

Advancement on Women's Rights in Yemen

The concept of human rights has been a privilege given only to those who are the “superior” human race. Human rights have been denied to those labeled as the “other” groups and this action been justified through religion and culture. Those seen as the “other” groups specifically target women, among a few other individuals. Women tend to be less than a man and are not given the same rights as men. More specifically women in the Yemen region do not have actual rights due to them not having the same value as men. The lack of women's rights is justified through the culture and religious beliefs practiced in the Yemen region. For the longest time women have been inferior to men in Yemen and Muslim regions, however over the years' advocates for women's right have been creating movements for change to occur in these regions. The women living in the Yemen region are being oppressed due to the Islamic Law. Women in the Yemen and Islamic regions continue to face many issues of lack of human rights and oppression, from previous years to present day. North Yemen became independent from the Ottoman Empire to advance and have better opportunities, however this was not case for the women in the Yemen region, who are fighting and advocating for their human rights. [1]

There is clear difference of statuses of men and women in the Muslim region, when being compared to other civilizations specifically in comparison to Western civilizations. A major difference between these two civilizations is placed on Muslim regions following the Qur'an or the shari'a, which to them is the holy law. This tends to create friction because of how against Muslim regions are in borrowing another region's customs and practices. Women in the Muslim and Western civilizations are given different statues based on that region's laws.



The Islamic Law has placed many restriction on Muslim women due to the myths that have been generated concerning women. A common myth surrounding women in the Muslim region would be that women are perceived as evil due to being labeled as sexual temptations. Another important factor as to why women are inferior to men in the Yemen and Muslim regions is because women are a man's property. The men can be polygamous with the justification that, “male polygamy does not bar us from knowing who the father is, but female polygamy would” [2]. Women are therefore seen as having to be controlled and most importantly have little to no contact with males outside of family.

Women in the Yemen and Muslim regions are struggling with having their voices being heard. Women activists have been changing strategies and tactics in hopes of being able to transition into the modern world. However, the women are being ignored in their fight for gender-equality. What many countries fail to see is that due to the state and religious affiliation women are becoming victims to the laws put in place. The hope is that through continuous activism and support of

women rights in Muslim regions the isolation, gender discrimination, and other forms of inequality will no longer be emphasized. Changes are being made in hopes of helping to provide Yemen the push it needs to become more modern, especially regarding the women. For example, a popular program established was the Girls World Communication Center (GWCC) in hopes of encouraging and empowering young women to can pursue higher education and careers. Nearly after two decades the Republic of Yemen had granted the women the right to vote and receive higher education. Women in the Yemen region are heavily politicized because “the rights of women and the status of women are vociferously debated by men” [3]. However, women activist are labeled as controversial due to the idea of women having equal rights as men is viewed as preposterous. The Yemeni Scholar's Body makes the claim that women are not a man's equal and therefore women should not be guaranteed protection [4]. The Yemeni Scholar's Body claim that the Western calls is simply corrupting women despite article 40 under the constitution. Women's Right activist Fatima Salah goes on to explain on how the Yemeni law does not entitle women to the same rights as men because they do not have a soul. The Women's National Committee is fighting towards changing the Yemeni law.



For about decades there been an increase in what is called the veiling and seclusion, which is used to ensure the women are living “proper” lives. This practice was mostly seen in the Northern Yemen region because of conservatives using religion to justify the little to no human rights given to the women. However, women living in the Southern Yemen region, there has been a significant change the types of jobs women are being allowed to have. If given the choice many women would choose being able to have job over living “proper life”[5] .



North Yemen had gained independence from the Ottoman Empire as a way to create their own societies with new laws to benefit the individuals living in Yemen, however the new societies and laws created had continued to oppress the rights of women. Women are still fighting for their voice to be heard and to be seen and accepted as a man's equal. Although women advocates have helped Middle Eastern regions to become more advanced, there is still much to be done for women to have more rights given to them. Yemen as well as other Middle Eastern regions are not yet fully modernized and only with time they will continue to make advancements in hopes of women being given more rights.

[1] Provence Micheal, "Ottoman Modernity, Colonialism, and Insurgency in the interwar Arab East". *International Journal of the Middle East Studies*, Vol. 3, NO. 2 (May 2011) pp. 205-225
<http://ntserver1.wsulibs.wsu.edu:2135/stable/pdf/23017395.pdf>

[2] Keddie, Nikki R. 1990. "The Past and Present of Women in the Muslim World." *Journal of World History* 77-108.

[3] Yadav, Stacey Philbrick. 2009. "Does a Vote Equal a Voice? Women in Yemen." *Middle East Report* 38-45.

[4] Al-Azazi, Abdulrazaq, "Women's rights advocates: secure women's rights through the constitution," *Yemen Times*, Oct. 15, 2013, <http://ntserver1.wsulibs.wsu.edu:2098/newsstand/docview/1442256926/28C49989CCE34AFAPQ/3?accountid=14902> (January 19,2016)

Illustrations

Figure 1 <https://www.loc.gov/search/?q=islamic+law&fa=online-format%3Aimage>

Figure 2 <https://www.loc.gov/collections/women-of-protest/?fa=subject%3Awomen%27s+history>

Figure 3 <https://www.loc.gov/collections/national-american-woman-suffrage-association/?fa=subject%3Awomen%27s+history>