that he reported was inflicted on him by a municipal official and her aides. His act became a catalyst for the Tunisian Revolution and the wider Arab Spring, inciting demonstrations and riots throughout Tunisia in protest of social and political issues in the country. The public's anger and violence intensified following Bouazizi's death, leading then-President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali to step down on 14 January 2011, after 23 years in power. The success of the Tunisian protests inspired protests in several other Arab countries, in addition to several non-Arab countries. The protests included several men who emulated Bouazizi's act of self-immolation, in an attempt to bring an end to their own autocratic governments.

³ For more information on the Arab Spring, see Robin B. Wright, *Rock the Casbah: Rage and Rebellion Across the Islamic World* (Cape Town: Deckle Edge, 2011); Bruce Feiler, *Generation Freedom: The Middle East Uprisings and the Remaking of the Modern World* (London: William

Morrow Paperbacks, 2011); John R. Bradley, *After the Arab Spring: How Islamists Hijacked the Middle East Revolts* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Lin Noueihed and Alex Warren, *The Battle for the Arab Spring: Revolution, Counter-Revolution and the Making of a New Era* (CT: Yale University Press, 2012); Sohrab Ahmari, Nasser Weddady, Lech Walesa and Gloria Steinem, *Arab Spring Speaks out for Freedom and Justice from North Africa to Iran* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Hamid Dabashi, *The Arab Spring: Delayed Defiance and the End of Post colonialism* (London: Zed Books, 2012); Marwan Bishara, *The Invisible Arab: The Promise and Peril of the Arab Revolutions* (New York: Nation Books, 2012); Marc Lynch, *The Arab Uprising: The Unfinished Revolutions of the New Middle East*. (Jackson, TN: Public Affairs, 2012); Jean-Pierre Filiu, *The Arab Revolution: Ten Lessons from the Democratic Uprising* (USA: Oxford University Press, 2011); James L. Gelvin, *The Arab Uprisings: What Everyone Needs to Know* (USA: Oxford University Press, 2012); James Petras, *The Arab Revolt and the Imperialist Counterattack* (Atlanta: Clarity Press, 2011); Kenneth M. Pollack, *The Arab Awakening: America and the Transformation of the Middle East* (Washington, D.C.: Saban Center at the Brookings Institution Books, 2011); Minky Worden and Christiane Amanpour, *The Unfinished Revolution: Voices from the Global Fight for Women's Rights* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2012).

⁴ For more information on this topic, see Nicola Christine Pratt, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in the Arab World* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2006); Ibrahim Elbadawi and Samir Makdisi (eds.), *Democracy in the Arab World: Explaining the Deficit* (New York: Routledge, 2010); Gerd Nonneman (ed.), *Democracy, Reform and Authoritarianism in the Arab World* (New York: Routledge, 2010); Francesco Cavatorta and Vincent Durac, *Civil Society and Democratization in the Arab World: The Dynamics of Activism* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

⁵ For more details on the rule of dictators in the Middle East, see, e.g., Roger Owen, *The Rise and Fall of Arab Presidents for Life* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012); Galal Amin, *Egypt in the Era of Hosni Mubarak, 1981-2011* (American University in Cairo Press, 2011).

⁶ For more discussions on the brutality of Arab regimes, see, James Petras, *The Arab Revolt and the Imperialist Counterattack* (n.c: Clarity Press, 2011).

⁷ For more information on the Egyptian revolution and the democracy of bread, see, e.g., Vijay Prashad, *Arab Spring, Libyan Winter* (n.c: AK Press, 2012); Wael Ghonim, *Revolution 2.0: The Power of the People Is Greater Than the People in Power: A Memoir* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012); Ashraf Khalil, *Liberation Square: Inside the Egyptian Revolution and the Rebirth of a Nation* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2012); Alaa Al Aswany, *On the State of Egypt: What Made the Revolution Inevitable* (London: Vintage, 2011); Alaa al Aswany and Jonathan Wright, *Arab Spring Dreams: The Next Generation the State of Egypt: A Novelist's Provocative Reflections* (The American University in Cairo Press, 2011); Alaa Al Aswany, *The Yacoubian Building* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2006).

⁸ Ashraf Ezzat, "Mona Eltahawy Recounts the Real Story of Egypt Revolution," "Word Press." November 26, 2011. Accessed July 11, 2012. <http://ashraf62.wordpress.com/2011/11/26/mona-elatahawy-recounts-the-history-of-egypt-revolution/>

⁹ Alaa Al Aswany, "United by an injustice and anger that won't be tamed," In *The Arab Spring: Rebellion, Revolution and a new world order*, edited by Toby Manhire (London: Guardian Books, 2012), 4919.

¹⁰ Ibid, 4919.

¹¹ For more information on the impact of social media , see, Denis G. Campbell, *Egypt Unshackled- Using social media to @#:) the System* (New York: Cambria Books,2011)

¹² Al Aswany, “United by an injustice and anger that won’t be tamed,” 4948.

¹³ Denis G. Campbell, *Egypt Unshackled- Using social media to @#:) the System* (New York: Cambria Books, 2011), 5.

¹⁴ For more information on the role of Aljazeera, see Josh Rushing and Sean Elder, *Mission Al-Jazeera: Build a Bridge, Seek the Truth, Change the World* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Mohammed El-Nawawy and Adel Iskandar, *Al-Jazeera: The Story Of The Network That Is Rattling Governments And Redefining Modern Journalism Updated With A New Prologue And Epilogue* (Jackson, T N:Basic Books,2003); Khalil Rinnawi, *Instant Nationalism: McArabism, al-Jazeera, and Transnational Media in the Arab World* (New York: University Press of America, 2006).

¹⁵ Minky Worden and Christiane Amanpour, *The Unfinished Revolution: Voices from the Global Fight for Women's Rights* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2012), 2.

¹⁶ On 14 January 2011, following a month of protests against his rule, Zin Din Ben Ali was forced to flee to Saudi Arabia along with his wife Leïla Ben Ali and their three children. The interim Tunisian government asked for Interpol to issue an international arrest warrant, charging him with money laundering and drug trafficking. He and his wife were sentenced in absentia to 35 years in prison on 20 June 2011. In June 2012, Ben Ali was sentenced to 20 years imprisonment in absentia for inciting violence and murder.

¹⁷ For more information on the rule of Hosni Mubarak, see Gala Amin, *Egypt in the Era of Hosni Mubarak, 1981-2011* (American University in Cairo Press, 2011); Roger Owen, *The Rise and Fall of Arab Presidents for Life* (Harvard University Press:Cambridge,2012)

¹⁸ For more details, see Mona Mikhail, *The images of Arab Women: Fact and Fiction* (Washington, D. C: Three Continents Press, 1979); Reina Lewis, *Rethinking Orientalism: Women, Travel, and the Ottoman Harem* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press,2003); Reina Lewis and Sara Mills, (eds.) *Feminist Postcolonial theory* (New York: Routledge,2003); Faegheh Shirazi,(ed) *Muslim Women in War and Crisis: Representation and Reality* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011).

¹⁹ Soumaya Ghannouchi grew up in London where she worked as a journalist writing for the Guardian.

²⁰ Soumaya Ghannouchi , “Female protesters are shattering stereotypes,” In *The Arab Spring: Rebellion, Revolution and a new world order*, edited by Toby Manhire. (London: Guardian Books, 2012), 6493.

²¹ Avenue Habib Bourguiba is the central thoroughfare of Tunis, and the historical political and economic heart of Tunisia. It bears the name of the first President of the Republic of Tunisia and the national leader of the Tunisian independence movement. During the protests of 2011, many demonstrations calling for the downfall of President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali and that of the national unity government were held on the avenue.

²² For more details on the significance of Tahrir Square, see Hoda Rashad, *Rising from Tahrir* (Seattle: CreateSpace, 2012).

²³ Pearl Roundabout was a roundabout located near the financial district of Manama, Bahrain. The roundabout was named after the pearl monument that previously stood on the site and was destroyed on March 18, 2011, by government forces as part of a crackdown on protesters during the ongoing Bahraini uprising.

²⁴ For more discussions, see, Jessica Sarhan, “The Women behind the revolutions and computer screens.” *Your MiddleEast* 18, October, 2011. Accessed July 9, 2012.

http://www.yourmiddleeast.com/columns/article/the-women-behind-the-revolutions-and-computer-screens_2258; Soumaya Ghannoushi, “Rebellion: Smashing stereotypes of Arab women.” *Aljazeera*. April 25, 2011. Accessed July 9, 2012.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2011/04/201142412303319807.html>.

²⁵ Mohamed Ghannouchi resigned as prime minister of the post-revolution government amid further clashes between police and protestors. The interim president, Fouad Mebazaa, named the former government minister Beji Caid-Essebsi as Ghannouchi's replacement.

²⁶ Soumya Ghanoushi, “Female protesters are shattering stereotypes,” 6493.

²⁷ Lina Ben Mhenni is a Tunisian Internet activist, blogger and university linguistics teacher. In 2011, Mhenni was reported to have been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize for her contributions and activism during the Tunisian Revolution.

²⁸ Magda Adly is the director of the El Nadim Center for the Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence to Inter Press Service.

²⁹ For the debates on the veil, see, e.g, Fatima Mernissi. *The Veil and The Male Elite* (New York: Basic books, 1992); Ali Mohammad Syed, *The Position of Women in Islam: A Progressive View* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004); Nawal El Saadawi, *The Nawal El Saadawi Reader* (London & New York: Zed Books, 1997); Leila Ahmed, *Women, Gender and Islam* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); Anwar Hekmat, *Women and the Koran: The Status of Women in Islam*. (Amherst: Prometheus, 1997); Elizabeth Fernea, *In Search of Islamic Feminism: One Woman's Global Journey* (New York: Doubleday, 1998).

³⁰ Soumaya Ghannouchi, “Female protesters are shattering stereotypes,” 6493.

³¹ Asmaa Mahfouz is an Egyptian activist and one of the founders of the April 6 Youth Movement. She has been credited by journalist Mona Eltahawy and others with helping to spark mass uprising through her video blog posted one week before the start of the 2011 Egyptian revolution. She is a prominent member of Egypt's Coalition of the Youth of the Revolution and one of the leaders of the Egyptian revolution.

³² Tawakkul Karman is the head of Women Journalists Without Chains.

³³ Tawakkul Karman, “A Better Country Awaits Us,” In *The Arab Spring: Rebellion, Revolution and a new world order*, edited by Toby Manhire (London: Guardian Books, 2012), 5803.

³⁴ Worden and Amanpour, “*The Unfinished Revolution*”, 2.

³⁵ For more information on human rights in Quran, see, e.g., Muhammad Sharif Chaudhry, *Human Rights in Islam* (Lahore: Pakistan Islamic Education Congress, 1993); Riffat Hassan, “On Human Rights and the Qur’anic Perspective,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 19:3 (1982): 51; Shaheen Sardar Ali, *Gender and Human Rights in Islam and International Law: Equal Before Allah, Unequal Before Man?* (The Hague/Boston: Kluwer Law International, 2000).

³⁶ For more information on the reductionist interpretations of religion and conventions, see Miriam Cooke, *Women Claim Islam* (New York: Routledge, 2001); Amina Wadud, *Quran and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Margot Badran, *Feminists, Islam and the Nation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); Margot Badran, *Feminism in Islam: Secular and Religious Convergences* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2009).

³⁷ For more details on the Western stereotypes concerning women in the Arab world, see Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Vintage, 1979); Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*:

Remaking of World Order (New York: Touchstone Press, 1996); Soumaya Ghannouchi, "Rebellion: Smashing stereotypes of Arab women," *Aljazeera*. April 25, 2011. <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2011/04/201142412303319807.html>; Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994).

³⁸ For more discussions on the status of women in Tunisia, see Mounira Charrad, *States and Women's Rights: The Making of Postcolonial Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco* (University of California Press, 2001); Minky Worden, *The Unfinished Revolution: Voices from the Global Fight for Women's Rights* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2012).

³⁹ For more information on the relationship of women and nationalism, see Valentine Moghadam (ed), *Gender and National Identity: Women and Politics in Muslim Societies* (London: Zed Books Ltd, 1994); Jayawadana Kumari, *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World* (London: Zed Books, 1986); Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse* (London: Zed Press, 1986); Andrew Parker, Mary Russo, Doris Sommer and Patricia Yaeger (eds.), *Nationalisms and Sexualities* (New York: Routledge, 1992); Homi Bhaba (ed), *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990); Anderson Benedict, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

⁴⁰ For more discussions on the rise of Islamists to rule in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya, see, John R. Bradley, *After the Arab Spring: How Islamists Hijacked the Middle East Revolts* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Wadah Khanfar, "Islamist parties: We should welcome the rise of political Islam," In *The Arab Spring: Rebellion, Revolution and a new world order*, edited by Toby Manhire (London: Guardian Books, 2012).

⁴¹ For more details on the history of Arab women's struggles for their rights, see Nawal El Saadawi, *The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab world*. Trans. Sherif Hetata (London: Zed Books, 1980); Suhair Majaj, Paula W. Sunderman, and Thérèse Saliba, (eds). *Intersections: Gender, Nation, and Community in Arab Women's Novels* (Syracuse University Press, 2002); Dayla Cohen-Mor, (ed). *Arab Women Writers: An Anthology of Short Stories* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005); Anastasia Valassopoulos, *Contemporary Arab Women Writers: Cultural Expression in Context* (London: Routledge, 2007).

⁴² Minky Worden, "The Unfinished Revolution", 4.

⁴³ Mona Eltahawy is an Egyptian-American journalist.

⁴⁴ Ashraf Ezzat, "Mona Eltahawy Recounts the Real Story of Egypt Revolution," *Word Press*. November 26, 2011. Accessed July 11, 2012. <http://ashraf62.wordpress.com/2011/11/26/mona-elatahawy-recounts-the-history-of-egypt-revolution/>

⁴⁵ For more discussions on sexual harassment against women by the Egyptian military, see, Ahdaf Soueif, "The unknown woman shows the struggle is not over," In *The Arab Spring: Rebellion, Revolution and a new world order*, edited by Toby Manhire (London: Guardian Books, 2012).

⁴⁶ Virginity tests are perceived by many women as rape. They are undressed by jeering soldiers, who use their mobile phones to film examinations of women's genitalia. For more discussion on virginity tests, see Habiba Mohsen, "What Made Her Go There? Samira Ibrahim and Egypt's Virginity Test Trial," *Aljazeera*." March 16, 2012. Accessed July 11, 2012. <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2012/03/2012316133129201850.html>

⁴⁷ For more information on suing the Military by women victims, see ,e.g, Robert Mackey, “One One year later, Egyptian women subjected to ‘virginity tests’ await justice,”*TheLede*,” March 9,2012. Accessed June 10, 2012.

<http://thelede.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/03/09/one-year-later-egyptian-women-subjected-to-virginity-tests-await-justice/ngroundnews.org/article.php?id=29727&lan=en&sp=0>; Deena Adel, “Against all odds: ‘Virginity test’ Victim Awaits Her Verdict,” *Global Post*. November 21, 2011. Accessed July 11, 2012.<http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/regions/middle-east/egypt/111121/against-all-odds-‘virginity-test’-victim-awaits-her-v>

⁴⁸ Ahdaf Soueif , “The unknown woman shows the struggle is not over,” In *The Arab Spring: Rebellion, Revolution and a new world order*, edited by Toby Manhire (London: Guardian Books,2012), 5081.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 5040.

⁵⁰ For more information on Nawal el Saadawi’s views, see, Anna Louie Sussman, “An Interview With Nawal El Saadawi,” “*The Nation*”, March21, 2011. Accessed, July21, 2012.

<http://www.thenation.com/article/159362/interview-nawal-el-saadawi#>

⁵¹ For more information on the rights of women in Saudia Arabia see Sören Jehoiakim Ethan,(ed) *Women's Rights in Saudi Arabia* (Berlin: Volv Press, 2012); Sami alrabba, *Veiled Atrocities: True Stories of Oppression in Saudi Arabia* (New York: Prometheus Books,2010); Rajaa Alsanea, *Girls of Riyadh* (Penguin Press HC, 2007).

⁵² Christoph wilcke , " Saudi Women's Struggle," In Minky Worden and Christiane Amanpour , *The Unfinished Revolution: Voices from the Global Fight for Women's Rights* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2012), 93.

⁵³ Rashid al-Ghannushi is a Tunisian Islamist politician who co-founded the Ennahda Movement, currently the largest party in Tunisia. He has been called the party's "intellectual leader”.

⁵⁴ Shirin Ebadi is an Iranian Nobel peace laureate. She was Iran’s first woman judge but lost that job following the Islamic revolution because the country's new leaders said women were too emotional to be judges. She became a human rights lawyer but, after suffering harassment, she left the country in 2009.

⁵⁵ For more information on women and the Iranian revolution, see Soraya Paknazar Sullivan(ed.), *Stories by Iranian Women Since the Revolution* (Austin, University of Texas Press,1991); Robin Wright, *The Last Great Revolution: Turmoil and Transformation in Iran*(London:Vintage,2001); Shirin Ebadi and Azadeh Moaveni, *Iran Awakening: A Memoir of Revolution and Hope* (New York: Random House,2006); Haleh Esfandiari, *Reconstructed Lives: Women and Iran's Islamic Revolution* (Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press,1997); Azar Nafisi, *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books* (New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2008).

⁵⁶ Shirin Ebadi, “Islamic Law and Revolution against women,” In Minky Worden and Christiane Amanpour, *The Unfinished Revolution: Voices from the Global Fight for Women's Rights* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2012), 53.