

**Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research**

**Mohamed Boudiaf University of M'sila**

**Faculty of Letter and languages**

**Department of English**

**The Weaponisation of Feminism in the Gulf  
States: the Rise of Sociopolitical Pressure  
after the Arab Spring**

**A RESEARCH PROPOSAL SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH IN  
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT OF THE MASTER DEGREE  
IN ENGLISH**

**Candidates**

**Miss. Sabrina Hadji**

**Miss. Siham Bousakra**

**Supervisor**

**Mr. Bennaa youcef**

**Academic Year: 2018/2019**

## **Declaration**

**I hereby declare that this dissertation is my own original work, which I have created myself.**

**All the literature I used is properly quoted and is listed in Bibliography. It is our own. It has not been submitted before to any other institution or university**

**I declare that I worked on my final master's dissertation on my own using only cited literary sources, other information and sources in agreement with the disciplinary regulations for the Faculty of Letters and Languages at the University Mohammed Boudiaf of M'sila and with the regulations and laws of research of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in Algeria.**

## **Acknowledgments**

In the Name of Allah, the Most Merciful and the Most Compassionate First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Allah the Almighty without His mercy, grace, help, guidance, this research could never see the light.

We would like to express our special thanks of gratitude to our supervisor **sir Youcef Benna**a for his patience and guidance throughout the course of this dissertation.

We are also thankful to all teachers of the English Department at M'sila University for their cordial support, valuable information and guidance which helped a lot to complete our university study.

We are thankful to all the examiners who spent some of their precious time to read, correct and evaluate our work which is not immune from mistakes and imperfections.

## **Dedication**

We dedicate our dissertation work to our families who have been our source of inspiration. A special feeling of gratitude to our loving parents and brothers, sisters, friends and classmates who shared us their words of advice and encouragement to finish this work.

Sabrina and Siham

## **Abstract**

For centuries, the Western world sees women in the Middle East especially, in Gulf States as victims of patriarchy system and authoritarian regimes. Therefore, they attempt to provide policies and strategies to empower women under the name of Feminism, since the region is considered as global power; it has strategic importance at regional and international level particularly, in oil industry. However, they ignore that the women in the Gulf have witnessed great changes in recent year, notably after the Arab Spring. Thus, they consider women rights as a weapon and political tool to intervene in national and political issues of the target states and to pressure the ruling regimes for change in order to reach their political and economic aims in the region. Therefore, our study aims to reveal the dark face behind women rights and the west benefits for advocating women rights in the region. This study aims to shed the light on women participation and empowerment in the Gulf States, with focus on recent issues effecting women situation and the relationship between western powers and Gulf States countries concerning women rights particularly in Saudi Arabia. Thus, the main aim of this study is to reveal western benefits from feminism in the region. Therefore, we use descriptive and historical analytical method as well as, we depend on pervious literature review to reveal historical facts about women rights in the region, by providing necessary information and analysis recent statics about women development. As a result, we conclude that the west countries advocate women's rights in the Gulf region because it benefits them as well as their intentions have different orientations.

**Key Words: Gulf States, Human Rights, Weaponisation, West, Women rights**

## **List of Abbreviations**

**BPA:** Beijing Platform for Action

**CEDAW:** Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women

**CERD:** Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

**CERD:** Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

**CESCR:** The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

**CRC:** Convention on the Rights of the Child

**EB:** European Parliament

**ESCWA:** the Economic Commission for Western Asia

**EU:** European Union

**GCC:** Gulf Cooperation Council

**HRC:** Human Rights Committee Human Rights Council

**ICCPR-OP1:** First Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

**ICCPR:** International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

**ICESCR:** International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

**OP-CEDAW:** Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

**ICPD:** International Conference on Population and Development

**NGO:** Non-Governmental Organisation

**UAE:** United Arab Emirates

**UDHR:** Universal Declaration of Human Rights

**UN:** United Nations

**UNGA:** United Nations General Assembly

**UK:** United Kingdom

## List of Contents

Declaration.....	II
Acknowledgements.....	III
Dedication.....	IV
Abstract.....	V
List of Abbreviation.....	VI

## General Introduction

1. The Statement of the Problem.....	2
2. The Significance of the Study.....	4
3. Objectives .....	5
4. Research Questions.....	5
5. Literature Review .....	6
6. Methodology.....	7
7. Structure of the Dissertation.....	8

## Chapter One: Historical Background of Human Rights in the Middle East

Introduction.....	10
1.1 History of Human rights in the Middle East.....	11
1.1.1. The Rise of sociopolitical Pressure after the Arab Spring .....	12
1.2 Minorities' Rights in the Middle East.....	14
1.2.1 Religious and Ethnic Minorities in the Middle East.....	15
1.3. Workers' Rights in the Middle.....	19
1.3.1. Domestic Workers Rights.....	20
1.3.2. Migrant Rights.....	21
1.4. Violations of Freedom of Expression in the Middle East.....	23
1.4.1. Press Freedom in the Middle East before and After Arab Spring.....	26
1.5. Women's Rights in the Middle East.....	28

Conclusion.....	29
<b>Chapter Two: the Situation of Women in the Gulf States and the effect of the Arab Spring</b>	
Introduction.....	32
<b>2.1. Women Rights in the Middle East before the Arab Spring.....</b>	<b>33</b>
2.1.1 In Saudi Arabia.....	34
2.1.1.1. Political.....	35
2.1.1.2 Economic.....	35
2.1.1.3. Education.....	37
2.1.2. In United Arabic Emirates.....	38
2.1.2.1. Political.....	39
2.1.2.2. Economic.....	40
2.1.2.3. Education.....	41
2.1.3. Kuwaiti women.....	42
2.1.3.1. Political.....	43
2.1.3.2. Economic.....	44
2.1.3.3 Education.....	45
2.2. Recent Development Regarding Women’s Rights and the Effect of Arab Spring.....	47
2.2.1. Women’s Legal Status and the Sociopolitical Position after the Arab Spring.....	48
2.2.2. The Outcomes of the Arab Spring on Women in the GCC countries.....	49
2.2.3. Women Empowerment in the GCC countries.....	50
2.2.4. Women Economic Decision-Making Empowerment.....	52

2.2.5. Women Political Decision-Making Empowerment.....	54
2.2.6. The Deposition of Male Guardianship in Saudi Arabia.....	57
2.3. Current Issues Affecting Women’s Position in the Gulf Region.....	60
2.4. Challenges face women in Gulf States.....	62
Conclusion.....	64

### **Chapter Three: the Weaponisation of Women Rights in the Gulf States**

Introduction.....	67
3.1. The Reality of Feminism in Gulf States.....	69
3.2. Double-edged Politics on Women’s Rights in the Gulf States.....	70
3.4. Weaponisation of Feminism in Gulf States.....	72
3.5. Westernisation of Women in the Gulf States.....	73
3.5.1. Europe and Women Rights.....	74
3.5.2. USA and Women Rights.....	78
3.5.2.1. Women’s Rights and Democracy.....	81
3.5.3. Canada and Women Rights.....	82
3.6. Women Rights as Leveraging on the Gulf Countries.....	86
3.7. Does Western Pressure for Gender Equality help.....	87
<b>General Conclusion.....</b>	<b>92</b>
<b>Abstract in Arabic.....</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>Glossary of Terms.....</b>	<b>96</b>
<b>Works-Cited.....</b>	



## General Introduction

Today Glendon frets that :“basic human rights are misunderstood by many, manipulated by many and ignored by the world's worst human rights violators”. (qtd. In carden). Human rights, and more specifically women's rights and international female empowerment, have started to become a more integral aspect of international politics and foreign policy, particularly through western nations pushing for gender equality in developing areas. Recently, gender equality and the promotion of women's rights is being recognized as having many political and economic benefits, which continues to empower many nations to push for such a development. Though human rights are starting to become more prominent in foreign policy, many see that not enough is being done to promote such values and the promotion that has been executed from a very euro-centric perspective has little consideration for the receiving states ( Miyahara).

For a decade’s human rights in the Middle East especially in the Gulf States was a subject of security, debates. The 25 years since the end of the Gulf War (1990–91), have been marked by increasing strife and international involvement, end with the uprisings of 2011. United States’ role in Iraq up to 2011, along with its alliances with various countries of the region, partly explains the 2011 backlash and political and social shifts in Gulf societies. Socio-cultural and religious differences have intensified and manifest themselves in sectarian and ethnic divides such as Shia vs. Sunni.

After a long trip of making the Gulf states better by making new rules, and changing ancient thoughts and ideas. The concept of “women rights” remains controversial and analytically challenging in post 2011 in the Arab world particularly in the Gulf States. Some point of views and reports from the west and the international organization think that Women

in the Gulf States have continued to be victims of marginalization, and they have been portrayed as oppressed, weak, and submissive. The issue of women rights sometimes considered as a western imperialism that is not respecting traditional values of cultures and religions. Anti-westerns, individuals that have negative views towards the United States or western powers reject women's rights or secular interpretation of women's status, which they view as representing western enlightenment values.

This dissertation examines the economic, political and socio-cultural changes which have affected the situation of women in the Gulf region over the last decades. Through an overall research and analysis, it notably sheds light on recent developments concerning women's emancipation in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates, with focus on women's political and economic empowerment, social change and education.

Our dissertation will reveal current conditions affecting women and gender in the region. Furthermore this study focuses on the role of external and internal actor concerning women rights in the region and the Mm true intention behind the policies that advocate women rights. Therefore, this research provides a critical review of women's development in the Gulf States, and draws attention to the tensions that exist between internal and external actors in the region.

## **Statement of the Problem**

The weaponization of human rights has transformed the individual and collective entitlement to assistance, protection, respect and solidarity-based on our common human dignity and equality-into a hostile arsenal to target competitors and political adversaries (De Zayas 1). The fundamental human rights are the rights of women over the world. Women's

rights have been at the heart of a series of international conferences that have produced significant political commitments to women's rights and equality.

The Post-Arab Spring has become an age of uncertainty for women's rights. The Uprising opened a window of new opportunities for women in public life in the Gulf region; it also increased the risks of reactions against women's rights, it is a time of empowering of women in the region.

This study identifies different features of Middle Eastern countries where human rights norms and experience the Historical, ideological, political, socio-political aspects of the human rights in Middle Eastern context. Islam's main characteristics differentiate it from other religions. It is difficult to perceive a better human rights situation without taking into account the real forces that govern the Middle East and shape the context of human rights in the region, the Arabic Western relations in particular. This study demonstrates that human rights violations in the Middle East are from both internal and external sources. The internal sources are highlighted, in one way or another, the nature of external factors, Western or attached to Western treatment of the Middle East. The West could be seen as a major contributor in what human rights standards experience in the region.

Women are potent symbols of identity. They signify a vision of society that identifies a nation. The Middle East provides a perfect example of this. It has one of the highest rates of population growth in the world, yet maintains one of the lowest literacy rates and labor force participation among women. This has a direct impact on their ability to be seen as modern states. Furthermore the Middle East has come under attack for having one of the poorest records of human rights, particularly in reference to women. Contrary to this implication Middle Eastern women have taken extremely active roles in

the gender debate and the socio-political struggles within their societies. The results of this participation have yielded a number of different interpretations of what it means to be a feminist and if this title is even something that Arabic women want. It has also created a very complex relationship between the west and Arab feminism which has deep implications in contemporary gender politics.

## **Significance of the Study**

This study focuses mostly on the Gulf States in view of its importance on the regional and international level and their involvement in oil extraction, which has generated major wealth nationally and which have important economic and political influence at a global level as well as new security concerns, other common cultural and religious features such as Islam in its various forms, tribal, conservative and tradition-bound culture and society in addition to, two current issues are significant in the Gulf States. The first is the turbulent recent history of international, regional, and civil wars. The second is the absence of democratic practices, and authoritarian regimes governed by elites. These two factors have affected the development of the areas as well as women's lives and freedoms.

Oil revenue is another force that regulates human rights situation in the Middle East. Oil exporting regimes have enough accessible resources to buy and advance ruler's rights at the expense of subject's rights. The history of Islamic-Western relations offers loads of relevant points about the human rights violations in the region; Western colonial, interventionist, and orientalist views of the Middle East, contributed heavily to leaving limited chance for the region to be impressed by Modern Western human rights values.

When popular uprisings began to spread through the Middle East, Women played a prominent role in the Arab uprisings, this show evidence of a declining gender gap in unexpected forms of political participation. Following the calls for democratization in the Arab uprisings, it is more important than ever to support the inclusion of women in Middle Eastern society via international pressure.

## **Objectives**

This dissertation aims to obtain an insight into the efficacy of states' international human rights policies with focus on women rights, involving the obvious and obscure goals of international human rights initiatives.

This study highlights the most significant issues related to human rights in the Middle East.

This study aims to increase awareness of major issues concerning the Gulf women; it attempts to develop a thorough understanding of the situation of women rights before and after Arab Spring.

It examines the economic, political and socio-cultural changes which have affected the situation of women after the Arab spring, as well as, we shed the light on the key achievements, remaining obstacles, and threats to gender equality in the Gulf region.

This study aims to clarify the reasons behind the west intervention in women issues and their intentions through altering the human rights and women rights practices of targeted states. Therefore, this study seeks to reveal the malicious aspects behind proclaiming women rights in the Gulf States.

## **Research Questions**

In order to accomplish the aforementioned objectives, the dissertation will try to answer the following questions:

To what extent human rights have been used as a weapon and to what extent they have been persuaded as legitimate goals? In order to answer this question, this study will attempt to answer to the following sub-questions:

Does feminism really serve women in the Gulf States? Or is it in fact working against them? Was feminism efficient to change the women's life in the Gulf States?

What are the genuine intents that led the international organizations of human rights and western countries to advocate the women's rights in the region?

## **Literature Review**

We had many studies on human rights and international law. However, few authors had focused on human rights and foreign policy, and fewer still had tackled the issue of the weaponisation of human rights and the women rights in the Middle East. Therefore, this dissertation deals with the weaponisation of women rights in Gulf States and seeks to pursue what the Arab revolutions articulate and illustrate about Arab understandings of women rights.

This study has been conducted to deal with a significant gap in the relevant literature where human rights situation in the Middle East is at the center. The literature on the subject, academic and journalistic, is quite sizable in the Western world. And most of them blame the Middle East, in one way or another, for its terrible treatment of human rights norms. They often consider it an Arabic, Islamic or Middle Eastern issue.

In the beginning researcher of Islamic affairs, and a member of the human rights association, Sohaila Zein Alabedin, says that Islam does not forbid women their rights. Most of the Gulf States have already signed the international convention of non-discrimination against women. In Professor Michael Ross's study titled "*oil, Islam and women* ", he argued that there is an inverses relationship between oil and women's social and political opportunities. He argued that Middle East dare's record in women's rights and equality was not due to the legacy of Islamic culture, but rather attributable to oil.

Expert scholars such as Ruth Santini at the Brookings Institution and Isobel Coleman at the Council on Foreign Relations have expressed doubts about the situation of women's rights in post-Arab spring countries. They believe that cultural and religious factors had much to do with the marginalization of women once demonstrations began to wane and the political transitions began.

Francois Poulain de la Barre's brochure entitled "*The Woman as good as the man; or the equality of both sexes*" in 1673 employed the Cartesian argument that reason is universal. Poland did not consider that the absence of women from public offices, arts or sciences showed that they were incapable in these fields. Instead, he considered that such assumptions were "prejudice" and noted that "[w]e are filled with prejudices, and we must renounce them completely if we are to attain clear and definite knowledge.

This study aims to complement available literature by building on their findings. The literature review showed that most existing research works on gender equality had a too broad geographical scope. Moreover, while various academic publications do offer detailed analysis of the situation of women in the Arab region, they are seldom concerned with policy issues, and the effects of foreign policy on feminism in the Arab world particularly in Gulf States.

## **Research Design and Methodology**

Our dissertation is based on previous literature review and descriptive methodology in order to reveal historical facts and examine the recent issues that affected the status of Arab women, before and after the Arab Spring, in addition to, historical and analytical methods.morever

This study places its analysis of women's rights and gender equality within the overall socioeconomic and political environment that has defined the Arab region during the last decades, with focus on Gulf region. Throughout the study, the cultural and historical heterogeneity of the region has been taken into account.

## **Structure of the Dissertation**

The study will be divided into three main chapters. The first Chapter provides a brief historical background of human rights movement in the Middle East; it deals with the violation of human rights within the region. The second chapter tackles the recent political and economic transitions in the Gulf region which have been affecting various groups of women in different ways, it involves the socio-political, cultural and economic analysis of women's situation in the Gulf region, and a discussion of the effects of the Arab Spring on women's position and movements in the Gulf region is provided. In addition to, a comprehensive overview of the most important women's rights issues with a particular focus on challenges and concerns of women in the region, in addition to, an overview of current issues affecting women's position in the Gulf region. In the third chapter, we focus on the impact of western and human rights organizations on women in the Gulf States, and highlight the dark face behind their proclamation of women rights.

# **Chapter One:**

## **Historical Background**

## **Introduction**

The Middle East is considered as a place of paradoxes: theoretical and philosophical foundations for promoting human rights that emerge as a result of the cultural fragility, administrative inefficiency and deficiency of the system, these complexities are intensified by the widespread violation of human rights by the ruling elites. Therefore, human rights situation in the Middle East is a main interest in recent political issues and most scholars and journalistic in the Arab and the western world, blames the Middle East countries in different ways for its hard treatment of human rights norms.

The issue of human rights in the Middle East has grown into a main topic of concern in the Western media. News and commentaries report the dramatic cases of human rights violation in Middle Eastern countries, reports portray the whole region as a different zone, a 'black' one (Borhani 128).

In this chapter, we tackle the historical developments of human rights in the Middle East, and we examine the internal and external factors contributing to change in the area. As well as , this study is conducted to identify the major features of a Middle Eastern context where human rights norms experience the region's realities, we are going to deal with four particular items, minorities rights, workers and migrants rights, violation of freedom of expression and women rights. In addition to the internal and external sources, that influence human rights issues in the Middle East.

### **1.1 The History of Human Rights in the Middle East**

Human rights are still a dilemma that every region in the world faces; many countries have human rights violations and every day innocent people's human rights are violated

throughout the world. Within the Middle East many countries have human rights violations. Therefore, the human rights are considered a crucial part of the political, diplomatic and social fabric of the region.

When the international organizations began to enshrine human rights values into law, representatives from the Middle East were at the centre of the debate, in the following two decades, Middle Eastern government contributed to diplomatic efforts to form treaties and norms against human rights violations (Duryea 1). Middle Eastern diplomats played important roles in the development of human rights in the world. Charles Malik, a Lebanese diplomat was one of the architects of the universal declaration of human rights, the foundational documents of human rights law. Malik Was considered the intellectual force behind the document (Glendon 44).

Recently, the focus of human rights shifted to nongovernmental organisation that used human rights to pressure their own governments for change since most states address human rights values in response to domestic and international pressure. Activities created organisations promoting the rights of minorities, protests, women and the poor (Duryea 1). However, human rights violations continue in the Middle East, the Arab authoritarian regimes and the lack of respect to the human dignity of their citizens paved the way to the awakening of enormous movements calling for independence, equality for women and protection for workers that have deep root within a region.

During the last decades the Middle East has experienced various periods of upheaval and unsettlement. Currently, the world is talking about Deepening human rights concerns in Palestine, Syria, Egypt and Yemen. Most of them related to the protest, discrimination, diversity, and human rights. In other words protection of human rights and freedom seems to

be crisis in the region, as most political institutions are weak in the Middle Eastern countries. Therefore, people wanted more freedom and their basic human rights such as: employment, dignity, and security. Virtually, in most countries protests were calling for removal of the whole system. The causes vary from country to country, but mostly derived from domestic issues such as: economic decline, lack of democracy, spread of corruption unemployment, and so on.

We cannot understand the complex reality of human rights in the middle east, without take it from different levels of analysis; domestic, and sub regional such as Gulf, North Africa and Mashrek; regional MENA; International as United Nations, EU, US and China; transnational as global civil society. Therefore, the violation or protection of human rights in the region is influenced by the complex interaction of forces that operate at these different levels. Any strategy to promote human rights in any state on region should take this complex reality into account (Ibrahim 5).

### **1.1.1. The Rise of Socio-Political Pressure after the Arab Uprising**

Since the last decade, the socio-political history of the Middle East region has dramatically increased under the pressure of conflicting forces at regional and international levels particularly after the Arab uprising that can be considered a sort of political and social turbulence.

The Middle East is currently witnessing a period of tremendous transformations since the 2011 Arab uprising. The outstanding movements of protest and change that took place in the region had a deep impact on the Middle Eastern countries on both regional and international level. The Arab uprising was a turning point in local, regional and global

development in the region that led to geopolitical and ideological rivalries for national interests. The rivalry between regional actors and international actors has increased to fill the geopolitical and ideological gaps.

For decades, human rights in the Middle East were supported by the international politics of human rights, western countries and nongovernmental organisations that proclaim minorities and women rights and condemn the human rights violations in the region. This led the rise of protest against the subjugation by the foreign policies of international actors. Therefore, there was distinction between the human rights through the protest and the politics behind its applications in the Middle East, the wave of revolution and popular uprising across the region at the dawn of 2011 highlights the impact of the region politics and security on the human rights. For instance, the Green Movement's de facto leader Mir Hossein Mousavi stated:

Don't you claim that expressions such as human rights, women's rights, minority rights and the like are excuses world powers hypocritically co-opt to beautify themselves? Why are they who are supposedly the original and primary proprietors of these values then far from [realizing] them? (Mokhtari 196).

Politically, great powers as the United States and the European power have never seriously pressured the ruling regimes for democratization and human rights protection and they often overlook democracy and human rights concerns in the region. In fact, they focus on the regional stability in the Middle East through supporting regime security. However the policies of "traditional stability promotion" that pursued by the authoritarian regimes and great powers are actually one of main roots of the current instability in the region, since domestic and international cannot be sustained without justice. Many Arab regimes failed

because they ignore the problem of inequality, poverty and justice. These factors led to the end many Arab regimes such as, Mubarak and Ben Ali regimes (Brahim 41).

The failure of these regimes, led to the improvement of human rights protection in the region and it provides a political and social spaces for human rights and democracy to emerge. Furthermore, it led to the fear of the other dictators in the region from facing the same fate as the other. Additionally, they became more vulnerable and more willing to implement political and economic reforms.

## **1.2. Minorities' Rights in Middle East**

Around the world the question of minorities' rights is an important and sensitive issue. The Middle East like many other region of the world is represented as a place of great complexity and contradictions, it includes numerous of ethnic, national, religious, and linguistic societies and groups. Much of the troubles facing this region revolve around the treatment or mistreatment of its minority population.

Minorities' rights in the Middle East have influenced by religious, political and historical forces that have constructed the current settings of the Middle East, notably the situation of Palestine that has influenced the politics of the whole region, the events of September 11 attacks and clash of civilization by Samuel P. Huntington. Leila Nicolas states that:

Nearly a century after they rose on the ashes of the Ottoman Empire, Arab Levant states have failed to unite their communities and form nations with common goals and aspiration. Though all their history, those societies have been torn by ceaseless internal and external trouble, political and economic discrimination (5).

Minorities rights in the Middle East is one from the most important problem that faces most Arab states notably since the Arab uprising, that led to civil war, the rise of extremists and terrorism in the region. Minorities continue to face serious threats, discrimination, and racism; they are often excluded from the political, economical, social life and they have been subjected to injustice and force displacements for more than five centuries ago (Nicolas 5). The minority problem can be used in speaking of situations such as, apartheid or authoritarian regimes as well as to describe conditions of discrimination, isolation and exclusion in politics and society involving gender and generational features.

### **1.2.1. Religious and Ethnic Minorities in the Middle East**

Ethnic and religious diversity and the lack of government protection of minorities rights, still a challenge in all part of the world. While there are numbers of human rights laws at the international and regional level addressing the rights of ethnic and religious minorities, there was a lack of political application to human rights minority and many states refuse to recognize particular group within their territories as an ethnic or religious minority.

The Middle East region is considered the most religious, ethnic and culturally diverse region, this give rise to many conflicts through the region between different religious groups and ethnic minorities. Ikeda writes: “religion can be the base for a philosophy of coexistence that allows humanity to face and overcome the evils threatening its own existence”. In the Middle East, co-existence has been impossible in the region, since the religion is very often manipulated for political purposes. Therefore, politics rather than religion determine the level of human rights in each country of the region (Maria Corrao 216).

It is difficult to give a unique definition for a minority in the Middle East region. Though Islam is the dominant religion, most Arab societies divided into Muslim and non Muslim. Non Muslims include “Dhimmi” category and non believers. “Dhimmi” categories include people of the book such as Jews, Christians and Zoroastrians. They are offered certain conditional protection under Islam rule, while the other religious minorities including, these non believers are not recognized by Islam, in addition to heterodox Islamic sects such as “Shias”, “Alawis” and “Druze”. Thus, the Middle East is a home to numerous groups that are distinct from the majority because of their religious beliefs, ethnic roots, and cultural identities (P R245).

The dominant Groups in most Middle East countries are ethnically and culturally Arab and Muslim. However, not all of them are Arabs or Muslims, There are non Arab groups live in the region, and we can divide them into Non Arabs Sunni Muslim groups such as Kurds, Circassians and Turkmens; non Arab and non Muslim groups such as Jews, Armenians, Assyrians, Christian tribes and animists in southern Sudan. In addition to various Christian groups including “Copts”, Greek orthodox, Greek catholic, Latin and protestants; in addition to majoritarian minorities includes “Shiism” in Iraq, Bahrainis in Syria and Palestinians in Jordan, these groups are the majorities demographically even though they are marginalized politically and socially (P R 246).

Most ethnic and religious minorities in the Middle East face severe and immediate problems. They suffer from discrimination and the denial of their existence. Though it is known that under Islam all people are treated equal and Islam secured complete equality for the non Muslims, it is known to find claims such as “all humans have the right to live in the Islamic state and with the Muslims they enjoy equality justice and liberties that shape the

reality of human brotherhood”. In 1949, Sayyed Qutb states that: “Islam grants non-Muslims complete political and religious freedom and protection to practice their religious freedom and protection to practice their religious duties”(qtd. in P R 248). Furthermore, Islamic scholars tend to focus on the application of Prophet Mohammed and Quran teachings towards minorities, but rarely address the practices of Islamic rules toward them.

Other narratives present a different picture. On the other hand, we have seen various problems can be taken into account when studying the minorities in the Middle East and their conditions vary from country to country. For instance: in Egypt, the “Copts” are culturally assimilated but they face difficulties in improving their career in institutional positions as well they cannot build or adjust churches. In Lebanon the constitution gives equal rights to Shiites, Druze and Christians and their participation in the parliament depends on their share not equality. Recently, the “Shiites” are asking to change the constitution because once they were the minorities and now that they are the majority claim a more equal share of deputy in the parliament (Maria Corrao 214).

Some ethnic minorities claim for their right to rule independently their land for instance, the Kurds in Syria where they do not enjoy the status of citizen. “Alawis” in Syria, the Armenians and the Caldeans enjoy certain freedom but not as the “Sunni” Muslim, even if they are numerically the majority (Maria Corrao 215).

Arab uprising and the rise of extremism and terrorism reopened the file of the minorities in Arab world again. In this context members of smaller minorities have been the target for ideological and geopolitical reasons as fundamentalist groups aiming to bring an end to religious diversity in the region: like Baghdad, Kirk and Ninew etc in Iraq; Latakia, Homs and Deirzour in Syria, Rebel groups attack civilian target to increase sectarian hatred,

mobilize jihadists and undermine the governments' abilities to maintain basic security in both Syria and Iraq (Nicolas 11).

The establishment of ISIS military group represented a turning point in Arab majority-minority struggle. This group identified by the UN as a terrorist organization, gained global prominence in 2014 and has claimed responsibility for numerous beheadings, executions, and violent attacks in Iraq and Syria. The Syrian refugee crisis that resulted from the waves of violence carried out by ISIS between 2014 and 2016 brought to light for Westerners some of the complex histories and relations among majority and minority communities within the Middle East.

When the revolution started in Syria Christians and "Alawites" feared a similar situation of Christian in Iraq where hundreds of thousands have either left or fled to the northern part of the country due to violence of Islamic extremism, as the war continued its year in Syria, minorities paid a heavy price in respect to their rights particularly their rights to life and their freedom of religion. Entire minority communities, including- Armenian, Christian, Chaldo, Assyrians, Sabaeen, Mandaeans, Shabak, Turkmen and Yazidis- have been displaced from area where they have been living for thousands of years; women have been the targets of horrific form of sexual and gender based violence, including kidnapping, rape, and trafficking. Hundred of Christian families, Yazidis and other minorities joined the exodus of civilian leaving Mosul. Approximately, 500,00 people fled in the first week following the entry of ISIS into the city and the remaining Christian families received an ultimatum to either convert to Islam or pay "Jizya" (Nicolas 10).

In Syria and Iraq, "Alawites", Kurds, "Shia" and "Sunnis", have developed their own armed groups and recalled support from foreign troops, however marginalized minorities have

found themselves with little effective protection in that deteriorating security environment. Fortunately, Lebanon still seen as haven for minorities in the middle east and constructed the Lebanese diverse religious population, today it is still seen as the safest place for religious freedom and protection of minorities.

Minorities have often been controversial and politically loaded. The treatment of minorities' group can be considered as a useful foreign policy instrument. Currently, discrimination and persecution of minorities lead to chaos and call for more justice, Western power used this to declare their protection of minorities. In the world, most great powers and foreign policy maker have used the crisis of Tibetans in china, Muslim in India, or Christians in Indonesia to promote their narrow national agenda. Middle East is one of the countries that use minority rights for political purposes. On the other hand, minority rights in the Middle East are mostly the essential target by the external opponents (P R 244).

### **1.3. Workers' Rights in the Middle East**

Workers rights in countries across the Middle East are the main focus in the media both within the region and worldwide and working people with all the variations in their local experience constitute a major force in the modern history of Middle East. The role of working people as producers, consumers, and citizens has increased as a modern form of production, political association and culture. Though, most workers in the Middle East do not belong to any social class, they have mainly prosperous masters who employed other workers skilled journeymen, wage labourers and those with no lived place for work. According to the International trade Union Confederation, democracy is under attack in countries that failed to guarantee people's rights to organize, speak out and take action.

The Middle East remains the world worst region when it comes to fundamental rights at work; millions of migrant workers in Saudi Arabia are trapped in modern slavery under the “kafala” system (International Trade Union Confederation 5). Currently, organized public sector workers in the Middle East suffer from the result of economic adjustment; therefore, trade unions are concerned often with struggle against, price raises, reduced wage, allowances, and government interference in union affairs (Bayat 8).

Organized labour in the Middle East constitutes only a small portion of the total work force, though its social and political impact, since the vast majority of workers are self employed, and the majority of wage earners work in small workshop in which paternalistic labour relations prevail on the whole. The most workforces in the region are active in the informal sector cities like: (Egypt, 43 percent; Yemen, 70 percent). Although tension between bosses and employees is not uncommon in these paternalistic establishments, labourers are more likely to remain loyal to their bosses than to form alliances with workers against them (Bayat 9).

### **1.3.1 Domestic Workers Rights**

Today the Middle East depends mainly on domestic workers. However, they are slowly adopting legal reforms to protect their fundamental rights. According to The international domestic workers network, the international trade union confederation and human rights watch, domestic workers in the Middle East are suffering from different form of abuses, such as: unpaid wages, restrictions on leaving the households where they work and excessive work hours with no weekend in addition to psychological, physical, or sexual abuses. Nisha Varia, senior women’s rights researcher at human rights watch, claims that:

Even though the Middle East and North Africa are home to some worst abuses against domestic workers, the pace of legal reforms in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait...and Lebanon has dragged on for years with little to show (Human Rights Watch).

On October 2011 a group of labour leaders from more than 40 countries release a report in order to create a new international domestic workers federation to help domestic workers around the world to advocate their rights. More than 25 countries have improved legal protections for domestic workers but in the Middle East most countries still exclude domestic workers from their labour laws (Human Rights Watch).

Domestic workers organizations in the middle east have many challenges, both practical in terms of limited time and mobility or legal, where some countries prevent domestic workers from forming their own unions or joining other unions, especially when they are also migrants, such as the Gulf Cooperation Council countries that deny domestic workers the right to form unions to fight for their rights. Myrtle Witbooi, chair of the international domestic workers network said: “even though domestic workers provide critical services that families depending on-cooking, cleaning, and child care-we have faced discrimination and marginalization for generations” (Human Rights watch).

### **1.3.2 Migrant Rights**

For years, The Middle East region was a place for highly vulnerable groups to trafficking and exploitation. Particularly, Migrant workers who are most at risk. While the region faces many pressing challenges, for instance, the rise of Islamic extremism, sectarian conflict and severe hardship, all of these conditions coupled with already exceedingly unstable working conditions for millions of migrant workers (McCormack et al. 5).

Middle East offers immense opportunity with serious risk for the millions of women and men from South Asia, South East Asia, and Sub Saharan Africa who travel to the region for employment in the construction, the retail trade, manufacturing, agriculture sectors and in private home as house keeper, gardeners, drivers and nannies. Generally, these roles considered unappealing by the local population (McCormack et al.2). The Middle East region is experiencing unrest and widespread violent conflict, millions of people across the region require urgent humanitarian assistance; they are struggling with displacement and unable to access employment opportunities for their economic survival. Furthermore, state actors and international organisations are currently trying with profound emergency to find response to the situation.

Although their working conditions vary enormously, these workers are particularly vulnerable to discrimination, exploitation and abuses of all kinds, including harassment violence by employers and compulsion by employment agencies, forced labour and low wages. Almost, all form of modern slavery are evident in the middle east region, cases of forced labour, debt bondage, commercial sexual exploitation and the worst forms of child labour are common in many countries in Asia and the Middle East (International Labour Office 2).

Jobs for female migrants are concentrated in less regulated sector, making them more vulnerable to exploitation and unequal treatment than migrant men as agriculture, sex industry and domestic work. domestic workers are comprise mainly of female migrants, in the Gulf States countries, women migrants represent about 20 to 40 percent of the migrant workforce and come mostly from south and south East Asian countries. In 2000 for example 35000 Sir

Lankans and 7000 Filipinas were employed as domestic workers in Jordan (International Labour Organisation 2).

The kafala system that ties a migrant worker's immigration and employment status to one specific sponsor is resulted in numbers of problems, since it causes an imbalance between the rights and abilities of workers and employers within an employment relationship. Although immigration sponsorship systems are common in many parts of the world, the type of sponsorship elements that are common in the Middle East create a number of risks of human rights abuses and labour exploitation (International Labour Organization 1).

Recently "kafala" system heightens opportunities for employers to violate the essential human rights of the migrant workers under their sponsorship. Through "kafala", migrant workers are placed in a position of vulnerability and have very little leverage to negotiate with employers. Common grievances expressed by migrant workers include restrictions on free movement, confiscation of passports, delayed or non-payment of salaries, long working hours, untreated medical needs, and all conditions that can give rise to situations of forced labour and human trafficking (International Labour Organization 3).

The International Labour Organization's independent and Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations saw that "kafala" system restricts the freedom and options of migrant workers. The CEACR noted that:

the so-called visa 'sponsorship system' (or 'kafala' system) in certain countries in the Middle East may be conducive to the exaction of forced labour and urged governments to adopt legislative provisions specially tailored to take the necessary

measures in law and practice, to ensure that migrant domestic workers are fully protected from abusive practices (International Labour Organization 3).

#### **1.4. Violations of Freedom of Expression in the Middle East**

Journalism is considered as an important force in shaping public opinion, attracting, and involving people in numerous socio-political affairs. Media freedom and access to information contribute in empowering people, and helps people gain control over their own lives. This can only be achieved through access to accurate, unbiased information and representing a plurality of opinions. Currently, the freedom of speech is indispensable for the continual success of the international community and citizens are increasingly influenced by social media, but the government has responded with a host of violent practices and new laws that silence individuals particularly in the Arab world.

Freedom of speech legislation has been less progress in Arab states as compared to others parts of the world, while some countries have made notable progress in creating the legal and political environment for free speech during the last decade. Though, the Constitutions of most countries in the Middle East guarantee freedom of expression, many Middle Eastern countries either lack the necessary implementing legislation or have adopted conflicting criminal laws and enforcement policies that avoid these fundamental rights. For instance, they use the term “defamation” to refer to legal terminologies across the region, such as libel, slander, and insult laws. All of these laws have been used, in various ways to suffocate the press, and restrain criticism of government. Consequently, journalists are criticizing government officials, and decisions under the veil (Henderson 1).

The past years were scare for freedom of expression in the Middle East as several activists, journalists, and every day citizens faced interrogations and censorship by the judiciary and security forces. Many of these cases are originated in dated laws and have polarized significant public attention particularly, on social media. Journalists are the target of their governments. They face prison and detention for violating cyber crime laws, in addition to new repressive tools that criminalize all speech criticizing the government.

Severely, censorship system can be mortal as what happened to Jamal Khashoggi, the Saudi operative last year in the Istanbul consulate. Heba Morayef, Amnesty International's Middle East Director said:

2018 Has been a particularly brutal year for peaceful human rights activities, journalists, and dissent in the Gulf States. The abhorrent killing of Gamal Khashoggi shone a global spotlight on Saudi Arabia's human rights record (Amnesty International).

In May, the Saudi authorities launched a campaign of arrests targeting many human rights defenders and activists including prominent women's rights activists among those arrested were Loujain Al Hathloul, Iman Al-nafjan and Aziza Al-Youcef, who led a campaigned against the ban on women driving and the male guardianship system, all remain in trial detention (Amnesty International).

Government critics, academics and members of the Shi'a minority were also targeted. In Yemen ten journalists were arrested by Houthi separatists in 2015 and they continue to resist detention and torture. In Bahrain, Kuwait and Oman, group of dissidents remain in the prisons. These include the opposition leaders as Sheikh Ali Salman, Hasan Mushaima and

Abdulwahab Husain; human rights defenders as Nabeel Rajab and Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja. Since mid-2016 the Bahraini authorities have declared systematic operations to eliminate organized political opposition in the country. In Oman human rights activities such as Saeed Jaddad and Mohammed Al-Fazari have been driven into exile after years of persecution by the government. Authorities in Kuwait and Qatar also suppress freedom of expression for the time being. Other states have used different violent means to silence the media (Amnesty International).

The historical evolution of Arab media has largely dominated by information on political and foreign affairs, which might be ascribe to the region's status as a hotspot of international conflict and the political pressure by international forces. Media in the Middle East does not come from the local governments in the region only, but even from foreign governments which have political ambitions and work to justify their policies in this rich part of the world and without support from powerful allies such as the united states, democratic efforts in the Arab world will be crushed by government with the knowledge that their western allies need them badly for different reasons, the allies of western countries such as Jordan, Egypt, and Palestine are using laws designed to protect the innocent to shut down proper criticism and civil expression. Therefore, values of freedom of expression and human rights are reflected in the west relation with the Middle East both privately and publicly (Al Zowaimil 4).

Journalists, who believe in the crucial role of journalism in effecting changes in all levels of society, politics, and economy, have made several attempts to reform the press situation in the Middle East, but these attempts were met with repression, and journalists were imprisoned. At most, governments use standard reasons to justify their reaction. According to

the 2018 freedom house report, permanent press repression in a region where only one country, Tunisia ranked as free; Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, and Morocco were classified as partially free while the rest of the Arab countries remained not free (Douai 130).

#### **1.4.1. Press Freedom in the Middle East before and After Arab Spring**

Journalism in the Middle East has long suffered from the effect of dictatorial and corrupt political regimes, which see control of the media as being necessary to their continued ability to enlarge their power over their nations. This definitely led to negative impacts on the freedom of the press in the region which has made Middle East one of the few regions has the minimum press freedom.

Journalists in the Middle East face trial and imprisonment and governments did not stop the enactment of repressive laws that limit freedom of the press. According to a 2008 Press Freedom Campaign report issued by the International Federation of Journalists, the main reason behind the decline of press freedom in the Middle East was the reluctance of Arab governments to weaken the existing laws and regulations, Middle Eastern journalism before the Arab Spring greatly suffered from extremely severe laws which were used to accuse journalists of libel and insults against political leader. Moreover, journalists operated under government control, psychological pressure, and threat of physical violence (Al Zowaimil 3).

Before 1990 most media ownership in the Arab world linked mainly with government, and most media act under strict government supervision. They mainly claim fake news, misinformation, propaganda, and media characterized by low credibility. Journalists were not permitted to criticise government policies and their jobs were at the favour of state's

achievements. Thus, Arab citizens had very little trust in government controlled media until satellite television channels took place in the region (Al Zowaimil 2).

The media landscape in the region started to improve with the appearance of international satellite and TV channels, such as CNN. These channels occupied the region to cover military events and this in turn led to the proliferation of satellite channels in the region. The proliferation of satellite channels with the evolution of digital communications at that time contributed to the liberation of the Arab media from the grip of governments. Consequently, governments are no longer the controlling authority on information, and news broadcasting. This does not mean that media in the Middle East has been fully liberated from government intervention and restrictions, but to create alternatives for people and journalists in the region (Al Zowaimil 2-3).

After 1990 a new media revolution broke out in the Arab world as a result of satellite television channels and the internet, which led to an important shifted from the state controlled and government owned media to a much more pluralistic and diverse media scenes. Though, the region generally suffered from being on the low of the digital world. This plurality of satellite channels, and the resulting emergence of private ownership of media, contributed to the excitation of the Arab peoples in general and journalists in particular, to confront the government oppressive laws. With the time, the consciousness of the Arab peoples about their political and civil rights has increased. This has led to increased demonstrations against Arab governments to obtain these rights. However, most of these uprisings were met with repression (Al Zowaimil 5).

Arabian TV channels such as Al-Jazeera and Al Arabiya have had a great influence on the emergence of these liberation movements. Under the impact of the Arab uprisings, a

number of Arab governments decided to give the press more freedom to report and criticise the government (Majid 6). However, press is still not completely free in the region. There still exist some boundaries in the Middle East as all media organisations face some limitations forced by funders and the hosting country where the organisation is located. For instance, Al-Jazeera, the channel is not allowed to discuss the Qatari foreign policy, as the Qatari government funds and hosts Al-Jazeera, this can be clearly observed on Al-Jazeera's coverage of issues related to Egypt since, there is a continuous fluctuation on its discourse toward Egypt depending on the Qatari government relationship with the ruling government; for Al Arabiya, issues like terrorism and religion are not freely discussed. In general, Journalism was dominated by political pressure, either from local governments or from external sources, which repress the media (Al Zowaimil 6).

Nowadays, the internet resists boundaries and challenges government censorship, where many varied voices representing different political situations and orientations could be heard in the region. Notably, what happened during Arab spring, where new media were deployed actively and effectively as tools for protestors to enhance their power, coordinated their efforts and capabilities and extend their voice of resistance by making sure they are recognized both at national and international level (Khamis 55-56).

## **1.1 Women Rights in the Middle East**

The Middle Eastern wars and conflicts caused by the attacks of 11 September 2001 and the 2011 Arab uprisings have had a profound effect on women and gender in the Middle East. The US intervention in Afghanistan in 2001 and the occupation of Iraq in 2003 were partly centered on a particular discourse about women and had complex effects on gender relations in both countries, the 2011 uprisings gave rise to opportunities for female political

mobilization but also caused multiple crises and rebuild of domestic political orders. The erosion of state capacities, the restoration of authoritarian regimes, the militarization of contentious politics and the pluralisation of collective identities triggered by the uprisings impacted negatively on women and gender relations in the region (Dalacoura 2).

Questions of women's rights and gender equality in the Middle East are not only politicised but are also related to strong postcolonial significance. therefore, it onstitute one of the main topic for discussion not only about issues related to women and gender, but also about the role of religion in society, about relations between East and West and between liberal and secular and perspectives.

There are wide range of cultural, social, legal and political challenges and barriers which prevent Arab women from sharing the same rights and opportunities as men. Many of these are interrelated. For instance, common views about the inappropriateness of women being visible and active in the public sphere lead to strong societal resistance to female participation in the workforce and in the public sphere more generally. The situation of women across the Arab world is characterised by tremendous social, geographical and cultural differences. Even limiting the focus to Gulf States, this diversity still exists as lifestyles and opportunities vary considerably between urban and rural women, educated and non-educated women, rich and poor women etc. Furthermore, these differences obviously impact tremendously on local perceptions of what constitutes Arab women's situation and problems (Pruzan-Jørgensen 20).

## **Conclusion**

Role of human rights in Middle Eastern politics illustrates how both the discourse and practice of human rights have changed throughout the second half of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. After decades of activism and the recent protest movements, there has been little progress in changing state action to comply with international human rights law. There is little enforcement at the regional level, and widespread repression of domestic rights. The role of NGOs in most Arab countries is bleak as states continue to suppress their activities. As the legitimacy of human rights frames declines and they are increasingly associated with Western imperialism, even domestic calls for respect for human rights are less echoing. However, activists in every Middle East country continue to struggle for social change through governmental reform, public education, international pressure, and domestic advocacy (Duryea 6).

Since 2011, human rights defenders and organizations in the Arab world that were built over approximately three decades have come under increasing attack inside their countries and many have been forced to stop their work or to go into jail. This has happened during an anarchic regional environment in which governments of Arab countries have been obliged to retain or regain control, while their citizens have been demanding their rights. The international community's engagement on human rights in the Arab world, never be strong or consistent, it has also changed significantly since 2011. That engagement has been affected by what has happened in the region itself, by political and economic developments inside Europe and the United States, and by developments on a global level, they afraid of migration and terrorism coming from the region, and the desire to make profits on regional conflicts have all corroded the willingness of Western leaders to engage on these issues (Dunne).

Finally, this chapter examines the contradictions of human rights in the Middle East, and we conclude that human rights have influenced the shape of politics in the Middle East. In most Middle Eastern countries, violations of human rights are justified by national security and the preservation of the status quo. Moreover, the Western world's position toward addressing human-rights issues in the Middle East has been based on double standards, supporting authoritarian but pro-Western regimes while criticizing and punishing authoritarian regimes.

## **Chapter Two:**

### **The Situation of Women in the Gulf States and the effect of the Arab spring**

## **Introduction**

Over the current years, the topic of women's rights in the Gulf has attracted much attention in the region and beyond; it has become a favourite subject of public interests, academic scholarship and international press. Most Gulf countries are characterized by a patriarchal system and conservative religious social and cultural traditions that underline the rights and privileges of men and women while limiting women's rights. Family and personal status laws are guided by the Islamic law, which is the religious law controlling women's mobility, personal rights and defining women's status as not entitled to equal basic rights and having less than full participation in all social and political spheres. This is made the region a place of debate on the women issues.

Histories of women's movements in the Gulf region vary from country to country. Bahrain, Iran and Iraq have longer histories than the other five Gulf States; Bahrain is considered one of the most liberal countries in its application and interpretation of Islam. What is important is Bahrain's legacy of early education for women and waves of activists, men and women determined to achieve women's social and political participation, framed as 'modernisation'. Since 1992, this has culminated in government reform processes and pressure from local non-governmental organisations, which has led to improvement in women's situation regardless of religious background.

In recent years, especially since the 2011 uprising against authoritarian political forces in Bahrain, women have emerged as proactive and vocal leaders, using social media in their struggle. As in other Gulf States, women are demanding more space and attention on

social media through blogs, Twitter and Facebook (Seikaly et al. 37). Thus, this chapter discusses the situation of women in Gulf States before and after the Arab Uprising and its impact on women status, with focus on three Gulf countries Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Kuwait. Moreover, it tackles the recent developments concerning women rights, obstacles and challenge of women in Gulf States.

## **2.1 Women Rights in the Middle East before the Arab Spring**

Women rights in the Middle East appeared with the beginning of the feminist movement. Social traditions, religious rules, and other items were the principle reasons, which denied women presence and participation in public life. The Gulf States governments delayed Girls' education until the oiled surge. The new United States focus on women's rights and the position of women in the Arab world in general received strong encouragement by the publication of the United Nations Development Program's Arab Human Development Report 2002. Because of the major deficits in freedom, women's empowerment, and education the report drew black picture about women's rights in the region. The report contended the deficit in women's empowerment was not just an issue of justice and equity, but also more than a cause of the Arab world's backwardness.

The utilization of Arab women's capabilities through political and economic participation remains the lowest in the world in quantitative terms, as evidenced by the very low share of women in parliaments, cabinets, and the work force, and in the trend toward the feminization of unemployment, the report explained. "Society as a whole suffers when a huge proportion of its productive potential is stifled"... (UNDP.AHDR 23).

The President Bush in a May 2003 commencement speech at the University of South Carolina declared; "No society can succeed and prosper while denying basic rights to the

women of their country” (Ottaway 3). Women in the Gulf States faced several issues, obstacles and barriers to become a vital member within the society. In some countries within the Gulf States women’s failed to have any sorts of rights, they were isolated, neglected and misunderstood. The marginalization of girls within the Gulf States region is currently well documented within the thought and social media (Odine 17-23).

### **2.1.1 In Saudi Arabia**

The Western World sees Saudi Arabia as a center for women oppression. It is a country where women were forced and neglected, women in Saudi Arabia obliged to cover their bodies and heads in black dress, and they are banned from driving cars. They are under the male guardianship. The Gulf war has influenced women and challenged Saudi society due to the first and the second Gulf war’s the Saudi society has seen a very little change in its policies towards women. The Saudi women were forbidden to do many things such as the rights to vote, the right to drive cars, and the right in the political participation. The Saudi women started asking for some rights when they saw the American women drive cars, having a political position and other rights, since the American presence in Saudi Arabia started with the production of oil in 1970. In addition to the establishment of ARAMCO (Arabian American Oil Company) in the east coast of Saudi Arabia where most American companies located. The American oil executives brought their families with their western styles. American women were driving cars, shopping, in malls and unveiled that is what the Saudi women were banned to do. Many feminists at that time paid and actually are still paying a high price for such stand. As an example of that, security officers in her car arrested Loujain Al-Hathloul as she was driving near her university in Abu Dhabi. She was forced onto a plane back to her homeland and spent several days in prison (Huyette 10).

### **2.1.1.1 Political Rights**

Saudi Arabia as a kingdom is a monarchy ruled by the royal family. The Saudi government bases its legitimacy on its Islamic law and the 1992 basic law, which sets out the system of governance rights of citizens, and powers and duties of the government in 83 articles (Rajkhan 1). The monarch every four years appoints the cabinet or the council of ministers, which includes the royal family members. Majlis Elshura contains 150 members and chairperson in every four years terms, it considered as the legislative branch (Rjkhan 1-2). The elections in October 2003 were appointed only for men above 21 ages. According to world fact book, it has 28.5 million of population; women take 45% .from the total population (Seikaly et al. 52-54).

Recently there was a famous stereotype about women in the Middle East and in the Arab world in general that they veiled, homebound, uneducated women who need help to take the first steps toward emancipation. Before the Arab spring there was not any kind of women participation in the Middle East particularly in the Gulf States. They were not allowed to participate in any social, political and religious ceremonies in her society and she was under the total control of man.

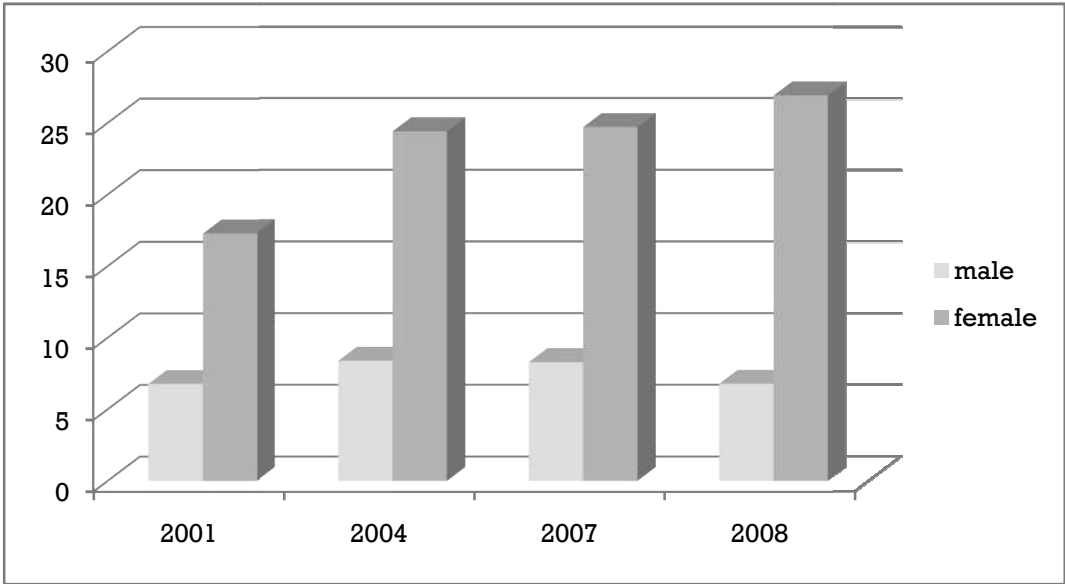
In 2005 the inter-parliamentary union and the UN women watch state that there was no proportion and number of seats held by women in parliament or in ministrel positions. For the ministers Saudi Arabia has no female ministers, the highest post ever was appointed in 2009, when Nura Bint Abdullah Alfayes allowed being deputy minister in charge of girls Education. They were also excluded from being ambassadors; in 2005, the government allowed women to study law but there were no female judges in the kingdom (Sheikaly et al.44-51).

**2.2.1.2 Economic Rights**

Saudi Arabia economics is considered from the twenty top economies in the world because it has the second-largest proven petroleum, its economy depend on oil. Saudi women make up less than 15 percent of the national workforce which represents an enormous source of unexploited potential for the kingdom whose labor force currently relies heavily on expatriates women were prohibit from full participation in the Saudi labor market (Roodsaz et al 56 -192). In 2007 the active work force in Saudi Arabia included 8.2million people; women labor force had an unemployment rate of 26.9 percent. The majority of women are working in the field of education either teaching or administrative (AlMunajjed. 2).

In the economical field of Saudi Arabia, there was a gap between male and female in the economic participation and opportunity

**Figure1: Saudi Male and Female Unemployment Rates (2001-2008)**



Source: .P.K Abdul Ghafour,” Job seekers in private sector Urged Patience Saudi Arabia Monetary Agency (SAMA). Forty fourth Annual Report. August 2008. “Arab News March 30, 2008

The figure showed The Unemployment Rate for Saudi Women Is Significantly Higher than for Saudi Men. In 2001, the female unemployment rate was 17.3 percent in comparison with male unemployment rate, which was 6.8percent. However there was a clear increase in 2004 .2007, and 2008 to became 26. 9 percent for women unemployment rates in contrast with men which was a slight increase from 6,8to 8.4 percent between 2001 and 2007 than the unemployment percentage for male was fixit in 2008 6.8 percent (AlMunajjed).

### **3.1.1.3 Education**

Until 1956, women in Saudi Arabia were not allowed to be educated. Despite the king’s efforts to extend education to women, schools for women were built into the kingdom’s educational foundation. A woman's primary role is that of a nurturing mother and housewife. One of the most astonishing realities is that even when Saudi Arabia locked women out of educational opportunities, international and intergovernmental organizations like the United Nations (UN) advocated for gender equality. Gender equality in education means to understand differences in learning as they arise and to focus on learning content, teaching methods and processes Yet, Saudi Arabia managed to practice this gross discrimination for nearly two decades.

The marginalization of women’s education was prevalent in Saudi culture up until the 1950s and started to dissolve when a group of educated middle-class men petitioned the government to establish schools for girls. These men thought that educated wives would

better supplement the family and the harmony of the marriage (Baki, 2004). According to scholar Sarah Yizraeli (2012), the first government-funded school for women was opened in 1960. The girls came pouring into these schools, wanting to show the world that they had long been deprived of something important. The curriculum designed for female students has always been similar to that designed for males but course material is usually much less extensive for females than for males. It is plausible to say that course content for females is minimally developed (Mills, 2009). Academic concentrations are not gender equal as women cannot choose majors such as engineering or law.

According to Mills (2009), a leader should have the confidence to eliminate the idea that women could never work as architects or engineers; clearly no such leader exists as there no female architects working in Saudi Arabia. Alamri (2011) points out, “Not all degrees are offered in Saudi Arabia for women, which increases the burden on the students who are willing to pursue a higher degree in their field.

There are several specialties offered to men only which may interfere with social justice reminds libertarians that the educational opportunities available to women are often fewer or less quality than those available to men. Hatoon Al-fassi is a women's history professor at King Saud University; she is one of Saudi Arabia’s most outspoken women’s rights activists. She regularly asserts that education is unequal and that women are always at a disadvantage. The general social attitudes in Saudi Arabia are very difficult to change because the country enables an institutionalized environment in which individual actions for change are perpetually ignored. The unequal treatment of women is so embedded in the society that politicians cannot get past the controversies related to women’s rights and the female ability to expedite the economic and social development of the country (Alsuwaida 112).

## **2.1.2 United Arab Emirates**

In contrast with the other Gulf States, the UAE was from the most country that empowered women in all domains. The royal family of the UAE encouraged women and gave them their rights. The Emirati women enjoy more freedom due to the Emirati system, which allows them to participate in social and political life (Aljishi 55-67). The UAE has seen a large movement to developing the status of women. Women empowerment became a necessary government policy including at the international level. Therefore Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed, the minister of foreign affairs, addressed in the general assembly of the united nation in September 2012, he stated that a necessary feature of the UAE's human rights policy " moderation and tolerance[...] and acceptance of other communities as part of a diverse world built on mutual respect." (Bin Zayed 2012). In the sixty-ninth ordinary session of the united nation general assembly, Sheikh Bin Zayed highlighted that the UEA is committed to human rights principles and especially focusing on its effort on ending gender discrimination. In 2005, the UEA legislate the personal status law, which improves the women rights (Al-Ghurair 64).

### **2.1.2.1 Political Rights**

In recent years, the Emirati women were succeeded to get a high level in government positions. Emirati was elected to the federal national council and appointed as federal judges, prosecutors and ministers but with limited power. Lubna Bint Khalid Bin Sultan Al-Qasimi was the first women who hold a ministerial position, as a minister of foreign trade, in 2004. Maitha Salem Al-Shamsi and Reem Ibrahim Al-shamsi were ministers of state and they work to promote women issues particularly in the UEA and around the Arab world in general. In

December 2006, Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum said, “A place without women is a place without spirit.” (Bin Rashid Al Maktoum). In 2006, Maryam Mohamed Khalfan Al-Roumi has been serving as minister of social affairs. In 2008, the first female ambassadors were Hasa Al-Otaiba and Sheikha Najla Al-Qasimi serving in Spain and Sweden. However, kholoud Ahmed al-Dhaheri was the first female judge. (Seikaly et al.52). In 2007, Najla Fn other countries, women have had to fight for their political rights, whereas women in the UAE have been granted these rights, so let us never take our rights for granted. We shall remember every right entails responsibilities and we will work hard to live up to the expectations of our leaders and our society (Gulf News).

The United Nation entity for gender equality and women’s empowerment has welcomed the decision of Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahayan the president of the UEA, to raise the presentation of Emirati women in the federal council to 50 percent (UN Women 2018). The United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka commented:

This decision is major step forward gender equality and women’s empowerment in the UEA, with direct implications for women’s broader engagement in national decision-making. I welcome the UAEs decision, which makes them a pioneer in the region, with among the highest representation of women in office globally. This means more diverse decision-making, tabling of different issues, and a strong message to all girls that they too can lead and be anything they want to be (Malambo-Ngcuka 2018).

### **2.1.2.2 Economic Rights**

The best example of rapid development story in the Gulf States or in the Arab world in general is the UAE in both the infrastructure and economy in addition to the development of the people improvement (MNCA.2). The Emirati women are really success story to be celebrated from the private sector (Seikaly et al 52). The UAE constitution deals with the rights to work for women “society shall esteem work as a cornerstone of its development. It shall endeavor to ensure that employment is available for citizens and to train them so that they are prepared for it.” UAE, “Society shall esteem work as a cornerstone of its development. It shall endeavor to ensure that employment is available for citizens and to train them so that they are prepared for it.” ( UAE Constitution. Article 20).

The Shariaa law did not prevent women from economic participation, for that the UAE government encourage Emirati women to achieve their economical positions. Emirati women have a great empowerment in economics. However, their representation in upper-level position is small, particularly in the (UAE constitution article 20). Moreover, the UAE constitution provides that “every citizens shall be free to choose is his occupation, trade or profession within the limits of law” (UAE Constitution article 34).

The UEA government gave women such rights to get new profession and sectors for example media, medicine, information technology, and engineering. Women were state employees only 11.6 percent in 1995. This percentage increased approximately to 22 percent in 2005, which is the highest rate in the GCC countries, this also increased to 66 percent in government sector including 30 percent in senior decision-making position in 2007. (UAE ministry of economy 2<sup>nd</sup> report 1-39, 11). Some studies in 2005 showed business women council, there were 40 percent of women work in public sector, 18 percent in the private

sector, 29 percent work as representatives of various organization , 7.6 percent participate in partnership ventures and 6 percent work in business (AlGurg. 2006).

### **2.1.2.3 Education**

The largest motivator for the Emirati women empowerment has been access to education; women have skilled in the local universities and internationally throughout the UAE government scholarship programs. Emirati women are actually exceeding males at every educational level. According to the Price Water House Coopers report, at 77 percent “the united Arab emirates is registering the highest rate of females in higher education in the entire world” (Fergany 12).

The United Nation also considered the UAE among the most developed nations in educating women. In 2007, there were 75percent of all students in the UAE universities are women, nearly 50 percent of the registered throughout 1.250school across the UAE are girls, three out of every five students in the public higher education system are women “Women in the UAE 8”

The female illiteracy rate in 2005 was fade to 2.4 percent compared to 10 percent among males and the average in the Arab world of more 50 percent with only 2.1 percent of females dropping out of educational institution since2006 – 2007 (Women in the UAE 9). In 2007, the UAE government has devoted nearly 25percent of the federal budget to improve overall education standards in the country for the education sector, which translates into 6.98 billion Dirhams (US\$1.9 billion).

### **2.1.3 Kuwaiti women**

The constitution of Kuwait enshrines the status of women as citizens and other legislation extends that constitutional guarantee into all areas of life (Beijing 10). The Kuwaiti women have started to gain some higher education and relative freedom to develop economic and cultural rights especially when comparing Kuwaiti women with women in neighboring countries. The first women's organization in Kuwait actively lobbied for the boarder involvement of women in the labor market equal political rights and greater cultural and educational opportunities. During the Iraq occupation period many women hold important social responsibilities and were instrumental in the survival of their besieged community (al-Mughini 1-2).

The deposed Kuwaiti government gave some public promises that after Kuwait was liberated women would play a greater role and make more noble constitution to the country that they had valiantly helped to defend, an apparent nod toward granting their rights on comparison with men. After the end of Iraq occupation, Kuwaiti women assumed new and important titles including university rector, vice –president of the Kuwait oil company and ambassadors (al-Mughini 2).

### **2.1.3.1 Political Rights**

Kuwait is a constitutional emirate. The Emir is the chief of the state, chosen from within the ruling family and confirmed by the parliamentary vote. The prime minister is the head of the government appointed together with the deputy prime ministers by the Emir.

After the end of Iraq occupation, Kuwaiti women had gained some political rights. Women tried to enjoy equal rights with men in politic. In the gulf countries there was only three Gulf States do not recognize the right of women to vote and to participate in elections.

Two of the three states, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates do not hold elections in the first place; leaving Kuwait as the only country that holds regular elections but excluded women (Ottaway 4-5).

Women in Kuwait participate in all major political groups and sometimes hold the positions of founders or broad numbers, with the exception of Islamic organizations in which women's participation is limited to women's committees. Women's participation to the decision-making process involves two seats in the municipal council and one ministerial position. Since 1993, Nabeela Al-Mulla was the first woman from the GCC to serve as ambassador. Currently, she is Ambassador to the Kingdom of Belgium and Ambassador-designate to the European Union and to the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg (Shiekaly, Roodsaz and Van Egten 49).while the true political equality remained elusive as the election law (No.35 of 1962) continued to pan political rights for women for another decade.

The Emir of Kuwait announced a decree granting women the right to vote and run for the office in a parliamentary and municipal elections during the interregnum between parliaments, in May 1999. Nevertheless, the decree was overturned by the parliament few months later. By coming, another government-sponsored declared that would give some political rights for Kuwaiti women such as the right to vote and run in municipal councils was rejected by the parliament in 2003 (al-Mughini 2).

Because of the great efforts of activists, lawyers, politicians, and everyday citizens women in Kuwait granted finally full political rights in may 2005. In 2006 -2008, Kuwaiti women voted and ran for the office in municipal and national elections. However, no female candidates were succeeded in their bids for office. The national elections of May 2009 saw the participation of the first four women in the Kuwait parliament (al-Mughini 3).

### **2.1.3.2 Economic Rights**

Kuwaiti women have enjoyed a high literacy and employment rates, and their participation in the workforce have developed over the past decade. The government has exploited many efforts to create more employment opportunities for all citizens' men and women, while the results have been mixed. Kuwaiti women have the right to own their lands, properties, income and assets, and to use them fully and independently. However, their heritage right is not equal to that of men according to the Quran, which states that a women's right, is equal to half of that her brother ,this reflects the Sharia's requirement . However, a woman may use her inheritance for her benefit; a male beneficiary must use his inheritance to support all the dependent female members of his family (al-Mughini 13).

Employment among Kuwaiti women is relatively high, and it has increasingly joined the work force. Kuwait government allowed women to sign employment contracts and financial contracts without men approval. In practice the number of women who start their businesses and gain more economic independence is developing and increasing time by time. Moreover, women participate in most professions, including engineering, architecture, medicine and law and hold positions as external board members in major banks and private companies (Seikaly et al 55).

The interior ministry of Kuwait encourages women to enter the police force by the establishing of a police academy. While, they still cannot join the army. They are not authorized to work at night or only in jobs that serve men, to protect against unethical exploitation. Women must receive equal pay with men about the same work, but there is no serious investigation about the complaints of discrimination. Women have the right to maternity leave and childcare in both the private and public sectors (Seikaly et al. 55)

### 1.1.3.3 Education

Kuwaiti women faced some discrimination in the educational field as educational curriculum still present incomplete traditional image about women, which is different from the real role that women play in society. It concentrates on displaying the traditional role of women as wife, mother, homemaker and daughter only, looking after house problems and affairs and raise the children. Moreover, the internal study draft at the ministry of education provides in article (6) of the general rules (returning the student to the evening session if she got married while study, she maintains her grades in the course system and the semester system according to the draft of the exams). This means that the female student is disadvantaged from study if she gets married during her study and she is allowed to join learners care centers. This center gives education with less commitment that is important for students in such educational stages. In order to succeed in their study and obtain grades meet their ambitions (CEDAW/C/KWT 68).

Women in Kuwait started to attend school in 1943. The Kuwaiti government provides free education up to the university level, which made it easier for women to acquire education. According to the legislative decree of No.40 1987 concerning public education, the Prime Minister Saad Al-Abdullah al-Sabah said in article 4:

Educating Kuwaitis in government schools is free. Free paying for non-Kuwaitis, and money payment for extra school services maybe assigned to all according to decree from the minister of education, after consulting the committee and having the cabinet's approval (Al-Nouri 40).

The Kuwaiti law has eliminated disparities between men and women in the matter of free or obligatory education. The government of Kuwait enjoys especially high literacy rate , 79.9percent of Kuwait women and 83.3 percent of Kuwait men over the age of 15 were able to read and write in 2000.the period between 1995 -1999 girls school register was higher at all levels than the preceding five years period from 1990-1994. However, a few girls' students drop out of school without completing the secondary level, this means after completing their obligatory education , to attend vocational institutes and take training and skills improvement courses (Beijing +10 6).

According to some statistics from 2002, girls and boys enrolment rates in secondary school are similar, 80 percent for girls and 77 percent for boys (UNCEF/K and Abu Hamza 3). The Kuwaiti compulsory education act women and men have equal opportunities in education. In article 2 from the legislative decree No.40 1987, concerning public education the prime minister declared:

Education is right for all Kuwaitis guaranteed by the states as a protection of the young from exploitation and from moral, physical and spiritual neglect, as an encouragement of scientific research and as an endorsement of the progress of the society (Al-Nouri 40).

While women at Kuwait university must have a higher grade point average than men to enter such programs as a policy for positive affirmation , since women comprise two thirds of university graduates (Kuwait University Admission and Transfer Regulations) (Seikaly ,Roodsaz and Van Egten 132).

## **1.2 Recent Development Regarding Women's Rights and the Effect of Arab Spring**

In many countries of Gulf States women's empowerment has improved over the last decade, though these developments vary between Gulf countries. Issues as family law, migration, education and health have become topics of public debate, The growing such presence of women in the political field, though limited in some of the Gulf States, has led to an increasing public awareness of women's issues and Researchers have observed a trend of increased political involvement by both men and women in the politics in the region particularly after the Arab uprising.

The trend of globalization in the world has resulted in an increase in women's economic participation in Gulf region. Women's participation in the labour force increased in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait and Bahrain; it nearly tripled in UAE and Oman. The gender gap in the labour participation rate is widest in Iraq and smallest in Kuwait and Qatar. Families have started to rely more on women's financial support in the region, particularly in Bahrain and Kuwait, women became effective member in society and gained more respect in the family.

As many actors and activists are gaining grounds in the context of the 'Arab spring', Arabic women's activists are becoming more important than ever. They work as scholars, as charity and welfare providers, and as religious or political activists throughout the Arab world and their activism complements secular approaches as it reaches out to other audiences and often enjoys a wider local legitimacy. Accordingly, Arabic women's activists constitute potentially important future partners for external actors such as bilateral and multilateral aid

agencies or women's organisations who wish to contribute to Arab women's empowerment, participation, agency and authority (Pruzan-Jørgensen 1).

### **2.2.2.1 Women's Legal Status and the Sociopolitical Position after the Arab spring**

The term Arab Spring turned rapidly to "Revolution". The sociopolitical and economical landscape has changed dramatically after 2010 (N.Rozsa et al). Since the end of 2010, the Arab Spring and its subsequences political, social and economical changes took place in the Gulf States region. Generally it became a center of international interest (Suzuki 1). The revolutions that started in Tunisia and continued in some Gulf countries such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Oman changed the operating environment, which led to the displacing of some governments not all of the demonstrations asked for the ousting of the governments. In the Gulf States, the Bahraini protesters aimed to achieve greater political freedom and equality between all citizens Sunni and Shia, men and women. Saudi Arabia itself was also witnessed demonstrations starting in January 2011 and similar protests took place in other Gulf States (N.Rozsa et al. 1-2).

Women were in the first line of protests asking for their freedom and for their legal rights to take their sociopolitical position in their countries like men. Despite these beautiful image of women alongside men involving in the demonstrations movement demanding freedom, equality, justice and democracy. These changes in the region gave real opportunities, and presents risks of regression. Women in the Gulf States faced many challenges, despite the foundation of international resolution draft to protect women and empower them (Abou Ras et al. 3).

Women since the Arab Spring in 2010, stand with men asking for political change and deeper and more extensive rights. Women protests rights during the Arab spring in the Gulf States were developed at various stages and different from the other Arab countries. For instance in Bahrain, most of the Shia was encouraged by events in North Africa to gather in the Pearl Roundabout and protests their second-class citizenship and legal discrimination women's rights were not a part of the set of demands in the first beginning (Al Moghadam 9). Pre-existing gender relations were patriarchal and women organizations and mobilizations were weak, civil society was neither robust nor well organized, states institutions were more authoritarian, patriarchal, and international influences all those factors caused in the setbacks in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf States (Al Moghadam 11).

### **1.2.2 The Outcomes of the Arab Spring on Women in the GCC Countries**

After the end of the Arab spring, there were positive and negative effects on women's lives. Ten years after the Arab Spring and the status of women has not improved completely in most of Gulf States. Their social, economical and political demands have not been fulfilled. Because of the conflict that resulted from the Arab spring revolution. Women have paid the price of these conflicts in two stages, the first one is the religious discourse, in many part of the Gulf States countries has turned against women. Some unknown personalities who called themselves religious men have started to spout Haram, Halal Fatwas, which restrict women's rights and limit their role in the society. The second one is some girls were forced into marriage and scarifies to men for pleasure, these violations of women and children's bodies are sanctioned by the laws of these terrorist group. While observers of women's affairs, may remark bold measures taken by some countries to improve their conditions, the majority of them have been extraordinary, which gave an important number of women access to political

life and participation in the decision making process. In addition to assuming leadership position throughout the public and private sectors (Heideman Roman 1).

The unsatisfied results of the Arab spring on some women's in the Gulf States cannot be named by "the women's spring" because women during the first five years after the Arab spring did not gain what they deserve like equality, human dignity, democracy and justice. The GCC countries, during the past decade, have seen some political and economic gains. Though, they still have not gained equality throughout the set of social, political, and economical activities. Where war and the absence of the human security prevail, human rights and especially women rights are non-existent. Therefore, the road to gain equality and positive change in status of women in the Gulf States is difficult (Heideman Roman 6).

Women and children were the first victims of the dark side of the Arab spring impact on women in the Gulf region in particular and Arab countries in general. The rise of militant group ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and ash-Sham) was one negative effect of the Arab spring in the region (Esfandiari Heideman 303). These terrorist group controlled many territory in the region and have worked to spread poisonous ideas in the minds of the Gulf and Arab peoples. Women were among them, many women from the Gulf States have been influenced by the ISIS ideas and thoughts, which led to the rise of extremist movements.

A number of Saudi, Bahraini, Kuwaiti and Omani women and girls travel to Syria, Iraq, and named themselves Jihadist and they married ISIS fighters. ISIS is the worst brutal terrorist group, and it has carried out particularly heinous acts against women including their kidnapping, raping, and trafficking, selling and sexual enslavement. Women have been victimized throughout the region as result of the advance of ISIS, by turmoil and civil war. In

the region, women actively work to claim their rightful place in society (Esfandiari Heideman 304-305).

### **2.2.3 Women Empowerment in the GCC Countries**

The GCC governments (Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and United Arab Emirates) give a greater importance for the role of women in Economic and social life. There was an international overview about women in the Arab and especially in the Gulf States societies, which women are limited in their choices by what their families and societies decide. The GCC governments from recent years have worked to improve women's situations in all domains, In addition to the encouraging of women participation in the political life.

Women involvement in the labor force for some GCC countries women's employment is still lower than the MENA average, for example in 2018, 39 percent of the global work force were women , while in MENA women involvement was just 20.3 percent and in the GCC is even less. Women represent close to half of population in the GCC countries (Abousleimen 1-2). During the 39 session of the Arab women's committee which convened under the banner of "Empowering women" the capital of Saudi Arabia Riyadh was announced ,in February, as the "Capital of Arab women 2020" (AW Staff 1).

The Gulf countries set reforms and programs to allow women to achieve socio-economic and political growth in order to enhance the quality of life these objectives are in harmony with the United Nation 2030 Agenda for sustainable development. Recently the discourses on women's rights in the Gulf States region have attracted the international attention. Moreover, recognizing the social engagement and the means of women empowerment highlights necessary facts that disintegrate stereotypes and the politicization of the issue (Sas 1).

In October 2019, during the annual meeting in Washington there were representatives from Bahrain, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia come together with World Bank Staff to discuss their countries reaction to the finding of the of the banks, most recent women business, law, and doing business flagship reports, both of which highlighted the need for more active gender reforms (Abousleimen 2).

The average of women's presentation in parliament and in the political life in general has risen since the beginning of the Arab Uprising. According to the Global Gender Gap Index ranked the UAE at 115 in 2014, down from 103 in 2010. Women employment for the Gulf States much better with Qatar at 51 percent, the UAE at 47 percent, and Kuwait at 44 percent (Esfandiari Heideman 305). According to gender experts surveyed in Thomason Reuters Foundation poll released on Tuesday, Saudi Arabia classified as the worst countries for women in the Arab world (Kehoe 1).

#### **2.2.4 Women Economic Decision- Making Empowerment**

After the Arab spring there was a new path for women socio-economic making decision empowerment and development. The global feminist activism such as the Me Too movement encouraged this women progression. These challenges led by pioneering women, who proved that change is possible despite the obstacles. Their role was decisive, and for the first time prominent female figures occupied high profile legislative positions, professionals in unconventional careers, prominent academics, and many other public offices (Sas 3).

Bahrain's vision 2030 focuses mainly on economic and social transformation and development, as in the government framework of 2015. According to the Bahrain Human Development Report, that produced by the Bahrain Center for Strategic, International and Emergency Studies, in partnership with United Nations Development Program (UNDP) that gender income index in the country was equal and women have enrolled more than 50 percent

of newfound enterprises in the last years. In addition to the Bahrain's Human Development Index is presently 0.846, placing it in 43<sup>rd</sup> place of 189 countries. The kingdom of Bahrain was able to omit the gap in laws and legislations by encouraging gender equality and women's protection from violence by 67 percent, according to the report of Gender Justice and Law that issued by Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia in 2018 (Sas 3-4).

In 2015, Bahrain began the Ryadat Fund, highlighting the principle of great business to give women access to credit and loans. The supreme council for women leads the effort to inspire women to business owners. Women also have access to micro-financing loans to establish their small businesses, which have noted important rates (Abousleimen 2-3).

Oman has had differentiated route from the other Gulf States. Despite the similarities in establishing social equality and empowering women, the Sultanate is keen to build its good reputation. The actual figures point to a promising future for gender equality. Women represent 41 percent of the workforce, and 54 percent of students in high education are female (Sas 3-4). The labor force rate throughout Omani women is in increasing time by time.

Omani Human Development report of 2012 stated the number of women-owned individual institutions amounted to 4600 out of 69000 businesses. The chamber of commerce and industry confirms that the participation of women is still limited to 12 percent of all active commercial enterprises (Seikaly et al 154-155). Omani women benefit from wetter social protection than in other GCC countries, even though women in some areas in Oman faced discrimination in the workplace and pressure to conform to traditional role (Kehoe 5).

In 2012, the Dubai Women Establishment organized a two-day conference to explore problems related to women's participation in senior corporate positions. Women's economic participation in United Arab Emirates covers various sectors, like trade, real estate, restaurants, hotels, and engineering. From a legal point of view, women are free to choose

profession without men permission. However, social gender biases combined with laws prohibiting women's participation "physically and morally" harmful acts limit their options (Seikaly et al 56).

Women made up 59 percent of the national labor force market and work, in 2012 such as profession at universities, part of government, in the oil industry, within healthcare, the media and many other sectors. The UAE governments are still giving a great importance to education and they believe that high level of education produce a high economic power. The UAE governments consider education as women's weapon; Sheikh Zayed established the view that women were indispensable to the country improvement and the preservation of its heritage and identity. His speeches focused that Emirati women had a most responsibility for shaping future generations and UAE society (Krause 26). For women to carry out these responsibilities, he emphasized that they had to arm themselves with education:

Woman is one of the pillars of the UAE society, because she is the daughter, the sister and the mother who nurtures and raises the new generation ...The relationship between man, and woman is one of participation and co-existence; their destiny is one... Therefore, true development in any society will never be positively achieved unless it targets the two of them and is based on equal participation between them (Krause 25).

In 2014, there were 21000 female employees and 10 percent of female business owners accounted for the private sectors. Labor and human resource legislation provides protection for both Emirati and non-Emirati women (alhmoudi 126). Furthermore, Emirati women are free equal to men to open bank accounts and apply for finance (Seikaly et al 56).

The Article 3 of the CEDAW requires countries to increase, participation by women in all these fields and thus provides that

States Parties shall take in all fields, in particular in the political, social, economic and cultural fields, all appropriate measures, including legislation, to ensure the full development and advancement of women, for the purpose of Guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men (Alhmoudi 106-107).

### **2.2.5 Women Political Decision- Making Empowerment**

An international interest has gradually turned to the geopolitical implications of the Arab spring on women. It is broadly recognized that ongoing process of change in the Gulf States are not just about domestic level political reform but also regional security dynamics. Eclectic ranges of geopolitical dynamics are adjusting the region after the Arab spring. Moreover, clash of logics may persist for some time to come (Echague 15). Women activist informed the world what was happening about these awakening through the demands they generated, reasserted the University of human rights. Women during the Arab uprising demonstrations in the Gulf States have asked for political equality and justice. They were asking for legal position in the government. Women were looking for full freedom, equality and dignity (FIDH 3).

In February 2011 in Bahrain there were demands asking for democratic reforms and immediately faced violence repression. Bahraini women participated massively in protesters that continued in 2012 as organizer, demonstrators, and leaders. They were struggling to enter the political sphere. Women in Bahrain were at the forefront of demonstration calling for

political and social reforms. Women doctors, nurses and fellow protesters were helped and give treatment for the injured. A Bahraini women activist in human rights has made an interview on March 2011 said:

There are thousands of women taking part in the protests at Pearl Roundabout, but they are kept aside. When they arrive at the square, they are asked to go to a corner where women are separated from the men or at the back of the demonstration. This has been the practice in any demonstration in Bahrain since 2001( FIDH-Egalite 46).

Recently the number of women with an important political position in the kingdom of Bahrain is totally high, despite the gap between the number of men and the number of women holding posts in the executive (Seikaly et al 92). The protesters in Bahrain during 2011 were unlike the other protesters in the region. Equality rights and ending discrimination against women were not among the demands of protesters. Bahraini women is still victimizing of discriminatory laws and practices in the public and private spheres. Women are still significantly under-represented in government, parliament, the judiciary and political parties. In March 2012, there were two women out of a total of 23 ministers , Sheikha Mai bint Mohammed Al Khalifa hold ,an important political position, as minister of culture and Fatma AL-Blooshi as minister of human rights and social development. In 2010, there were nine women candidates for the parliament's representation in the lower house of the council of representative but only Latifa al-Qa'oud was elected in uncontested seat. In the elections of October 2011 that organized to fill the seats of members of parliaments there were more than three women was elected. By the end of March 2012, women representations in the parliament were 10 percent of the 40 seats (FIDH 50).

Being increasingly more educated and active in the labour force, Gulf women have also sought political empowerment. Their attainment of political rights has not lagged too far behind men's given the constricted political space in the region. In the early 2000s, Gulf countries finally started allowing women to pursue and occupy political posts (in some instances, these rights were given at the same time as men). In 2002, Bahraini women were given the right to vote and run in elections for the first time; four years later Lateefa al-Gaood became the first Bahraini woman elected to parliament. In 2005, Kuwait also allowed women to vote and stand for election. Four years later, four Kuwaiti women were elected to the parliament: Massouma al-Mubarak, Salwa al-Jassar, Aseel al-Awadhi and Rola Dashti.

In 2003, the Gulf witnessed the appointment of its first women ministers. In March of that year, Sheikha Aisha bint Khalfan took charge of the National Authority for Industrial Craftsmanship in Oman and in May, Sheikha Ahmed al-Mahmoud became Qatar's education minister. Now, there have been more steps made forward and a few backward. The speaker of parliament in Bahrain and the vice chairperson of the state council in Oman are both women (Fawzia Abdulla Yusuf Zainal and Suad al-Lawati respectively).

The UAE and Saudi Arabia have also started to give opportunities to women to occupy important government posts. In 2013, the late King Abdullah appointed 30 women to the Shura Council and last year King Salman entrusted the post of deputy minister of labour and social development to Tamader bint Yousif al-Rammah. In the UAE, Amal Abdullah al-Qubaisi became the first woman to hold the post of speaker of the Federal National Council in 2018 ( Al-Khamri).

## **2.2.6 The Deposition of Male Guardianship in Saudi Arabia**

Women's life in Saudi Arabia is controlled by a man, in Saudi Arabia system every women must have a male guardianship either father or husband, however, sometimes even brother or son, who has the power to make a set of critical decisions about her decisions, regardless of her economic or social-class, is adversely affected by guardianship policies. A Saudi woman declared to Human Rights Watch that the male guardianship system is the most significant impediment to realizing women's rights in the kingdom, effectively rendering adult women legal minors who cannot make key decisions for themselves (Human Rights Watch 1).

The most famous concern of Saudi women's right activists inside and outside the country was the ban driving and the male guardianship system rather than the issues of rape and sexual violence, which still taboo topics in the country. The male guardianship system not only affects women ability to register the crime to police without permission of a male guardian but also it is rests on a core notion of obedience to women that often conflicts with potential to combat domestic violence, including marital rape (Tonnessen 1).

In 2013 women's rights, activists in Saudi Arabia asked the government to abolish the male guardianship system, after its universal Periodic Review at the United Nation Human Rights council (HWR 1-2).Wajeha al-Huwaider and Fawzia al-Uyyouni had founded The Association for the Protection and Defense of Women's Rights in Saudi Arabia has been central in the campaign against male guardianship. This association claims that male guardianship is based on men's disrespect of Saudi women. The association led a campaign called "Treat Us Like Adult Citizens—Or We'll Leave the Country." As part of the campaign,

A petition signed by 25 female Saudi activists was delivered early March 2014 to the 150-member Saudi Shura Council, a formal advisory body to the monarchy, calling for the end of “absolute male guardianship” of women and demanding serious measures to protect women’s rights and stop domestic violence (Tonnessen 16).

After that Saudi government has tried to do some limited steps to reform certain aspects of guardianship system, however these changes are still incomplete and insufficient (HRW 2). The system restricts women’s mobility and denies them the right to take certain actions without the guardian’s permission. An activist explains,

I find that the guardianship system is linked directly to violence against women and children by granting men with vast authorities over women and children and limit[ing] women’s access to resources and means to escape violent homes. By promoting rights to drive (to commute to work, study, or leave the home), right to represent oneself (removal of guardianship), women can acquire more power to escape violence (Tonnessen 16).

Until the guardianship system is completely removed, Saudi Arabia will remain in violation of its human rights obligation and unable to achieve its 2030 vision, the country vision for the future, which states that women represent half of the country’s population (HRW 1-2).

In 2016, Saudi Arabia government declared the need to abandon the traditional resources of economy that depends on oil and should shift to more divested paradigm. Empowering and encouraging women was from the major steps toward gaining these goals, women represent 50 percent of the total population to participate and contribute their needed,

skills, and talents to the Saudi labor market (Alsharif 10) . As the official statement of the Vision 2030 states:

Our economy will provide opportunities for everyone—men and women, young and old—so they may contribute to the best of their abilities. . . . Saudi women are yet another great asset. With over 50 percent of our university graduates being female, we will continue to develop their talents, invest in their productive capabilities and enable them to strengthen their future and contribute to the development of our society and economy (Alsharif 10).

In September 2017, the Saudi government declared that from July 2018 women inside the kingdom would be allowed to drive a car in public for the first time (Alsharif 11). Mohammad bin Salman, the young crown prince in Saudi Arabia, eagerly pursues the reform drive he initiated in 2017 with the Vision 2030 reform package (Hvidt 1). This decision, a few months later, followed with another declaration that women also would be allowed to watch live sports at three main national stadiums in Riyadh, Jeddah and Dammam. In 2019, H.H the Princess Reema Bint Bandar Al Saud was appointed as ambassador to the United States, making her the first Saudi woman to ever hold this diplomatic position (Alsharif 11). The Saudi governments are working throughout the Saudi Arabia vision 2030 to make women the half of the country. On March 18 2018 he went as far as to say that 'Women should decide what type of clothing she should wear as long as it is decent and respectful' thereby saying that the black abaya– the hallmark of previous interpretation of Islam no longer is considered necessary (Hvidt 5).

### **2.3 Current Issues Affecting Women’s Position in the Gulf Region**

Women in Gulf States live in diverse socioeconomic and cultural environment effected by class, ethnicity, religion, education and politics. The portrayal of Middle Eastern woman as a victim of male oppression based on religion and culture is considered as Orientalism. Women witness a wave of social change, especially in the last decade. Some similarities in gender conception as terms of appropriate femininity and masculinity can be found in the Middle East and particularly in the Gulf region.

The Gulf region is changing rapidly. One of the paradoxes of Gulf States is that, while situated in a very important geo-political context in the Middle Eastern region, they present a great globalised part of the world because of their internationally oriented economies, the heterogeneity of their populations and the wide use of social media. Many of the States acquired wealth during the 1960s and 1970s due to rising oil revenues, which enabled the establishment of States with free education, health and social services. But differing in gender gaps in economic and political participation illustrates the different stages in transition within the region (Seikaly et al.35).

Many women's rights activists in the region face difficulties in defining women's rights in the frame of Islamic law. They feared that Islamists could emerge as the strongest parties after the Arab spring and undermine their previous achievements, while women's participation in the uprisings was welcomed, they have marginalised in the aftermath. Women's activists call for the inclusion of women at the decision-making table for recasting the Constitution to include gender as a prohibited category of discrimination. In 2011, in Saudi Arabia, women influenced by demonstrations in some the Middle Eastern countries, female students and teachers of King Khalid University and female relatives of prisoners held in arbitrary detention joined forces in demanding improved conditions and more justice. In the

same year, one of the three public petitions calling for reforms that circulated online in Saudi Arabia dealt with women's rights and issues of violence and poverty. The government was asked to empower women through educational, economic, political and public participation. In Bahrain, female activists played a crucial role at the initial Pearl Square demonstrations of 2011 (Seikaly et al. 35-36).

The rapid social change in the Gulf is simultaneously accompanied by reinventions of traditional culture to address recent issues. State policies are implemented to preserve cultural heritage through vast media resources, and creating an extension of public space. Although such articulations of sovereignty and nationalism can be understood as an appeal to the past and traditional culture, these are, in fact, efforts to construct new identities. At the regional level, intersecting with national politics, an increasing emphasis on religious (Sunni-versus-Shia) and ethnic characteristics (Kurdish, Baluch) has been observed, which attests to what the scholars call 'sectarian identity politics'. Rather than being the simple result of entrenched communal divisions, sectarian identities are contemporary phenomena that form part of current political developments.

## **2.4 Challenges of Women in Gulf States**

Women in Gulf States still face many challenges which inherent notions of liberalism as well as some of the concepts applied by many Western development and women's organizations. Furthermore, this activism also contains a number of serious risks, which relate to both local and external actors who seek to contribute to Arab women's empowerment. For one thing, it risks covering various local differences and variations in identity, religious, political, and social norms. It also risks strengthening the legitimacy and authenticity of an

Islamic approach to gender and family roles, and hence also risks excluding the voices and approaches of secular actors or non Muslim minorities.

Women in Gulf States are considered local political power games in unintended ways. For instance, it may support rather than challenge local patriarchal institutions, discourses and interpretations, authoritarian states, and conservative religious societies. These risks and challenges need to be addressed by both local and external actors. However, they should not prevent external actors working for women's empowerment from collaborating with Islamic women's activists. On the contrary, the latter hold some very important potential for the promotion of Arab women's empowerment, participation, authority and agency (Pruzan-Jørgensen 3).

Recently, there were great changes concerning women rights in the Gulf States. However, there are still many challenges ahead. Some achievements in the political arena, especially in Bahrain and Kuwait, have been rolled back. Women face a lack of social and financial support that makes it difficult for them to run for office. Various levels of political repression across Gulf States have also affected women and women's rights activists. And despite appointments to official positions, political decision-making largely remains in the hands of men.

Large sections of the Gulf societies are still dominated by views that reduce the importance of women's participation in the public sphere. These are very much reflected in various provisions of family and personal status laws, which can restrict certain social and economic activities of women and put them at a legal disadvantage to men, with Saudi Arabia still retaining a strict guardianship law. Although Bahrain (2006), the UAE (2008),

Qatar (2010) and recently Kuwait (2018) allowed women to become judges, the judiciary and the interpretation of the law are still very much dominated by men (Mufarreh).

Despite these major challenges, women rights witnessed the transformation from zero to the impressive level of public participation that Gulf women enjoy today. The struggle of the next generation will indeed be difficult and change will be slow, but they will be aided along the way by the established consensus in the Gulf that women's socioeconomic empowerment has to be part of any comprehensive development strategy and any "future vision" plans. Policies on women's participation are no longer just a bunch of nice words that grace reports of international organisations; they are real and tangible despite all the remaining political and social barriers (Mufarreh).

## **Conclusion:**

The wave of Arab Spring revolution across Arab world and so far led to the regime change in a number of them and force some reforms into place, and also the increasing internal and external pressures from the human rights activists, NGOs, the Western powers and so forth. Though these existing factors and others will lead to the gateway of absolute women's rights in the GCC is hard to say. Meanwhile, the significance of some of the factors should not be overemphasized due to their double edged nature. The Arab Spring, for example, can equally opens gates for the Islamists political parties into power, women's rights situation in the GCC countries seems to be improving gradually, but there are numerous factors that may hinder this development.

Recently, numerous socio-political and cultural factors have been observed not to be in support of women's rights, but increase the difficulty in its prosecution in the GCC

countries. Religious sources are often interpreted also against a number of women's rights. However, several other factors are perceived to be contributing to women's getting more rights granted to them. Some of these factors are the emergence of new and competing interpretations that challenged the Muslim traditionalists.

Saadia Mufarreh said : "My generation saw Gulf women rising from ground zero to remarkably high levels of education, accomplishment and wealth"(Aljazeera). even though women are gradually getting increasing attention in a number of rights in the GCC, rights that are clearly in contention with Islamic values and tradition family. It is noticeable the fact that our data shows that the overall record of the GCC countries in terms of women's social rights is worse than the two other categories of rights which is perhaps due to inheritance and family laws. Women's need to be granted more opportunities in the GCC countries, particularly in politics and economy and the parts of the social rights that are not in stark contradiction with religious values (Aljazeera).

Saadia Mufarreh stated that: Even those who are most concerned about women's rights in the Gulf and the Arabian Peninsula cannot deny the fact that much progress has been made in the area over the past decades. Although empowerment has been achieved at different levels in Gulf countries, given the difference in local political and social circumstances, there are a number of remarkable achievements that have to be highlighted (Aljazeera).

**Chapter Three: the Weaponisation of  
Women Rights in the Gulf States**

## **Introduction**

The effective role of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries - Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates in current international economy during the last few decades, the exceptional historical background of the Middle East and the prominent political and strategic significance of the region, in addition to its inherent resistance to the Western values make the region a subject of interests for many foreign powers over years. Moreover, the significant role oil plays in today's world further make the GCC countries always at the center of attention. The GCC countries have been classified by the World Bank Classification of Economies among the high-income economies. As of 2009, the GCC countries produced about 37% of world oil production, 14% of gas production and 28% of Liquidified Natural Gas production (A.Usman 1-2).

Over the last decades, Western values such as democracy, human rights and numerous forms of freedom have witnessed an unprecedented triumph particularly in the most conservative societies as the Middle East countries. According to the Westerners and their advocates this triumph is seen well, while to the other receiving cultures they are seen as new type of imperialism. However, Middle Eastern countries have rejected these values and hence resisted against it. The GCC countries as part of the Middle East have been fierce opponents of most of these values which still attracting loudly calls from the concerned bodies, individuals and all sorts of proponents. The most notable values are related to women's rights. Women of the GCC countries are perceived to authorize men in virtually all fields of social life and are left with relatively smaller role to play in society notably at home and when dealing with other women, this is in spite of the already mentioned overwhelming

significance of the GCC countries in the contemporary global political economy (A.Usman 2).

The GCC member countries are not the only countries in the world where women experience inequality and denial of rights, in many other countries such as, Latin America, North America, Europe, Africa, and so on. Women continue to face some obstacles in the achieving their rights and the rights of women are among the most controversial issues, especially in the GCC member countries, Middle East countries are always considered as major violators of women's rights in all world countries, though, the steady change of women status in these countries (A.Usman 2).

Arabic women's activism may appear a contradiction in terms to many Western audiences accustomed to presentations of Islam as counterproductive to the promotion of women's empowerment and the situation of women more generally. A better understanding of this activism also has important practical and policy implications, not least for external actors who work to contribute to the promotion of women's rights and gender equality in the Arab world. Traditionally, they have based their activities mainly on a secular, rights-based approach inspired by the UN instruments (notably the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women,) and have predominantly collaborated with local actors who base their activism on liberal and secular frames of reference. However, these liberal and secular local organisations often represent small, urban and bourgeois minorities with limited popular following in an Arab world which has undergone an important Islamic revival in recent decades (Pruzan-Jørgensen 5).

Postcolonial and anti-imperial sentiment remains vivid among large parts of the population and they often focus on the question of gender and women's rights given that 'the

repressed Muslim woman' served for many years as one of the key legitimising arguments for colonial interference in the region. In turn, the status of women has also become one of the main arguments against postcolonial interference and in defence of local identity and authenticity. Accordingly, 'civilising' and 'liberating' Western attempts to empower women or alter their situation in society have been widely perceived as part of a postcolonial agenda and an attack on cultural and religious identity. This view has been strengthened in recent years, where present-day Western military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq were both partially legitimated by calls to free Muslim women is not only one between foreign/Western and local/Muslim actors, but also plays out between 'local' actors. In the Arab world, local actors arguing for a liberal and secular approach to women's rights are often accused of representing a 'foreign' and sometimes also a 'neo-imperialist' approach in their discourse and approaches (Pruzan-Jørgensen 13).

Women in the GCC countries still have a long way to achieve their absolute rights. Numerous socio-political and cultural factors have been observed not to be in support of women's rights but to increase the difficulty in its empowerment in the GCC countries, the wave of the so-called 'Arab Spring' that led to the regime change in a number of them and force some previously reforms into place, and also the increasing internal and external pressures from the human rights activists, NGOs and the Western powers. Whether these existing factors and others will lead to the gateway of absolute women's rights in the GCC is hard to say. Ann Elizabeth Mayer said:

In the mind of many women, equality and freedom have become associated with undesirable aspects of westernization[...] Many see in women s liberation a western plot to undermine native culture so as to facilitate western political and

economic penetration of Middle Eastern societies (Cultural Survival Quarterly Magazine).

### **3.1 The Reality of Feminism in Gulf States**

The dominant image of Arab societies in the West is that of patriarchal systems, oppressive regimes, and subordinate roles, Gema Martín Muñoz argues that in order to fully understand the diversity and complexity of the Arab world and the changes taking place there, the West should take a closer look at how women's lives and roles are changing and at the women that are making things happen. Arab societies often appear rigid and resistant to change to outsiders, because what outsiders see is these countries' ruling regimes, which mostly do resist development and change. But this image is nearly the opposite of reality in Arab societies, where enormous dynamism is opening doors to many types of change (Qantara.de).

Arab societies are engaged in a process of immense change in which women are playing a crucial role. During the last decade, intense urbanization and feminization of the workforce in all Arab countries has pushed women into the public arena on a massive scale (Martín Muñoz).

This change will affect many others, and it must be analyzed from an Arab perspective, as well as from outside that perspective. This is particularly necessary because the situation of women is one of the main tools that the outside world, particularly the West, uses to assess the Arab world. And, unfortunately, such assessments tend to focus on the supposed immobilism that derives from Islamic norms, which obscures knowledge of the real changes that are taking place. Indeed, the predominant view of women in Gulf societies often

repress outsiders' ability to break free of their belief that Islam confines all Arab women in the same way, when in reality they experience very different conditions. This prevents many from observing the deep changes taking place in Arab societies and how women are driving those changes forward. The West thus risks depriving itself of an important key to understanding the Arab world today and the Arab world as it will be tomorrow (Martín Muñoz).

### **3.2 Double-edged Politics on Women's Rights in the Gulf States**

After the 9/11 attacks, images of Arab women were increasingly used in western views and US news media with women either wearing a hijab or burqah. In these cases, we see how the media was selective in deciding how Muslim women are captured and presented within specific representation frameworks. For example, American politicians use the trope of the oppressed Muslim women in attempts to gain support for intervention within the region. These manipulations prevent us from appreciating the variety of women's lives across the Arab or Middle Eastern worlds, differences of time and place and differences of class and religious interpretation.

The emergence of American involvement in the internal regional and social politics of the area deemed an invaluable critical in region by both superpowers, the competition for regional influence deeply affected all aspects of the political formation and national identities of newly independent Middle Eastern states. In the wake of the Cold War, the emergence of the United States as the hegemonic global economic and military power coincided with a powerful backlash within the Middle East, exemplified by widespread social unrest and the rise of Islamic fundamentalism. In addition to the specter of terrorism, the ideological rallying cry of "saving" the women of the Middle East has been a powerful tool in justifying U.S

military intervention in the region. Now, with the startlingly swift rise of a particularly brutal, transnational terrorist group self-titled the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), Western fascination with the “oppressed Muslim woman” has once again flared up in media and policy debates. The complex discourses surrounding women in the Islamic world have a long and deeply political history, and this narrative has been renewed and re-utilized numerous times to garner widespread public support for Western military intervention in the Middle East. Yet when examined critically, it becomes apparent that U.S foreign policy and military intervention in the Middle East has both worsened the status of women’s rights in the region, and subsequently used the discourse of women’s rights as a justification for the “war on terror.” American policy in Afghanistan for the past thirty years provides a cogent example by which we can examine the ways in which an agenda of women’s rights becomes co-opted and politicized to morally justify violent intervention (Rich).

The West continues social and political hypocrisy when engaging in other parts of the world such as the military invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq that have allowed the United States to shape governments and decide social policies. Muslim women are the target in the war. there is no doubt that the western involvement in the empowerment of women in gulf states is to intervene in Gulf societies affairs as well as they use women rights as a tool to find support within the region as they aware that the women rights issues polarize popular interest

### **3.4 Weaponisation of Women Rights in the Gulf States**

For generations, the women of the Middle East have contributed to various resistance and state-building movements during times of war and protracted conflict within the region. The general public’s interests in the Middle East has become reinvigorated due to the US and UK closely following the growing conflicts within the region after 9/11 and the subsequent

increase in foreign political and military interventions within the region. As the forms of mass communications continue to evolve, a large amount of media is consumed on the war, conflict, and instability of the Middle East with women in the region particularly, those who openly partake in and approve of armed struggle as a means of resistance (A. Koranteng 5).

The US and UK's are both disturbed and fascinated when presented with images of Muslim women in the Middle East participating in resistance, more particularly militarized or violent forms of resistance. Although women are impacted in many ways during times of war and conflict, it is not unexpected for their images and stories to be absent from the news, unless they articulate the West's preconceived notions of Arab women's position and roles within their societies and further justify Western oriental thought. This absence is not startling as media theorist Herbert Gans points out, for "the news reflects the white male social order" leaving no space for Arab women's voice. Negligence of these women's voices not only impacts journalists' work, but also affects the historical record, creating male dominated narratives of life during war.

Western society's conceptions of war, violence, and death are heavily biased according to gender stereotypes, which we see in news articles focusing on women who choose to participate in more violent or militaristic forms of resistance (Koranteng 80-81-82). Alainna Liloia, Ph.D. Student, University of Arizona said: "The discovery of oil in the Arab Gulf in the 1930s turned these Islamic monarchies into global players. One result of this globalization was that Western leaders put pressure on the region to "modernize" their laws and customs" (The Conversation).

### **3.5 Westernization of Feminism in the Gulf States**

As the debate on feminism in the Gulf region gathers contradictory opinions on the matter. Some believe that feminism is a Western concept which has no place in the Arab world. Academics and students argue that Arab women are still fighting for an equal place in society, Discussions on Arab feminism must consider Islamic principles and any successful feminist movement should be gradual and must take into account cultural views so as not to alienate women from their societies, Gallant said. “Women don't want to vary too much from what society expects from them”. she add “Arab women wouldn't want to see themselves as feminists because it is too Western and anti-men” (Moussly).

There is no place for West feminism in the Arab world due to existing cultural and religious differences in societies, some academics and students said. Arab women are fighting for an equal place in society but not under the umbrella of feminism because the term indicates a gender struggle which is primarily a Western ideal, they said. “The ideology of feminism came from the US and Europe and you can't sell it to Arab culture”. Suad said. "If women in the UAE and other Arab countries want to create something new for them, it's up to them to do it." Suad attended the region's first conference on Arab feminism in Beirut, Lebanon, last year. She said the purpose was to establish if feminism exists in any of the 22 Arab nations, she said. “Some countries understand Arab feminism from an Arab point of view and others from a Western one” ( Moussly).

For years the West has seen the woman in Gulf States as victims need saving. They ignore the teachings of Islam and an considerably diverse Middle Eastern society, Western powers attempt to shape women in the gulf states into secular (al salak).Western discourses surrounding Islam, fundamentalism and Muslim women have been interwoven since the onset

of European colonial enterprises. A closer academic analysis of Islam in the Middle East increased in prevalence and fervor during the Cold War ( Rich).

### **3.5.1 Europe and Women Rights in Gulf States**

All Gulf States are situated in a socially and politically unsteady region, which makes the EU's and EP's task of formulating appropriate policies a complex one. Though human rights policy should not be solely evaluated in the light of regional upheavals or violence, the recent series of uprisings and its political instability and lack of security must be taken into account when developing strategies for the implementation of these policies. In most gulf countries such as, Oman, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, official collaborations at the regional and international level are rather uncommon in the Gulf region and relation with foreign NGOs are either forbidden or strictly controlled by governmental authorities.

The extent of collaboration is strongly related to the nature of the shared concerns between the partners. Regional activities among Kuwaiti and Emirati women's organisations also seem limited, regardless of governmental restrictions. The degree of collaboration and partnership between the European Union and civil society organisations in the region varies by country, for instance, in Qatar, proposals for international joint scholarship and university projects dealing with gender studies and human rights are refused by the government (Seilky et al. 44).

Cooperation between GCC countries is not completely and always stable; for example, the members recently had a dispute on interference in each other's national policies, since EU policies very often regard them as such. The GCC countries all ratified CEDAW, but with several profound reservations, mainly referring to inconsistency with Islamic Sharia. The

Busan Partnership was approved by Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Saudi Arabia has recently been elected as a member of the UN Human Rights Council for a three-year period, starting from January 2014. Kuwait's term will end in 2014, and the UAE's term in 2015. Many of the Gulf States were present at an ESCWA meeting in 2011 to discuss progress on the gender-related MDGs. Collection of gender statistics was mentioned as one of the challenges which needs to be addressed. In the process of the Sustainable Development Goals, ESCWA proposed the following priorities regarding women in Gulf countries: maternal health, women's labour force participation, and women in parliament. Women's empowerment is one of the main goals.

The Dialogue on human rights in 2013 is a new informal dialogue on human rights between the EU and the UAE was established. It is designed to promote open and constructive dialogue about the women issues, in a spirit of mutual respect, so as to enhance understanding of each party's human rights challenges and achievements and to support one another. The EU and the GCC countries committed to 'the promotion of contacts between enterprises, research institutions, and other agencies in order to stimulate joint projects in agriculture, agro-industry, and fisheries'. So far, gender issues have not yet been addressed explicitly and systematically. The 2014 meeting was cancelled by the GCC, apparently in protest at EU Member States having signed a statement at the UN Human Rights Council criticising the human rights situation in Bahrain.

The EP adopted a resolution on EU–GCC cooperation in March 2011, in which it: calls on GCC Member States to adopt measures to facilitate women's access to the labour market and to education by tackling all forms of discrimination based on gender and other customs or legal provisions, including all those relating to personal

status; urges GCC Member States to combat discrimination against women, calls on the EU to focus its cooperation programmes with GCC Member States more on civil society organisations and to support the empowerment of women. In March 2014, the EP adopted a resolution on Saudi Arabia. Several sections of the opinion of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM, February 2013) were adopted in this resolution. The main calls on Saudi Arabian authorities regarding the position of women are: elimination all restrictions on women's human rights, freedom of movement, health, education, marriage, employment opportunities, and representation in judicial processes, and all forms of discrimination against women in family law and in private and public life, to promote their participation in the economic, social, cultural, civic and political spheres (Seikaly et al. 67-68).

The EP meets regularly with the parliaments of the GCC countries. In most of the meetings in the last few years, women's issues, such as the representation of women in parliament, were raised by the EP. In 2013 in Bahrain, there were meetings with a female member of the Council of Representatives, the Secretary-General of the Supreme Council for Women and the National Institution for Human Rights, but not with women's NGOs. In 2010 the EP Delegation met with representatives of Kuwaiti civil society (Kuwait Society for Human Rights, Social and Cultural Society for Women, Kuwait Federation of Women's association, and academics), and in 2011 with the Omani Women's Association. The latter meeting led to the following conclusion: The EU should support the work of NGOs in promoting the empowerment and the active participation of women and young people.

The EU might use variety of policies and instruments for the improvement of women's rights and gender equality in the Gulf region. Relevant international frameworks and common

ground for policy dialogue among the EU and Gulf States on promoting gender equality and women's rights include CEDAW, the ICPD Programme for Action, the Beijing Platform for Action and the Busan outcome document on global partnership. Although the EP has called several times for more attention for women's rights in the Gulf States, there is still no evidence of systematic and explicit EU initiatives to mainstream gender equality perspectives in its cooperation. The majority of EU initiatives in the Gulf States are not explicitly addressing the position of women, or their impact on women is not clear (Seikaly et al. 69-70).

A mutual interest of the GCC States and the EU and its Member States lies in trade. The EU might consider developing a strategy on how to include respect for human rights and women's rights when developing economic policies, negotiations on trade agreements, actual trade activities and visa agreements. Some current examples are: negotiations on a Free Trade Agreement with the GCC and the Visa-Free Agreement with the UAE. Adding a clause on human and women's rights in such agreements might be a standard condition; adding a human and women's rights clause to all Cooperation Agreements; adding a social clause to the Free Trade Agreement to implement ILO labour standards; considering the impact of international sanctions on women's unemployment and pauperization (Seikaly et al. 76).

The EU's current role in the Gulf region is limited, but the need for cooperation is increasing as the importance of the region grows. As for the GCC States, their relationship with the EU primarily revolves around academic exchange and trade (the GCC being the EU's fifth largest export market). The EU policies and guidelines constitute the framework to reflect on the current and potential role of the EU and its institutions in the Gulf States with respect to women's rights such as: the Strategy for Equality between Women and Men 2010–

2015; the Plan of Action 2010–2015 on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in Development; EU Using these guidelines and priorities to advance women’s rights, which takes into consideration the particularities of the region, such as the Islam-based legislation, the absence or limited presence of independent women’s rights NGOs and women’s rights defenders in some countries, and the variety of socio-economic and political situations. (Seikaly et al. 63)

### **3.5.2 USA and Women Rights in the Gulf States**

Advancing women’s rights in the Arab world is an important goal for united state. Therefore it continues to pursue it in the name of equity and justice. Improving the position of women might also have a favorable impact on economic growth children’s welfare, and fertility rates, the US government has made the promotion of women’s rights and the empowerment of women a central element of its interests to modernize and democratize the Arab world. No official U.S. speech about reform in the Middle East miss to mention the problem of women’s rights, and the issue of women is undoubtedly raised at meetings where Middle East affairs are discussed (Ottaway 11).

The current U.S. focus on women’s rights and the position of women in the Arab world received strong encouragement by the publication of the United Nations Development Program’s Arab Human Development Report 2002 that Signed by a number of prominent Arab intellectuals, the report gave a depressing picture of a region lagging behind the rest of the world because of major deficits in freedom, women’s empowerment, and education. The report argued that the deficit in women’s empowerment was not simply a problem of justice and equity, but a major cause of the Arab world’s backwardness (Ottaway 3).

Promotion of women's rights in the Middle East is an easy goal for the United States to announce. It lends itself to resounding rhetorical statements. It can be translated in practice into many concrete and small projects that are not seen as threatening by most Arab regimes and are even welcomed by them as a means to demonstrate their willingness to democratize and modernize. An improvement in the rights of women does not threaten the power of the authoritarian government in the same way as free elections or a free press would. Many governments are even willing to take small concrete steps, such as appointing the occasional woman to a high, visible position, or introducing amendments to divorce or family laws. For the United States and other democracy-promoting countries, women's programs have the added advantage of being relatively cheap and easy to implement—for example, encouraging schooling for girls, financing women's nongovernmental organizations, or providing training for women's candidates in countries where women can run for office ( Ottaway 3).

On November 17, 2001, Laura Bush made an appeal to the American people to support the war in Afghanistan. In her speech, no link was made between the military operation in Afghanistan and the September 11th attacks. Instead, she called upon the American people to support an operation that would encompass the salvation of Afghan women." Called "women of cover," by former president George W. Bush, Muslim women are rendered static victims in a discourse of transnational feminism that has been deployed to justify military intervention in the Gulf States and Afghanistan. The November 17, 2011 speech by former First Lady Laura Bush clearly indicates that war was being sold to the American people as a rescue mission for the women of Afghanistan. According the Mrs. Bush, "the fight against terrorism is also a fight for the rights and dignity of women. The war in Afghanistan, and Iraq, was to destroy Al-Qaeda and the Taliban in response to their attacks on the United States. Women were used to justify American intervention in the region (Haller 4).

The U.S. economic and political interests in the Middle East stem from the inability or of the U.S. to judge human rights on a universal and neutral basis. Many human rights organizations have documented human rights violations within the United States. But the U.S. presents itself to the Middle East, and to other regions of the world, as the authority on the human rights standards, and does not admit that its actions both within and outside the U.S. often worsen human rights situations (AbuKhalil).

In the Middle East, Saudi Arabia stands as a clear example of American hypocrisy. No serious policy on human rights can ignore the record of the Saudi royal family, which has imposed on the Saudi Arabian people one of the most oppressive regimes in the world. Saudi Arabia's government is based on institutional sexism, misogyny, and intolerant religious exclusiveness. The brand of Wahhabi Islam imposed in Saudi Arabia is seen in no other country. Qatar, which follows Wahhabi doctrine, has been launching a series of social and political reforms affecting women in the past few years.

American support for the Saudi royal family has permitted that government to violate human rights and to ignore the claims of Saudi men and women for reforms. Crown Prince Abdullah, who has assumed more powers in the past two years in the wake of the near incapacitation of King Fahd, has publicly alluded to popular demands for social, political, and legal reforms affecting Saudi women. Yet Washington, which routinely interferes in the minute affairs in the region and in the internal domestic situation of many Arab countries, has not made one public statement in support of Saudi women in the face of state oppression and discrimination. How can the U.S. government make speeches and statements in support of 13 Iranian Jews who are accused of treason and yet remain silent about the plight of millions of Arab women who are oppressed daily by a pro-American government? How can the U.S.

scrutinize the human rights records of Libya and Iran but not of Saudi Arabia? Iran's political system, with all its shortcomings, is certainly superior to the archaic political system in Saudi Arabia (Abukhalil).

U.S. support for Saudi Arabia has also harmed the cause of reforming Islam, because Saudi oil wealth helps to promote a very conservative branch of Islamic theology and jurisprudence throughout the Muslim world. The Saudi Arabian branch of Wahhabiyyah Islam targets women: they are denied political roles, they are deprived of driving privileges, they are confined to educational institutions inferior to those reserved for men, and they are still subject to the legal practice of guardianship, which treats women as legal inferiors who cannot move or travel without the notarized legal permission of their fathers, brothers, husbands, or a remote male relative in some cases. While Saudi Arabia welcomes technology allowing it to accommodate U.S. military needs and requirements, it fights political reforms under the slogan of maintaining its cultural and Islamic authenticity. The campaign against gender equality and religious reforms spearheaded by the Saudi royal family is directly or indirectly sponsored by the U.S., the main political benefactor of the Wahhabi government. Though the Saudi case is exceptional, it is illustrative of the determinants and consequences of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East (Abukhalil).

Actually, U.S. aid programs don't help Middle Eastern women either. Although the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have belatedly accommodated themselves to the needs of civic organizations around the world, the U.S. foreign aid program is not based on need and is severely tarnished by its political agenda. The Canadian foreign aid program is geared toward the empowerment of both the poor and women, and it awards grants and aid on the basis of need. But the largest recipient of U.S. aid remains Israel, which has a per capita income comparable to that of the UK. Moreover, the U.S. government still favors rewarding

and punishing governments through its aid programs. Instead of supporting the courageous feminist and human rights nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in the Middle East, the U.S. aid program helps finance the defense industry in America. This type of aid only serves to promote a culture of corruption in the recipient countries and keeps unelected officials in power. In recent years, Washington has been giving some money to civic associations, but the amounts are small when compared to U.S. military aid, or to the needs of Middle Eastern NGOs.

Many private philanthropic organizations in the West have shifted their largess to aid civic associations. NGOs now proliferate throughout the Arab world, and these organizations suffer not only from political repression but also from lack of resources. Feminist organizations in particular have to navigate between the hostility of the state and the hostility of Islamic fundamentalists in society. These organizations, and female-led groups promoting economic development among women, would benefit from U.S. economic aid. Yet even when some groups such as, the feminist organization led by Nawal Saadawi in Egypt, receive private American aid (Abukhalil).

Many Westerners and their respective governments are uniformed when it comes to gender issues in the Gulf States. some preliminary evidence show that both U S endorsements reduce support for women's representation more among women who opposed the monarchy than supported it That finding holds even though regime opponents and supporters have similar attitudes about gender to interpret those unexpected findings, we argue that, in autocracies, disposition toward the incumbent regime is an important cleavage that shapes citizens' receptivity to endorsements..in the Middle East Some observers after the Arab Spring urged the United States and other foreign actors not to undermine the legitimacy of local reformers' efforts According to Al Jazeera's former director general, Wadah Khanfar,

for example, “what is most important about the Arab spring is that it is coming from Arabs themselves” At least in the case of gender quotas in Jordan, however, the results suggest that foreign endorsements of political reforms will not necessarily delegitimize the cause, even when delivered by American groups that publics might generally distrust As we note in the article: “If American support has no average negative impact on public attitudes toward women in politics, the net effect of active American efforts to promote women’s representation is more likely to be beneficial” (Bush 5 ).

### **3.5.2.1 Women’s Rights and Promoting Democracy in Gulf States**

The claim for women’s rights in the Arab world is considered by the United States as part of the effort to promote democracy in the region, because there is a special relationship between women’s rights and democracy. The idea that working for women’s rights is an integral part of the struggle for democracy is in part a tautology and in part simply wrong. Since, democracy entails equality for all citizens, thus promoting women’s rights means promoting democracy. But democracy also entails creating institutions that are accountable to the citizens and curb one another’s power through a system of checks and balances. The existence of such institutions does not depend on the rights of women. These institutions can thrive, even when women do not enjoy the same political and civil rights as men. Conversely, states that did not have several institutions or a system of checks and balances have recognized the equality of women, historically and even now (Ottaway 6).

Promoting democracy and promoting women’s rights require different approaches, how the United States could contribute to the democratic transformation of Gulf States. It is clear, that it cannot do so through programs which advance the rights of women and opportunities for them. Thus, the advancement of women and the advancement of democracy are not only

incorrect but also dangerous in the atmosphere of deep distrust of the United States that already exists in the Middle East. Combining between democracy and the advancement of women encourages liberal Arabs, who are already doubtful about the U.S. commitment to democracy, and make them more skeptical, the United States has chosen to teach girls to read instead of confronting autocratic governments. Conservative Arabs, who already tend to interpret the moral degeneration (for them) of the West that results in democracy, worry even more when U.S. officials talk about democracy and trying to change the position of women in their societies (Ottaway 11).

The identification of democracy and women's rights leads to sinister interpretations and unintended consequences in the Arab world. There is great need for the United States government not only to rethink the nexus of democracy and the promotion of women, but also to become more sensitive to the great gap that separates what U.S. officials say and what different Arab constituencies hear (Ottaway 11).

### **3.5.3 Canada and Women rights in Gulf States**

Over the course of five years, between 2016 and 2021, Canada is investing up to \$3.5 billion to contribute to international efforts to enhance regional security and stabilization in the world, to provide vital humanitarian assistance to those in need, to help host communities to face conflict, and to increase Canada's diplomatic engagement in the middle east. Over the past decades, Canada has greatly increased its trade presence in the middle east. Growth in exports and imports with the region exceed Canada growth in trade overall (Government of Canada).

Recently, the tension between Canada and Saudi Arabia increased in January 2019, when Canada granted asylum to Saudi teenager Rahaf al-Qunun, who was caught in Bangkok while escaping her guardian. Many see Canada did the right thing by granting asylum to Saudi woman Rahaf Mohammed Al-Qunun, but this step caused irreversible damage to the relation with Saudi Arabia. Dennis Horak has first-hand knowledge of the two countries' testy relationship, having been expelled from Saudi Arabia in August in the wake of Canada's criticism of the kingdom's detention of women's rights activists (Kalvapalle).

Many activists and human rights defenders in Saudi Arabia now in prison or under threat of prosecution because they have asked for more substantive reforms, Loujain AlHathloul, a known activist that filmed herself driving, was arrested for a second time in May 2018 under dubious charges of spying and has been reportedly tortured and harassed. Runaways are also a target, being arrested and returned to their families when attempting to flee. Anti-guardianship activist Alaa AlAnayzi was arrested at the airport waiting for Dina Ali Lasloom's forced return after she was caught escaping. Twitter activist Marian Al Otaibi was arrested on April 2017 under the charges of disobedience and «breach of the peace». Also, those left the country and became voices against the regime. These stories have been harming Saudi's image internationally and hampering the goals for higher status. And many international powers use this Image as pressure sheet on Saudi Arabian government. Increasing discussion on violations of human rights has embarrassed some countries with links to Saudi Arabia, especially after the October 2018 assassination of journalist Jamal Khashoggi. For example, in November 2018, after rumours that Samar Badawi would be sentenced to the death penalty, the Canadian Foreign Affairs Ministry tweeted that it was “gravely concerned about additional arrests of civil society and women's rights activists” (Berlinger).

Spain, Iceland, Sweden, Slovenia, Switzerland, and New Zealand also issued recommendations to abolish male guardianship, starkly criticizing the regime's repression. social engineering measures with excluding nationalist narratives will, in one way or another, limit the possibilities for higher international status as the standard of civilisation referring to women is inclusive– it does not specify which women should or should not be empowered International actors are hearing the voices of these dissident women. In 2019, Loujain AlHathloul was named *Time* magazine's 100 most influential people. Amnesty International called 2018-2019 the 'year of shame for Saudi Arabia', and the stories of these women are becoming viral, pressuring the international community for reactions.<sup>4</sup> Names of Saudi arrested activists are now widely known, and the majority of news on any reform published since 2018 has at least a line remembering the readers that these women are still in jail. Projecting women entrepreneurship and economic empowerment is a way of gaining more international status. Nevertheless, the growing distinction between the right and the wrong kind of women activism will just hamper this endeavour. In sum, the regime's growing authoritarianism (cerlio 59-60).

Alqunun's story spread across social media when she locked herself in a Bangkok hotel room and tweeted for help, rapidly she gains thousands of followers as she wrote that she was in danger. She wrote in her first tweet "I'm the girl who ran away to Thailand; I'm now in real danger because the Saudi embassy is trying to force me to return". Alqunun wrote in another tweet. "I'm afraid, my family will kill me," She said she had suffered physical abuse at the hands of family members and they had tried to marry her off against her will, in a country where male relatives typically exert extraordinary control almost every aspect of a woman's life, including marriage, work, study and travel. Rahaf Al Qunun captured international attention as she resisted deportation from Bangkok hotel room arrived

in Canada on Saturday. Foreign minister Chrystia Freeland welcomed Rahaf Mohammed Al Qunun in the Toronto Pearson international airport. Freeland told reporters "Canada was glad we were able to act quickly and to offer refuge to a refugee at the request of UNHCR," (Paris).

Canada granting of asylum to Al Qunun may add to tension with Saudi Arabia, Riyadh expelled Canada's ambassador last year and recalled after Canadian foreign minister Chrystia Freeland criticized the jailing of Saudi activist, Canada granted asylum status to Alqunun on Friday. Alqunun arrived in Bangkok hoping to seek asylum in Australia, after fleeing her family while on vacation in Kuwait. Thai officials seized her passport, she said, but eventually returned it. Kenneth Roth, executive director of Human Rights Watch, said Alqunun chose Canada over Australia because Canada had expedited her case.

Riyadh expelled Canada's ambassador last year and recalled its own top diplomat in Ottawa after Freeland criticized the jailing of two Saudi women activists. Kenneth Roth tweeted "Canada's welcoming of Rahaf is a fitting rebuke to the Saudi crown prince's temper tantrum against Canada for defending the rights of Saudi women,". He also called for Canada to redirect its attention to the jailed activists, now that Alqunun had arrived safely.

Ryerson University professor Mehrunnisa Ali claimed "Canada and Saudi Arabia are in a political battle currently, so because this woman is Saudi, my sense is that there was some political motive in promoting the 'rescuing' of a Saudi girl," (CBC News). The National Society for Human Rights, an organization closely associated with the Saudi government, tweeted after Alqunun's arrival that "some countries and international organizations" are politically motivated to "incite" female teenagers to leave their homes (Paris).

Questions raised after whirlwind story of Saudi teen's asylum, Asked why al-Qunun's claim was processed so quickly, Global Affairs Canada was tight-lipped Now, as Qunun begins a new life in a new country, questions are being raised about the reasons for Canada's speedy decision to grant her asylum, the message it sends and its implications for the future of the country's already-frosy relationship with Saudi Arabia, where an estimated 17,000 Canadians currently live ( Nasser).

Al-Qunun's quest for asylum is just the latest high-profile human rights issue to damage Saudi Arabia's global reputation, the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul last year drew widespread international condemnation and worst the matter. The Al-Qunun case could also influence other human rights activists and believes, Aziza said: “It is true that major players such as the president of the United States usually do not comment on such issues, but a critical mass of writers, activists, and ordinary people keeps the up pressure, and that gives cause for hope” (Knipp).

Horak said that while it’s inevitable that the Al-Qunun case will worsen tensions in the short term, Canada could relieve the damage by maintaining an open line of communication with Saudi Arabia. He adds:

I think [granting her asylum] was the right thing to do but it’s going to have an impact in Saudi Arabia in terms of their views towards Canada. They’ll see this as yet another example of our ‘interference’ in their internal affairs (Global News).

### **3.6 Women Rights as Leveraging on the Gulf Countries**

Although some research have criticized the focus of Western governments and NGOs on goals such as women rights, enhancing women’s representation remains a central objective

of many international democracy promotion efforts in the Arab world. But the impacts of these efforts are more complex than they might appear, Lila Abu Lughod's provocative recent book, "*Do Muslim Women Need Saving?*" challenges what she refers to as a Western "moral crusade to rescue oppressed Muslim women from their cultures and their religion that has swept the public sphere" She notes that international, and especially U S , pressure on Muslim governments to improve on certain measures of gender equality could actually undermine the local legitimacy of feminist causes ( Bush and Jamal).

Women can exchange ideas about different ways to incorporate what they perceive as women's rights in their own socio-cultural and religious settings. A shared anti-Western sentiment is also noticeable among a number of women's organisations and engaged individuals in the Gulf region. A complex set of geopolitical and historical configurations underlie this sentiment. It is important to consider the negative notions towards the West might intersect with how women's issues are perceived at the local and regional level (Seikaly et al. 19).

The injustice experienced by individuals and organisations engaged with women's issues in the Gulf States is, for example, revealed by an emphasis on the role of the USA in uranium pollution in Iraq and its negative effect on women's reproductive health. In the other Gulf States, for example, the UAE, local actors voice concerns about a paternalistic approach associated with Western governments and institutions on issues related to women. At times, women's rights are presented as a Western value imposed on non-Western cultures (Seikaly et al 20).

### **3.7 Does Western Pressure for Gender Equality help?**

One of the most ambiguous issues facing society today is the claim that certain progressive Western ideologies, for instance, secularization and feminism, have lost their validity due to failures to take root in the Arabic world. In order to properly address this issue, it is crucial to examine the context in which these Western theories were initially developed, taking into account the development and consequential failures of the secularization and the limitations of the feminist movement in the Muslim world. The Western narrative of Islam is largely shaped by Western media, which tends to portray the religion as unfairly biased in terms of gender issues and its implicit assumptions of the inferiority of women, when taking into account the views of many prominent Muslim intellectuals, especially those who highlight the importance of the large gap between what Islam stands for and what the social reality is in the Arab world, particularly in the status of women, the supposed incompatibility of Islam with these Western constructs becomes unclear (HoWe 92).

African American feminists as well as Third World feminists are now challenging Western notions of feminism, arguing they cannot adequately address marginalized groups of women. They claim that Western feminism only represents the realities of a particular group of women, mostly, First World, white and middle-class women. In fact, Arabic feminists such as Sa'diyya Shaikh point to major shortcomings of the Western feminist aspects, arguing that because general feminist thought ignores issues related to cultural and social differences, it cannot be used to empower Arabic women. Thus, she and many other Muslim intellectuals believe it is now their duty to "reflect the conceptual difficulties and ideological biases experienced by many groups of Muslims with regard to certain developments in Western feminism." Shaikh defines feminism as including a critical awareness of the structural marginalization of women in society and the engagement in activities directed at transforming gender power relations in order to strive for a society that "facilitates human wholeness for all

based on principles of gender justice, human equality, and freedom from oppression” (hoWe 95).

Gender discourse now in Arab affected by a deep history of conflict between early European colonial encounters in different parts of the Muslim world. As a result of the processes of imperialism and globalization, neo-colonial power structures exist throughout the economic and social spheres of the Arab world. From the perspective of many Muslims, Euro, American cultural hegemony remains largely coupled with a prejudice propagated against Muslims. This problem is constituted by the Western stereotyping of Islam as a “violent, medieval, and, especially, misogynist religion,” as reflected in the enduring legacies of colonial scholarship on Islam. The homogenization of women within dominant Western feminist paradigms, in particular, has led to limitations on the ideology’s applicability, serving to further marginalize women that live in societies with certain cultural traditions and values. The Western feminist approach does not examine the particular material conditions and ideological frameworks that engender disenfranchisement for a specific group of women. Instead, many Western feminist intellectuals cite very basic examples of disempowerment in order to prove the general thesis that women as a group are “powerless.” For example, as Omid Safi writes in *Progressive Muslims*:

Western feminist discourses that represent the hijab as simply symbolic of Muslim women’s subjugation often muddy both the particularity of such a phenomenon as well as the multiple levels of meanings that it may have for different Muslim women.

Mohanty argues that, because Western feminism requires cross-culturally monolithic notions of patriarchy, this only leads to the construction of a similarly reductive and homogeneous type of Third World Difference. She believes the term perfectly captures the

essence of the oppression of most women living in the Arab World, stemming from vastly different patriarchal and gender-related traditions and values. Mohanty claims that this very process of Western homogenization and systematization, which has allowed for the oppression of women in the Third World, must now be re-interpreted within a third world context. One such significant effect of the dominant “representations” of Western feminism is its likeness to imperialism in its view of particular third world women (Howe 98-99).

In recent years, with increasing occurrence of religious extremism as well as enduring practices such as veiling and arranged marriages, it seems these Western teleological theories long believed to promote stability and tolerance are now losing their general applicability and validity. Paradoxically, it seems that secularization and western feminism have often served to undermine these values through the marginalization of religion as well as women in the Third World. Many of the traditional feminist movements in the Middle East came out of secular movements based on Western models and espoused Western ideologies. Yet, this type of movement was often in direct contention with the powerful religious elite, as it often ignored basic religious doctrine and challenged the patriarchal structure of Islam itself. Thus, many of the religious elite saw this rebellion by women as a symptom of a bigger disease.

Western imperialism is a problem that had to be refuted at all costs. As this tension threatened the power relationship between the political elite and the religious elite, many Muslim feminists felt that the only way they could move their feminist agenda forward was through the creation of a new thread of feminist dialogue, one that was able to operate within the bounds of Islam. Again, this is primarily a reason why Western feminism has failed in the Muslim world. It fails to take into account the context and culture of the Muslim world. Thus, it seems that the best way for Muslim women to move forward is to realize that they no longer

have to abandon their socio-cultural identities to have a voice, but can instead refuse to operate within the bounds of Western feminism by placing their feminist movement within the context of Islam (HoWe 100).

## **General Conclusion**

Over time and across space human rights are abused and turn into a political and economic tool of hegemony over other nations, though the fact that most countries in the world agree that human rights are fundamental for living in a more harmonize international community. The Ramsey Colloquium expressed its concerns that the concept of “universal human rights” was being diluted by a multiplying “number of interests, goods and desires that are elevated to the status of rights”.

Arab Spring movements in many Arab countries revealed a gap at the heart of Arab society and politics. Through the Arab Spring, a new outlook on women in the Middle East is taking shape not only in the region but also in the West. Perceptions of women's roles are changing, and the work of activists in the region is starting to make drastic changes on the shape of women's roles in Gulf States. These revolutions have worried many Arab countries into making changes for women's rights to avoid similar ousting of leaderships. One example of this is of the Saudi King allowing women in Saudi Arabia the right to vote, indicates that due to social and political turbulence in the aftermath of the so-called Arab Spring, the Gulf States are gradually taking steps to reflect on the need for genuine socio-political changes, including improvement in women’s rights.

Women rights in the Gulf states witnessed a rabid change in the last decades, some of this changes come as a result of the pressures on women' situation whether by internal or external hands, these hands have both a genuine and malicious intents.

The Gulf States is a uniform and homogenous region, particularly when it comes to the situation of women. Women find themselves in highly diverse socioeconomic and cultural arrangements determined by class, ethnicity, religion, political affiliation, education and age. Promoting women’s rights in some Gulf countries may be consider somewhat symbolic, and

perceive as a means to demonstrate a country's wealth and modernity rather than its commitment to women's progress.

I argue that interest in women's affairs isn't just about concern for women in Muslim countries, but in fact an interest in women in general has been ongoing for a long time and used as an issue to pursue the political agendas of other nations.( Abdullatif, 20)

Women played a prominent role in the Arab uprisings, but as the protests led to political Transitions and societies entered a state of flux.

Championing women's advancement is one way Gulf rulers can present a positive international image. This helps maintain good political, military and trade relationships with Europe and the United States and allays criticisms of human rights violations. In recent years, Arab Gulf women have also fought hard for their rights. Saudi women successfully campaigned for the right to drive, which was granted in 2018. In Kuwait, activists are now pushing for better protections against domestic violence (Liloia). The recent political developments in the Gulf region attest to women's key role in revolutionary and counter-revolutionary processes which served processes of democratization. The Arab uprisings serve women's interests and led into legal and social changes in the women situation.

As'ad AbuKhalil said: "Although there is no gender equality in the Middle East (including in Israel), the phenomena of sexism and misogyny are global not peculiar to Islam, or to the Middle East" (Institute for Policy Studies). Women in the Middle East, face general issues such as, the diversity of female lifestyles and conditions is often lost. Accustomed to stereotypical depictions, Westerners are told that Middle Eastern women are passive, weak,

and always veiled, though veiling has become a symbol of Middle Eastern oppression of women. Actually, the role of the West regarding Middle Eastern women is often obscured. Western colonial powers have historically shed crocodile tears over the plight of Muslim women and have vilified Islam for its role in this oppression. Ironically, in medieval times Islam was actually attacked by Christian polemicists for being too permissive and tolerant in social and sexual matters.

Western treatment of Muslim women has been hypocritical at best. Leila Ahmed, who published a study of women and gender in the Islamic world, dubs the Western attitude as “colonial feminism.” According to Ahmed, colonial feminism refers to the tendency among colonial officers to champion Muslim women’s rights, while at the same time opposing women’s rights in their own countries. Thus the status of women in the Middle East was used merely to denigrate Islam and the culture of the region. The legacy of colonial feminism persists; feminism in the Middle East is often discredited, by governments and by local enemies of feminism, because it is associated with the sequels of colonialism (Abkhalil).

In the present-day Middle East, the Western powers’ responsibility (America’s in particular) for the current state of affairs cannot be denied. Ever since the 1950s, successive American governments have supported Saudi Arabian Islam and have funded and armed Islamic fundamentalist groups, which have tormented Middle Eastern women and frustrated their efforts at emancipation. Furthermore, since many of the oppressive governments in the Middle East survive only because of Western military and/or economic support, the responsibility for local oppression has external dimensions.

Throughout this study we reach three main findings. First of all, the images that the western drew on women in Arab world are deceptive, they see women as victims of oppressive and patriarchy society while, in fact, the situation of women in Arab world is

totally changed. Recently, women became an effective member in the society and they started to achieve their full rights. Moreover, women in Gulf States have witnessed a wave of socio-political and economic empowerments in many fields. The second point is that the western countries such as USA and Europe are always present in the Middle East issues in order to keep peace, security and fighting terrorism, in particular, advocating women rights. The western intervention in Gulf States issues under the name of feminism and women rights violation is to achieve their economic and political goals in the region especially, in oil industry. Finally, we conclude that western ideologies such as Feminism are not beneficial to Arabic women since, there are many differences related to tradition and values between the two cultures. Consequently, the western attempt to improve the situation of women in Gulf States did not make a change since, they mostly call for women liberation and the equality between man and women, while ignore the essential matters as poverty, women unemployment, and oppression. Thus, most western countries seek to achieve their needs in the Gulf States not women's needs.

## المخلص

هناك اهتمام غربي متصاعد مؤخراً، بدول الخليج نظراً لمكانتها الاقتصادية والسياسية على الصعيد الدولي والعالمي وخاصة بملف حقوق المرأة والذي يحاول الغرب استخدامه في بعض الأحيان كأداة للتدخل في شؤون المجتمعات الخليجية أو كورقة ضغط على الحكومات العربية لتحقيق مصالحهم في المنطقة وربما كأداة لإيجاد تعاطف له على الساحة الشعبية في الخليج. فالغرب مدرك حق الإدراك بأنه يتعامل مع ملف يلقي اهتماماً شعبياً، لكنهم يجهلون أن الظروف التي عرّكت المرأة الخليجية غير تلك الظروف التي عرّكت المرأة الغربية، وبالتالي فإنه لا يمكن النظر إلى ملفات المرأة الغربية والخليجية بالنظرة ذاتها، على الرغم من التشابه في بعض الجوانب. لقد تعرضت المرأة عبر التاريخ إلى التهميش والظلم ولكن اليوم الكثير من المجتمعات المعاصرة في دول الخليج، تحاول الآن تغيير تلك الصورة النمطية عن طريق إشراك المرأة وإعطائها حقوقها كاملة وإعادة الاعتبار لها. ولكن مشكلة العقل الغربي أنه لا يزال حبيس تلك النظرة النمطية السائدة في عقول مفكريه وصناع القرار فيه. فالغرب لا يزال يقيم المرأة في الخليج بنفس الميزان الذي استخدم قبل عشرات السنين متجاهلاً ذلك التقدم الكبير الذي أحرزته المرأة الخليجية على كافة الأصعدة. فلا يزال البعض يخطئ في إعطاء المرأة حجمها الصحيح كما لا يزال البعض يجهل التفسيرات الصحيحة لمصطلحات كالحجاب والوصاية الأسرية وغيرها من المصطلحات، التي تعتبر غريبة في عرف المجتمعات الغربية. فعلى الرغم من أن التقدم الذي قطعه المرأة في الخليج، إلا أن الغرب لا يزال مصمماً على الإساءة لدول الخليج متخذاً من حقوق المرأة ستاراً يخفي أغراضه الحقيقية، وعلى الرغم من عدم وجود مطالب من قبل المرأة لم تحقق أو تُلبى من قبل القيادات السياسية، إلا أن هناك بعض الأصوات القليلة والتي تعد على أصابع اليد والتي تطالب بمطالب فردية وحرية غير مقننة وخروج عن العادات والأعراف في المنطقة. هذه الأصوات الفردية هي التي يتلقفها الغرب ويعممها على أنها الوضع السائد لنساء المنطقة وأن المطالب التي تطالب بها تلك

الأقلية هي مطالب نساء الخليج. لذلك فان هذه دراسة تهدف إلى تسليط الضوء على وضعية ومكانة المرأة العربية بعد حركات الربيع العربي كما تركز على أهم التطورات والتحديات التي شهدتها المرأة في الخليج ماخرا, بالإضافة إلى التدخل الغربي في شؤون المرأة العربية, واهم هدف لهذه الدراسة هو كشف نوايا الدول الغربية الحقيقية من وراء المطالبة بتحرير المرأة في الخليج. لذلك استعملنا في دراستنا منهجية تاريخية وصفية تحليلية لوصف وضعية المرأة في الخليج تاريخيا وتحليل المعطيات والإحصائيات المتعلقة بتطور حقوق المرأة في الخليج في الآونة الأخيرة, كما اعتمدنا على مصادر ودراسات سابقة. من خلال هذه الدراسة نستنتج أن المرأة في الخليج شهدت تقدما ملحوظا خلال العقود الأخيرة, وان الدول الغربية كالولايات المتحدة ودول الاتحاد الأوروبي يدعون أن المرأة تعاني من الظلم والاضطهاد في معظم بلدان الخليج وذلك من أجل تحقيق أغراضهم السياسية والاقتصادية في المنطقة.

## **Glossary of Terms**

- **Feminism**

Is the movement that has fought for the rights of women throughout history, to allow women's voices to be heard and to have political and social relevance. As Conrad and Peplau (1989, 381) state, 'feminism is both an ideology - a set of beliefs and values about women and gender relations – and a social-political movement for social change' (Abdullatif 14).

- **Gulf States**

The countries that are located around the Persian Gulf: Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq and Iran

- **Human rights**

Human rights are the fundamental rights and freedoms that belong to every single one of us, anywhere in the world. Human rights apply no matter where you are from, what you believe in, or how you choose to live your life (“What are human rights?”).

- **Middle East**

“Middle East” was originally coined in the late 19th century by the British. The Middle East at the time was defined as the region lying between these two extremes: the Arabian Peninsula, Mesopotamia, and the Persian and Central Asian lands.

- **The Arab Spring**

Arab Spring is the term generally used in the media in reference to the turbulent and yet exciting changes currently occurring in the Middle East.(Abdulltif 14)

- **Weaponization**

To use something in order to deliberately inflict harm on people is to weaponize it. When a group or government weaponizes something, they take an ordinary object and turn it into a weapon. These days, it's common to describe everything from words to the internet as being weaponized in fact, you can weaponize anything that can be used to attack someone else. "Weaponization ".<https://www.vocabulary.com/>

## Works cited

### Books

Esfandiari, Haleh, and Kendra Heideman. *The Role and Status of Women after Uprisings*. IEMed. Mediterranean Yearbook, 2015.

Al Zowaimil, Majid A. *After the Arab Spring: An Analysis of the Future of Journalism in the Middle East*. Diss. Auckland University of Technology, 2016.

Alhmoudi, Mohamed Khalifa. *The impact of international human rights on women's rights in the United Arab Emirates: progress towards gender equality*. Diss. Middlesex University, 2017.

Blythe, Devin M. *The Arab Spring and its Effects on the Region, the United States, and the International Community*. Diss. Johns Hopkins University, 2014.

Bush, Sarrah, et al. *Women and Gender in Middle East Politics*. George Washington university: Project on Middle East Political Science, may 10, 2016.

Duryea, Catherine Baylin. *Human Rights Movements in the Middle East*. Image 2019.

- Haller, Kelly. *Muslim Women and the West: Faith, Feminism, and the Quest for Gender Equality*. 2011.
- Hvidt, Martin. *The New Role of Women in Saudi Arabian Economy*. News Analysis Center for Mellemostudier. Syddansk University, 2018.
- Khamis, sahar. *The Role of Media in Arab Transitions: How Cyberactivitism is revolutionizing the Political and Communication*. Media and Arab transition, university of Maryland.
- Kinninmont, Jane, and Ana Echagüe. "The Gulf States and the Arab Uprisings." *FRIDE & the Gulf Research Center, Spain*, 2013, pp. 47-57.
- Koranteng, Nana-Korantema A. *Women in the Machinery of War: Gender, Identity & Resistance Within Contemporary Middle Eastern Conflict*. 2016.
- Nicolas, Leila. *Minority Rights in Arab Levant: between Extremism and the Envisioned future Regional System*. ISA Conference Human Rights in an age of Ambiguity in Minority and Indigenous Rights Panel, Fordham University, 13- 15 june, 2016.
- Ottaway, Marina, and Marina Ottaway. *Women's rights and democracy in the Arab world*. No. 42. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2004.
- Pruzan-Jørgensen, Julie. *Islamic Women's Activism in the Arab World: Potentials and challenges for external actors*. No. 2012: 02. DIIS Report, 2012.
- Realizing Qatar National Vision 2030 The Right to Development*. Doha: Qatar's fourth national Human Development Report. Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics, United Nation, 2015.

Sarhan, Abu, and Taghreed Mahmoud. *Voicing the Voiceless: Feminism and Contemporary Arab Muslim Women's Autobiographies*. Diss. Bowling Green State University, 2011.

Seikaly, May, Rahil Roodsaz, and Corine Van Egten. *The situation of women in the Gulf states*. 2014.

UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *UN Women for Arab States and the Committee on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW Committee) Regional consultation for the Proposed General Recommendation on Women Human Rights in Situation of Conflict and Post-conflict Contexts*. AMMAN, Jan. 2013

United Nations Human Rights. *Women's Rights are Human Rights*. New York and Geneva: United Nation Publication. 2014.

Usman, Abubakar A. *Women's Rights in the Gulf Cooperation Council: a Comparative Analysis*. University kebangsaan Malaysia, 2011.

## **Articles and Journals**

“Saudi Arabia 2018 Human Rights Report”. Country report on human rights practices 2018. United States Department of Statistics. *Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and labor*, 2018, pp. 1-59.

“The National Report of The State Qatar on The complete and Effective Implementation of The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action”. *State of Qatar*, 2014-2019, pp. 1-70.

- Abousleimen, Issam. "Women in the Gulf Countries: Perception and Reality". *World Bank Blogs*. Arab Voice. November 10, 2019, pp. 1-4.
- AbuKhalil, As' ad. "Islam, Judaism, and the Political Role of Religions in the Middle East." *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 4, 2005, pp.116-117.
- Al Munajjed, Mana, "Women's Employment in Saudi Arabia a Major challenge". *Ideation center*. Booza company, 2016, pp. 1-21.
- Al Sharif, Fahad L.alghalib. "Empowering Women: Educational programs and Reforms in Diversified Saudi Economy." *Dirasat king Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies*, No. 49, 2019, pp. 4-56.
- ALharbi, Rakan. "Women's Rights in Saudi Arabia: Example of Political life and Employment ". *Working papers*, Vol. 10, No. 131, 2015, pp. 1-27.
- Al-Hitmi, Saad. "Qatar Economic Diversification in Qatar National Vision 2030". *State of Qatar ,Ministry of municipality and Environment*, pp. 1-14.
- Al-Khateeb, Tarek Tawfik and Zafar Sultan. "Role of Women in Economic Development in Saudi Arabia: a case study of AlKharj Governorate." *International Journal of Academic Research, library of congress*, vol. 6, no. 3, 2014, pp.1-10.
- Al-Nouri, Anwar Abdullah. "Legislative Decree. No4 of 1987Consercs Public Education". *Kuwait reports CEDAW in Education*, Ministry of Education, Feb 11<sup>th</sup>, 1987, pp. 39-44.

- Al-Rushaid, Wafa. "Strengthening of National Capacities for National Development Strategies and their Management: An Evaluation of UN DP's contribution." *United Nations Development program*, Evaluation office, 201, pp. 1-24.
- Alsuwaida, Nouf. "Women's Education in Saudi Arabia". *Journals of International Education Research*, Vol, 1. No, 2, 2016.
- B.Sajoo, Aryn. "Minority rights in the middle east". *Ethics & Global politics*, vol.7, No. 1, 2014, pp.41.
- Bayat, Asef. "Activism and social development in the Middle East." *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, No. 34, Vol.1, 2002, pp. 1-28.
- Beijing+10. "Kuwait Brief Overview of Kuwait's Experience in the Implementation of the Beijing platform for Action (Beijing +10)." *United Nations*, pp. 1-11.
- Borhani, Seyed Hadi. "The Regional Context of Human Rights in the Middle East". *Journal of world sociopolitical studies*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 2018, pp. 127-159.
- CEDAW. "Women's Rights in the United Arab Emirates". *International Federation for Human Rights*, Jan 2010, pp. 1-7.
- Colombo, Silva. "The GCC Countries and \The Arab Spring, Between Outreach, Patronage, and Repression." *Institute Affari internazionali*, IAI Working Papers, Vol. 12, No. 9, March 2012, pp. 1-16.
- Doaji ,Nora. "Saudi Women's Online Activism One Year of the "I am My Own Guardian." Campaign. *The Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington*, No. 11. 1050 Connecticut Avenue. NW, suite 1060. Washington.DC 20036. Oct 2017, pp. 1-23.

- Eliman et al. "The contribution of Saudi Women in Economic Development". *International Journal of Business and Economic development*, Vol. 2, No. 3, 2014, pp.1-9.
- Etutleri, Ortadogu. "Saudi Women Under The Context of the Arab Spring". *Alejandra Golindo Marines*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 2012, pp. 9-29.
- FIDH. "The Arab Spring: Taking Their Place?" *FIDH* .Paris, vol. 17, NO. 2225, March 2012, pp. 1-88.
- Findlow, Sally. "Higher Education and feminism in The Arab Gulf". *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, July 2012, pp. 1-22. doi: 10.1080/01425692.
- Fox, Jonathan. "Are Middle East conflicts more religious?". *Middle East Quarterly*, 2001.
- General Secretariat for Development Planning. "Advancing Sustainable Development". *Qatar National Vision 2030. Qatar's second human development report*. July 2009, pp. 1-163.
- Hamd, Vida. "Reflections on Human Rights Understandings in Light of the Arab Spring". *The Hague Institute for Global Justice, Working Papers* Vol. 16, No. 10, May 2016, pp.1-22.
- Harvard Kenedy School. "The Labor Market in Saudi Arabia: Background, Areas of Progress, and Insights for the Future." *Ministry of labor, National labor Obsrvatory and Human Resources Development Fund* . USA. 02138, pp.1-28.
- Heidman , Kendra, Julia Criage Romano." Five Years After the Arab Spring: what's Next for Women in the MENA Region?". *Wilson center Middle East Program*. 2016, pp. 1-29.

- Hindy, Lily. "Kuwaiti Women Leaders Aim to Bring More Gender Parity to Politics". *Report world. The country fund 1919-2019*. June 13, 2018, pp. 1-11.
- Howe, Emma. "Limitations of Secularization and Western Feminism in the Muslim World: religion, Culture, and Identity". *Elements*, Vol. 13, No, 1, 2017.
- Ibrahim, Raslan. "Topical Review digest: Human Rights in the Middle East and North Africa". *An online Journal of Academic Literature Review*.
- Isbrahim, Islam. "Saudi Women: Opportunities and Challenges in Science and Technology". *Education Journal*, vol. 3, No. 2, January 30, 2014, pp. 71-78.
- Karause, Wanda. "Gender and Participation in the Arab Gulf". *kuwait programme on development, Governance and Globalization in the Gulf States. The center for study of global governance*, No. 4. Sep, 2009, pp. 1-43.
- Kehoe, Karrie, "Facbox: Women's Rights in The Arab world". *World News*, Nov 12, 2013.
- Kiminmont, Jane. "Vision 2030 and Saudi Arabia's Social Contract Austerity and Transformation ". *Middle East and North Africa Program. Chathan House the Royal Institute of international Affairs*, July 2017, pp. 1-46.
- Kuhan, Randall. "Marriage in The Gulf States after The Arab Spring". *University of Denver's Center for Middle East Studies Online*, 2012, pp. 1-10.
- Kumaraswamy, P R. " Problems of Studying Minorities in the Middle East". *Alternatives: Turkish journal of international relations*, vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 244-264.

Kuwait Society for Human Right. “A Report on Women Rights in Kuwait Submitted to the Committee on Elimination of Discrimination against Women during the Session 68”. Feb, 2017, pp. 1-10.

Liloia, Alainna. “Women in Arab Countries find Themselves Torn between Opportunity and Tradition”. *The Conversation*. Feb 11, 2020.

M. Fox, et al. “Islamism, Secularism and the Woman Question in the Aftermath of the Arab Spring: Evidence from the Arab Barometer”. *Politics and Governance*, Vol. 4, No. 4, Dec 23, 2016, pp. 41-57.

M. Moghadam, Valentine. “Explaining Divergent Outcomes of The Arab Spring: the significance of gender and Women’s Mobilizations.” *Politics Group and Identities*. Vol. 10, NO. 21565503, Jan 31, 2017, pp. 1-17. (<https://dx.doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2016.1256824> )

M.Kharaif, Rshood. “Fertility in Saudi Arabia: level and determinants”. *Riyadh.king Saudi Univ. XXIV General population conference Salvador*, Aug 18-24<sup>th</sup> 2001, pp. 1-23.

Maktabi, Rania. “Enfranchied Minors: women as People in The Middle East after the 2011Arab Uprisings”. *MDPI Laws*, Vol. 6, No. 4, 2017, pp. 1-25. doi: 10.3390/laws6010004.. ([www.mdpi.com/journal/laws](http://www.mdpi.com/journal/laws) ).

Mariacorrao, Francesca. “The question of minority rights in arabcountries is a religious or a national issues?”.

Martín Muñoz, Gema. “Feminism in arab world”. *Qantara. De*, 2012.

- Mayer, Ann Elizabeth. "Law and Women in the Middle East. *Cultural Survival Quarterly Magazine*, June,1984.
- Metcalfe et al. "Women's Empowerment in The Gulf States: Shaping Economics, Politics, and Culture." *Euram 2009*, 9. 2009, pp. 2-19.
- Metcalfe, Beverly dawn. "Women Empowerment and Development in Arab Gulf States: a Critical Appraisal of Governance, Cultural and National Human Resources Development( HRD) framework". *Human recourse development international*, Vol. 14, No. 2, 2011, pp. 131-148. DOI: 10.1080/13678868.2011.558310.
- Miahara, Sarah. "Women rights and US foreign policy" *journal f international relation*, Jan 13, 2018.
- Mokhtari, shadi. The Middle East and human rights: inroads towards charting its own path. *North western journal of international human rights*, Vol.10, No.4, 2002, pp.194-200.
- Monshipouri, Mahmood. "Human Rights and the Middle East". *Middle East Policy, Gale Academic OneFile*, vol. 10, no. 4, 2003, p. 168+. , Accessed 11 Aug. 2020.
- Muhamad al-Najjar, Sabika. "The Feminist Movement in the Gulf", Vol. 20, No.10, Winter 2003, pp. 29-36.
- N. Rozsa, et al. "The Arab Spring ,Its Impact on The Region and The Middle East conference ". *Academic Peace Orchestra Middle East – Policy Brife*, Vol. 9, No. 10, Aug, 2012, pp. 1-20.
- Naber , Nadine. "Women and The Arab Spring: Human Rights from The Ground Up".<sup>¶¶</sup> *Journal* . University Michigan, 2011, pp. 11-13.

- Naciri, et al. "Gender (Im) Balance in the Gulf Societies". *Oxford Gulf & Arabian Peninsula Studies Forum. Gulf Affairs Spring*, 2018, pp. 1-56.
- Odine , Mourice . "Role of Social Media in The Empowerment of Arab Women". *Journal of Business and Economics*, Vol. 6, No. 12, December 2015, pp. 1-31.
- OECD. "Women in Public Life: Gender, Law, and Policy in the Middle East and North Africa." *OECD Pub.* Paris 2014. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264224636-en>
- Offenhauer, Priscilla, and Alice R. Buchalter. "Women in Islamic societies: a selected review of social scientific literature." Washington, DC: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 2005.
- Ottaway, Marina, "Women's Rights and Democracy in the Arab World". *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. 42, 2004.
- Ottaway, Marina. "Women's Rights and Democracy in The Arab World". *CARNEGIE Papers, Democracy and Rule of Law Project*, No.42, Feb, 2004, pp. 1-16.
- P R, kumaraswamy. "Problem of Studying Minorities in the Middle East". *Alternatives Turkish journal of international relations*, 2, 2003, pp. 244-26.
- Pomeon , Alexandra. "Saudi Arabia condemned to Silence the Situation of Women Human Rights Defenders". *FIDH. The Observatory*, NO. 2225-1804, Jan 2018, pp. 1-48.
- Qatar National Vision 2030. "Qatar National Vision 2030". *General Secretariat for development planning*. July 2008, pp. 2-40.
- Raj khan, Safaa. "Women in Saudi Arabia Status, Rights, and Limitation" .*Washington: University of Washington Bothell*, June 2014.

- Rich, Janine. "Saving Muslim Women: Feminism, US Policy and the War on Terror." *International Affairs Review*, 2014.
- Saqib, Najia and others. "Women Empowerment and Economic Growth: Empirical Evidence from Saudi Arabia." *Advances in Management & Applied Economic*, Vol. 6. No. 5, 2016, pp. 79-92.
- Sas, Ahmad. "Women in the Gulf Where Do We Stand?". *The EURO-GULF Information Center*, Sep 2, 2019, pp. 1-5.
- Savak, Fatima. "ملف حقوق المرأة في الخليج". [File of Women Rights in Gulf States]. *Al Bayan*. Jan 20, 2019.
- Shalaby, Marwa. "Journal of Women and Human Rights in Middle East: A change of Seasons for Arab Women". *Rice University's Baker Institute*, No.1. 2013, pp. 1-48.
- Shalaby, Marwa. "Women's Political Representation in Kuwait: An untold Story ". *James, ABaker III Institute For Public Policy of Rice Univ*, No. 1-23, 2015.
- Sochoury, Yasmina. "Kuwait: Citizens Perceptions of Women in Politics." *NDI. People Mirror*. Feb 2007, pp. 1-27.
- Tailassanem ,Romaissa. "Women's Rights and Representation in Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Turkey: the Patriarchal Domination of Religious Interpretation." *International relations Honors papers*, No. 5, 2019, pp. 1-122.
- The Embassy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. "Saudi Arabia's Reforms and Programs to Empower Women". *Washington .DC*, Aug 2019, pp. 1-7.

Tønnessen, Liv. "Women's activism in Saudi Arabia: Male guardianship and sexual violence." *CMI Report* ,2016.

Varshney, Deepanjana. "The Strides of the Saudi Female Workforce: Overcoming Constraints and Contradictions in Transition." *Journal of International Women's Studies* 20.2, 2019, p. 359-372.

## Websites

"Government of Canada and the Middle East and north Africa". 25 July. 2019.  
[https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/international\\_relations-relations\\_internationales/mena-moan/index.aspx?lang=eng](https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/international_relations-relations_internationales/mena-moan/index.aspx?lang=eng)

"Human rights in the Middle East". *UKEssays.com*, 2018.  
<https://www.ukessays.com/essays/politics/human-rights-in-the-middle-east.php>

Abousleiman, Issam. "Women in the Gulf countries: Perceptions and Reality". *WorldBank.ORG. Arab Voice*, Nov 10, 2019.  
(<https://blogs.worldbank.org/arabvoices/women-gulf-countries-perceptions-and-reality>)

Cheslow, Daniella. "Canada Grants Asylum to Saudi Women who fled her Family". *NPR 24 Hour Program Stream*, Jan 11, 2019.  
<https://www.npr.org/2019/01/11/684452662/canada-grants-asylum-to-saudi-woman-who-fled-her-family>

- De zayas, Alfred. "Un special: the Weaponisation of Human Rights un Today". Oct 15, 2018. <https://dezayasalfred.wordpress.com/2018/10/15/un-special-the-weaponization-of-human-rights/>
- Dunne, Michele. "Support for Human Rights in the Arab world a Shifting and Inconsistent Picture". *Canegieen Endowment for International Peasce*. Getty, Dec 28, 2018. <https://carnegieendowment.org/2018/12/28/support-for-human-rights-in-arab-world-shifting-and-inconsistent-picture-pub-78071>
- Human Right Watch. "Middle East failing to protect workers". Oct 28, 2013. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2013/10/28/middle-east-failing-protect-domestic-workers>
- Human Rights Watch. "Women and Saudi Arabia's Male Guardianship System". *USA*. NO 978-6231-33795. July 2016, pp. 1-109. (<https://www.hrw.org> )
- International Labor Organisation. "Employer-Migrant Worker Relationship in the Middle East: exploring scope for internal labour market mobility and fair migration". *Beirute:(white paper),4 May, 2017*. [https://www.ilo.org/beirut/publications/WCMS\\_552697/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/beirut/publications/WCMS_552697/lang--en/index.htm)
- Kalvapall, Rahul, "Canada shouldn't use teenage Saudi refugee as apolitical football: ex-ambassador". *Global news*, Jan 12, 2019. <https://globalnews.ca/news/4841580/rahaf-al-qunun-canada-saudi/>
- Malmström, Maria Frederika, et al. "Have the Arab Uprisings Helped or Harmed Women's Rights?: Women and the Arab Revolutions: From Equality in Protest to Backlash in the Transition from Old Regimes to New Governments." *MECW: The Middle East in the Contemporary World Middle Eastern Studies Centre for Middle Eastern Studie*,

- The Swedish Institute*, 2012. <https://lup.lub.lu.se/search/publication/9dd83a54-e9e3-49ac-b161-6fd70031aa01>.
- Morayef, Heba. "Human Rights in the Gulf under Renewed Scrutiny ahead of GCC Summit". *Amnesty international*, 7 dec, 2018. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/12/human-rights-in-the-gulf-under-renewed-scrutiny-ahead-of-gcc-summit/>
- Moussly, Rania. "Feminism in the Arab World". *Arab America*, june18, 2010. <https://gulffnews.com/general/feminism-in-the-arab-world-1.568915>
- Mufarreh, Saadia. "Gulf Women Have Come a Long Way". *Aljazeera*. 8 mar, 2019. <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/gulf-women-long-190308131344342.html>
- Nasser, Shanifa. "Who Benefits from Rescuing Rahaf? Question Linger after Whirlwind Story of Saudi teen's Asylum". *CBS News*. Jan 16, 2019. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/rahaf-al-qunun-canada-saudi-refugee-1.4976735>
- Paris, Francesca. "Young Women who fled Saudi Arabia arrives in Canada as Refugee". *KEPBS*, Jan13, 2019. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/rahaf-al-qunun-canada-saudi-refugee-1.4976735>. Accessed on. 16, 2019.
- Scher, Isaac. Restrictions on Press Freedom in the Middle East and Beyond. *The American prospect*, Nov 4, 2019. <https://prospect.org/blogs/tap/restrictions-on-press-freedom-in-middle-east/>

Suzuki, Hitoshi. "Post-Arab Spring Political Changes in the Middle East and Japan's Response—Searching for New Axis of The Peace-Keeping System".  
(<https://www.ide.go.jp/Seisaku/pdf/Pdf>).

UNICEF. "Kuwait MENA Gender Equality Profile Status of Girls and Women in The Middle East and North Africa". *United Nations Children's fund*. Regional Office or the Middle East and North Africa, Oct 2011. <https://docplayer.net/20825709-Kuwait-mena-gender-equality-profile-status-of-girls-and-women-in-the-middle-east-and-north-africa.html>

Waldman, Elliot. "Women's Rights and Gender Equality". *World Politics Review*, Aug 6, 2020. (<https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/authors/2375/elliott-wahldman>)