

The Egyptian Center for Women's Rights

Advancing women's legal and political rights since 1996

Non-periodic Newsletter on the Status of Egyptian Women

Dears,

The year 2020 has ended with all the distress that Egypt, and the world, went through as a result of the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic. Despite the impact of this on the status of women in the world in general and Egypt in particular, there have been many developments in the status of Egyptian women at the legal and political level. In a glimpse; on the legal level, the issuance of a law stipulating "the confidentiality of information provided by

the victims of harassment and sexual assault," has encouraged and motivated many women who are survivors of harassment, but do not report these assaults, in fear of the assaulter, and/or the media knowing their personal information, which threatens the victims' right to privacy, safety, and might even coerce them to withdraw the complaints.

In regards to the political aspect, the 2020 Senate and Parliamentary elections took place recently, which witnessed a large number of female candidates. In the Senate elections, 141 female candidates ran for office, of whom 91 ran for individual seats, 20 under the party lists, and 30 women ran for the reserve lists.

The final results of the 2020 Senate elections saw 40 female candidates winning the party lists, 20 of whom were appointed by the President, out of a total of 100 appointed members. In addition, for the first time, a female candidate won the position of Senate Deputy Representative, and she is Ms. Phoebe Fawzy.

As for the 2020 Parliamentary elections - which are held in two rounds - a number of 632 female candidates ran for individual seats, of whom 348 were independent, and 44 were part of political parties. Women now represent a total of 8.6% of the Parliament.

There were 284 female candidates running on the electoral lists, out of a total of 568 male and female candidates, which represents 50% of the total candidates.

With regard to monitoring violence against women, ECWR received during the period from January to December 2020 - the period of the spread of the Coronavirus pandemic- a total of 11,721 legal consultations in which the number of personal status consultations came in the number of 4,073 consultations, representing 34.7% of the total received consultations. In addition, ECWR produced and broadcasted five online training courses, on various topics including training on establishing civil societies, building leadership skills and how to deal in light of the Coronavirus crisis. We did not lose sight of the political aspect, as a course was prepared on running for local councils elections.

Sincerely,
Nehad Abul Komsan



In this issue

Pg. 2: The highest honor in Spain is awarded to Nehad Abu Al-kumsan for her efforts to promote women's rights



Women In Democratic Transition

Pg. 3: 'Girls Takeover'



Pg. 4: SAFIR...Building Young People Skills and Entrepreneurship



Safe Homes for Women & Girls Campaign



Pg. 5: Success Stories

Email:

ecwr@ecwronline.org

Webpage:

www.ecwronline.org



- NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations
- 2002 Winner of "Top 10 Worldwide Programs" selected by Development Marketplace, World Bank
- Booklet "Rape: the Safe Crime" named Best Idea in the Middle East and North Africa in V-Day's 2001 competition
- 2008 Adel Abo Zahra Award for efforts in the empowerment of Egyptian women

The highest honor in Spain is awarded to Nehad Abu Al-kumsan for her efforts to promote women's rights



King Philip VI of Spain presented **Mrs. Nehad Abulkomsan with the Medal of Civil Merit**, which is of the highest honor in Spain and is given every year to a prominent human rights figure in the world.

The ceremony was held on October 17, 2020 at the residence of the Spanish ambassador in Cairo, in the presence of **Mrs. Arancha Gonzalez Laia, the Minister of Foreign Affairs.**

Such an award was granted to her by the **King of Spain**, in honor of her efforts to women's rights and being a catalyst for change within the Egyptian society.



In her speech during the ceremony, the Minister of Foreign Affairs stated that Mrs. Abulkomsan was awarded the Spanish Order of Merit due to the great role she plays to **advocate for human rights and defend issues of gender equality and women's political rights, and her involvement in combating violence against women.**

Women In democratic Transition



The political empowerment of women is one of the most important transformations for strengthening their leadership roles. This is done by stimulating political participation in all stages; representation in parliament at the national and local levels, assuming leadership positions in executive and judicial institutions, and developing their capabilities. For this reason; The Egyptian Center for Women's Rights monitors women's participation and representation in both the Senate elections and the 2020 Parliamentary elections.

A total of 632 female candidates competed in the 1st round of the Parliamentary elections, where 348 female candidates ran for individual seats, of whom 304 were independent and 44 were for political parties, out of a total of 4006 male and female candidates, representing 8.6%. There were 284 female candidates running for the main electoral lists from a total of 568 male and female candidates, which represents 50%.

The Parliamentary elections ended with the victory of 148 female representatives, including 142 in the list system, and 6 in the individual system, which represents 26% female representation in the upcoming parliament, in addition to half of those appointed by the President of Egypt will be women - and we are still awaiting the list of appointments.

Continued page 4



SAFIR

Building Young People Skills and Entrepreneurship

The evaluation committee, which includes 6 institutions, including the **French Institute** and the **Arab NGO Network for Development**, announced the selection of the **Egyptian Center for Women's Rights** as one of the institutions participating in the "SAFIR" Project.

SAFIR is built around 3 pillars: provide support to more than 1,000 young project leaders, develop a regional network of organisations supporting social entrepreneurship, and foster the creation of spaces for dialogue between youth and governmental authorities.

SAFIR is an ambitious project supporting youth and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 9 countries across North Africa and the Middle East. Co-funded by the European Union, it aims at creating an environment that fosters socio-economic participation of young people and enables the development of entrepreneurial projects with social, cultural and environmental impact.

ECWR participates in this project by adopting a group of young people to work with them through a series of trainings on advocacy, building their skills and entrepreneurship. It also provides them with a number of services and consultations provided by the ECWR's team of experts in various fields.

On the International Day of The Girl

'Girls Takeover'



As part of the initiative "Girls in Leadership Roles", the Egyptian Center for Women Rights (ECWR) celebrated the "International Day of the Girl", as Mrs. Nehad Abulkomsan, Chair of ECWR, relinquished her position for one day to Fatima Mustafa, a 19 year old student at the faculty of law.

This comes within the framework of the Egyptian Center for Women's Rights' cooperation with Plan International Organization and the Ministry of Social Solidarity, in an initiative entitled "Girls in Leadership Roles", whereby Plan International provides young leaders with the opportunity to assume leadership roles in an organization or body for one day, through cooperation with a number of the entities within the framework of that initiative, of which ECWR was one.

Nehad Abulkomsan, ECWR's chairwoman, participated in the celebration organized by the Ministry of Social Solidarity under the support and in the presence of her Excellency the Minister of Social Solidarity Dr. Nevin Al-Kabbaj.

In her speech, Abulkomsan focuses on the issue of cyber bullying girls.

The celebration's Agenda includes opening speeches by the Director of Plan International in Egypt, Mr. Mudassir Sidqi, a speech by the Chargé d'Affairs of the Ambassador of Canada to Egypt, and a speech by Dr. Nevin Al-Kabbaj, Minister of Social Solidarity, and it also includes a panel discussion on the safe use of electronic platforms for girls. A short film entitled "Supporting girls to safely use electronic platforms" will be shown in the celebration, and the ceremony will conclude with the presentation of certificates for the winners of the "Cyber bullying and Media Excellence" competitions.

Women In Democratic Transition- *continued*



The recent Senate elections have ended with 40 female deputies, including 20 from the electoral lists, and 20 female appointees. This means that the percentage of female members in the 2020 Egyptian Senate represents 13.3%.

The voting of Representative 'Febe Fawzi' as the undersecretary of the Senate- as the first woman and Coptic to be appointed this position- is an important step that opens the way for women to access all decision-making positions, in accordance with their participation in public life and their role in the economy.

TO NOT LET WOMEN PAY THE HIGHEST PRICE FOR THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

ONLINE TRAINING COURSE ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

In light of the World Health Organization's warnings of the second wave of the "Covid-19" pandemic, ECWR launched its fourth online training course. In five e-lectures; the online training course discusses the effect of the pandemic on society in general, and on women in particular. It addresses the increase in percentage of violence against women during the pandemic, as well as the role of civil society associations when it comes to facing such an issue, and how to deal with crises in general.

The importance of this Course is to highlight the effect of the pandemic on different sectors of society, how to ease the effects, and the lessons learned in avoiding its negative impacts.

It is worth noting that 185 trainees participated in this course. The five episodes are as follows:

(1): How the government and the family avoid the negative effects of the Covid-19 epidemic

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m8Rs4HKK1Us&t=231s>

(2): How do we face the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic ... What should we do!?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p4IRJQ4XhoY&pbjreload=101>

(3): Tips for a peaceful coexistence in light of the Covid-19 pandemic

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UBxUvb0HBXo>

(4): How women leaders around the world face the Corona crisis.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BqkROOdxZ8Q>

(5): The role of NGOs in facing the Corona crisis, with the participation of women and men

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4kV4Ya4wMzq>

For more, the videos are being broadcasted on Nehad Abolkomsan Youtube channel

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCcxDdx1UQeg5x_kk6yR040w

Safe Homes campaign for women and girls:

On the occasion of the 16 days of activism to combat violence against women, the Egyptian Center for Women's Rights cooperated with Mo7amek platform in launching a campaign titled # [Safe Homes for Women and Girls](#). This campaign came as a response to the distress of a twenty-year-old girl who, along with her mother, was subjected to violence at the hands of the father. The mother managed to escape the violence by going to her family's house, taking all the furniture with her. The young woman was left alone to face the violence at the hands of her father, being forced to serve him and her brothers. He prevented her from going to university or even leave the home at all, and began to eavesdrop on her phone calls. The young woman resorted to ECWR seeking protection, wanting to leave her home and be referred to one of the shelters for battered women. In cooperation with the Ministry of Social Solidarity, she was referred to the nearest shelter to the university in which she studies, and provided a suitable job opportunity to help her complete her studies.

This young woman is one of the very few who has been able to seek and obtain support, but there are many more who do not have the same opportunity. Accordingly, we launched the "[Safe Homes for Women and Girls](#)" campaign, with the aim of raising awareness of the harms of domestic violence on women and children, as well as calling for legislation to combat domestic violence; urgently issuing a law to combat violence against women and girls, and providing them with protection and support measures. ECWR also launched an online training course entitled "[How to live happily without violence](#)" aimed at spreading awareness of the seriousness of violence against women as one of the most serious violations of human rights, and the impact of violence on the quality of life for all parties. It also discusses the causes of violence as a major product of the imbalance of power relations in society, and the importance of working on eliminating discrimination as one of the foundations of power imbalances in society.

Success stories in cases of sexual violence

After going against the tide and refusing to remain silent, "Farha" - a seventeen-year-old girl – is the hero of our **first story** was kidnapped and raped by three young men



belonging to the most esteemed of her village's families. She was expected to conceal her suffering, especially as she is a girl from Qena, one of Upper Egypt's governorates. However,

"Farha" filed a report of her being kidnapped and raped, and accused these men. She

was later exposed to the worst; death threats against her and her family, if she doesn't drop charges.

Indeed, her father went to drop the charges - *After a bribe from the perpetrators' families an amount of 20,000 EGP-* as the girl is a minor and he is her guardian, but the prosecution insisted on hearing that from the survivor, as the crime of rape in law is considered a "major felony" but the girl refused to let go of her rights and insisted on carrying on with the case.

As the law was on her side, the court ruled to execute the three young men who committed the crime. The families of the perpetrators then tried to search for the girl and her family to kill them, but after the girl sought ECWR to provide her with shelter, the center contacted the Governorate Security Directorate, which decided at that time to protect the girl and her family inside the police station until a safe place is provided. With the cooperation of government agencies, the girl and her family were transferred to three different governorates to 'cut off tracking' by the families of the accused criminals so that they could not reach her. A safe house was provided for her and her family so that she could complete her education and life.

Farha, whose case was known in the media as "Farshout Girl," had been subjected to several threats to drop charges since the beginning of the legal procedures and the trial. She was also subjected to threats after appearing on the "Hikayat Nehad" program presented by the lawyer Nehad Abolqomsan on Al-Qahirah and Al-Nas in an episode entitled "Cases of Rape and Breaking the Silence," and that was less than two weeks before the ruling.

To watch the episode, please click on the link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=ezi4dUJnVFs>

ECWR has issued several statements calling for the adoption of a clear and sustainable legal mechanism to protect victims of sexual violence through the units to combat violence against women in the security directorates, and the centers for hosting female victims of the Ministry of Social Solidarity to provide support and protection for women victims of sexual abuse, preserving

their lives from retaliation against them before the families of the perpetrators.

The **second story** comes after media platforms shed light on incidents where more than 50 girls were subjected to sexual harassment and assault, and had published their stories on social media against a young man called "Ahmed Bassam Zaki." In a media campaign launched by the center targeting both:



Girls survivors of violence in order to encourage them to write reports, their families to provide them with the necessary support and encourage them to continue and not give up, as well as targeting the government to demand the importance of issuing a law to ensure the confidentiality of information to protect the girls from the perpetrators' retaliation. The campaign included a number of videos and press releases, as well as cooperation with survivors in receiving their complaints and taking the necessary legal measures. In addition to television interviews and media coverage of the case, which made it a case of public opinion. The perpetrator was recently sentenced to three years in prison.

The outcome of the social movement resulting from these crimes was a stipulation in the Criminal Procedure Law to protect the confidentiality of the survivor and their data, whereby the investigation authorities (ie the Public Prosecution or the investigating judge) are prohibited from disclosing the data, and therefore the media cannot learn his / her identity, which provides the necessary protection from any social stigmatization that occurs when the issue is addressed in the media.

Accordingly, the survivor will guarantee the preservation of the confidentiality of his / her data from the moment of submitting the report until the judgment is issued, which encourages him / her to move to obtain his / her right, preserving his / her reputation in the midst of a trend that is not sympathetic to such cases.

"ECWR considered this as a realization on part of the government, of how important it is to preserve the privacy of whistleblowers, and an important development in eliminating all obstacles facing women and girls in reporting their exposure to sexual abuse. In addition, this law is an encouragement and incentive for many women who are subjected to sexual harassment and assault and do not report due to their fear of having their information leaked, whether by the perpetrator or the press, which threatens their privacy and personal security, which leads to the perpetrator's impunity."