

The Debate on Gender Equality in Inheritance Resurfaces in Morocco

Calls for Inheritance Equality Reemerge in Morocco Following Tunisia's Move to Shun Sharia Law Dictating that Women Bequeath Half What Their Brothers Do.



By Saad Guerraoui - CASABLANCA

The call for gender equality in inheritance resurfaced in Morocco following Tunisian President Beji Caid Essebsi's move to amend the law on inheritance to guarantee equality between men and women in his country.

If the parliament passes the measure and it is enacted, Tunisia would be the first Arab country and fourth Muslim country to adopt equal inheritance.

Saida Idrissi, president of the Democratic Association of Moroccan Women (ADFM), hailed the move as a major human rights victory for Tunisian women.

In 2016, a legislative initiative to change the inheritance system was submitted by 27 Tunisian members of parliament but was met with fierce opposition.

In Morocco, there has been a long debate about the issue, with activists and religious figures calling for equal inheritance. Sharia law dictates that women inherit half of what their brothers do.

"Morocco is better than other countries although it still needs more effort on this subject (equal inheritance). The debate on it has become more powerful. It is no longer a taboo as it was before and there are official institutions that interacted positively with the subject, such as the National Council for Human Rights. Overall, I see that the situation will soon develop."

Idrissi said Morocco's 2011 Constitution stipulates gender equality in all fields, including economic rights that "enclose inheritance."

"Given that inheritance is a very important economic issue, men do not want to share this wealth to which women have contributed but men always bring the argument that the sacredness of inheritance should not be touched while there are many things that are more sacred, such as the illegality of usury," she said.

Opponents of equal inheritance argue that the law must be kept as it is because God's words are divine and not subject to any interpretation.

Abou Hafis denied that the call for equal inheritance was in opposition to Islam and the Quran.

"There are Quranic verses on jihad and punishments that are not applied today and have been subject to the logic of human development. Texts of inheritance should be similarly dealt with."

India's Top Court Suspends Controversial Muslim Divorce Law

NEW DELHI, (Reuters) - India's Supreme Court blocked the use of a controversial Muslim divorce law until the government frames new legislation, a partial victory for Muslim women who had long argued that the law violated their right to equality.

"This is a sensitive case where sentiments are involved. We are directing the Union of India to consider appropriate legislation in this regard," Justice J.S. Khehar said while announcing a six-month suspension on the practice of the divorce law.

The law allows Muslim men to divorce their wives simply by uttering the word "talaq" three times. Muslim women say they have been left destitute by husbands divorcing them through "triple talaq",



Egyptian Academic Accused of 'Glorifying Satan' After Teaching Milton's Paradise Lost

By Raf Sanchez

An Egyptian university has accused one of its professors of "glorifying Satan" after she taught John Milton's Paradise Lost to students in her English literature class.

Dr Mona Prince, a lecturer at Suez University, was suspended in February for teaching the epic 17th-century poem, which describes how the Devil tempted Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

The university launched an investigation and in its published findings this week it accused the 47-year-old academic of spreading "destructive ideas" to students.



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Trump Turns To 43-Year-Old 'America First' Trade Law To Pressure China

Sen. Sherrod Brown, D-Ohio, said launching the investigation sends a strong signal to China that it will be held accountable if it doesn't work with the United States to level the playing field. But he said the Trump administration needs to go further to address dumping of products such as steel. "We need to follow through with meaningful action and that means the president needs to get serious about trade enforcement, especially on steel," Brown

said. But there are risks to the White House approach. Caroline Freund, a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics, says U.S. companies that try to do business with China could get hurt in several ways. "China is likely to retaliate with tariffs on their own of U.S. goods, and then U.S. companies will be further hurt in China," she said. "It won't lead to anything positive."

UN Urges Iraq to Do More for IS Sex Abuse Victims

UN Rights Chief Says Physical, Mental, Emotional Injuries of Iraqi Women, Girls Inflicted by IS Are Almost Beyond Comprehension.

The Women Were Sold and Traded Across the Jihadists Self-Proclaimed "Caliphate" in Syria and Iraq



GENEVA - Iraq must do more to ensure that thousands of women and girls who survived sexual violence by Islamic State group jihadists receive care, protection and justice, the UN said Tuesday.

In a fresh report, the UN Assistance Mission to Iraq (UNAMI) and the UN rights office also warned that the children born as a result of the sexual violence risked facing a lifetime of discrimination and abuse.

"The physical, mental and emotional injuries inflicted by (IS) are almost beyond comprehension," UN rights chief Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein said in a statement.

"If victims are to rebuild their lives, and indeed those of their children, they need justice and they need redress," he insisted.

The report pointed to the horrific abuse suffered by women and girls, especially from the Yazidi minority, in IS-controlled areas, including rape, abduction, slavery and cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment.

In 2014, IS jihadists massacred Yazidis in Sinjar, forcing tens of thousands of them to

flee, and capturing thousands of girls and women as spoils of war to be used as sex slaves.

The women were sold and traded across the jihadists' self-proclaimed "caliphate" in Syria and Iraq. Around 3,000 are believed to remain in captivity.

The UN report stressed that Baghdad was responsible under domestic and international law to prosecute the perpetrators and help ensure reparations for the victims.

It decried "gaps" in Iraq's criminal justice system, "which

largely fails to ensure the appropriate respect and protection of women and children who have been subjected to sexual and other forms of violence."

It also warned that women who were married to IS fighters, with or without their consent, risked "discrimination and forms of collective punishment" based on the suspicion they cooperated with the group.

The report raised particular concerns over the situation of hundreds of children born to women in IS-controlled areas without birth certificates or with IS-issued documents not accepted by Baghdad.

"The government must ensure (these children) are protected from marginalisation and abuse," Zeid insisted.

He urged Baghdad to ensure that these children are "neither exposed to discrimination through references on their birth certificate that they were born out of wedlock or have a father linked to (IS), nor left unregistered and at risk of statelessness, exploitation and trafficking," he said.

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How the Pipeline Would Benefit Russia at the EU's Expense

That, in turn, would make the facilities linking Russia to Europe through Belarus, Poland, and Slovakia redundant, depriving those countries of an important source of income and leaving them more vulnerable to Russian pressure. More generally, Nord Stream 2 could weaken Europe's interest in finding alternative sources of gas in the decades ahead—especially if Gazprom modifies its prices to beat out the competition.

In the meantime, the debate over Nord Stream 2's construction has already helped pit the Baltic states, Poland, and the United States against Germany, undermining Western solidarity to Russia's benefit. In June, for example, the U.S. Senate voted to tighten sanctions against Russia in a measure that included German and Austrian companies involved in Nord Stream 2 (it was followed by the House of Representatives in July). Austria and Germany condemned the vote, raising the level of antagonism between Berlin and Washington to its highest point since the presidential inauguration of Donald Trump. "Europe's energy supply is a matter for Europe, not the United States," declared German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel and Austrian Chancellor Christian Kern in a joint statement. Behind the strong words lay German businesses' deep commitment to Nord Stream: the project could make the country a major energy-transit hub. (Former German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder is the chairman of the board of Nord Stream AG.)

If Nord Stream 2 is completed, it almost certainly would affect the United States' LNG exports to Europe. Just days before Germany and Austria challenged the U.S. sanctions, the first ever shipment of U.S. LNG into central Europe landed by tanker at Swinoujscie, a Polish port on the Baltic Sea. Polish officials participated in lavish celebrations to welcome the tanker to an \$845 million terminal built to diversify Poland's gas supplies and reduce the country's dependence on Russia.

Other countries in the region, such as Lithuania and Estonia, are also planning to accommodate LNG shipments—not only from the United States, but also from Australia, Africa, and the Middle East. Lithuania has already built an LNG terminal and imports gas from the United States,

some of which it sends to Latvia and Estonia. Such facilities threaten Russia's market share and Moscow's influence over countries that depend on Russian gas.

GAS IN RUSSIA'S TANK

Western defenders of Nord Stream 2 argue that the expanded pipeline will satisfy the EU's need for imported natural gas as domestic production declines. Some refer to Nord Stream AG's claims that the existing pipeline was used in 2016 to as much as 80 percent of its capacity and that usage is increasing. But other estimates suggest that Russia uses less of Nord Stream 1's capacity to deliver gas to Europe, and the EU's consumption of natural gas looks set to decline in the future. From this perspective, it seems harder to justify a second pipeline.

Some German businesses may profit from Nord Stream 2 in the short term, but the real winner from the expanded pipeline would be Russia. Last year, Gazprom provided 33 percent of the natural gas consumed in the EU. By giving the green light to Nord Stream 2, the EU would empower the very country that is working hardest to undermine it. The EU's reliance on the pipeline's supply of gas would boost Russia's foreign reserves and deepen its dominance over European energy markets. Meanwhile, Western investments in new pipelines connecting European nations to the German end of the Nord Stream pipeline would commit Europe to Russian natural gas supplies, discouraging the region's progress on energy efficiency.

Although German gas consumption is declining, Europe's shift away from nuclear and coal power could lead to a limited comeback for gas as a so-called transitional fuel. At the same time, the decline in the EU's domestic gas production, especially in the Netherlands, could lead to increased demand for gas imports in Germany. For those reasons, Nord Stream 2 could give Russia an increased share of the German energy market.

As an alternative, the EU should continue its drive to meet tough targets for energy efficiency. It should also continue to diversify its sources of gas, reducing its reliance on Russian supplies. Led by the European Commission, it should strive to harmonize its member-states' energy policies. The goal should be a unified approach to Russia that does not favor the narrow goals of individual states and companies, but protects the interests of the entire EU.