

Human Rights Council

MADMUN XIV



Theme: Challenging Authority

Topic 1: Male Guardianship in the Middle East

Topic 2: The Criminalization of LGBTQ+ Communities

Intro to the council

The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC), a body of the UN with an objective to promote and protect human rights worldwide, was established 17 years ago. This council of 47 elected members has the “ability to discuss all thematic human rights issues and situations”.



The UNHRC addresses a variety of thematic human rights issues, including women’s rights, rights of minorities, LGBTQ+ rights, freedom of association, and many others. The council also reserves the right to investigate accusations of human rights violations, and official allegations of breaches of human rights in any United Nation member states.

This has not been the first attempt by the UN to deal with the protection of human rights, the UNHRC replaced the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in an effort to be a more efficient body; however, the council does have a history of including countries that engage in human rights violations as well as countries that blatantly disregard the outcry of suffering minorities.

Topic 1: Male Guardianship in the Middle East

Introduction

In modern international usage, the term "human rights" refers to a collection of justified or legal claims. It can be argued that denying someone their rights does not amount to an infringement or breach of those rights, since denial can be viewed as only an attitude with no real societal repercussions. However, it can also be claimed that denial is in and of itself a pernicious type of violation that is as destructive to its victims, particularly in the case of gender discrimination in the Middle East. Human Rights Watch conducted research on male guardianship laws and practices in the Middle East and North Africa, as well as other discriminatory restrictions on women's freedom of movement both domestically and internationally, between January 2020 and July 2023. It excludes discriminatory nationality laws, which restrict women's and their children's freedom of movement by preventing them from passing on their nationality to their offspring on an equal footing with males in many nations in the region. Additionally, it does not address difficulties with immigration and citizenship laws that may affect the freedom of movement of women who are not citizens.

History

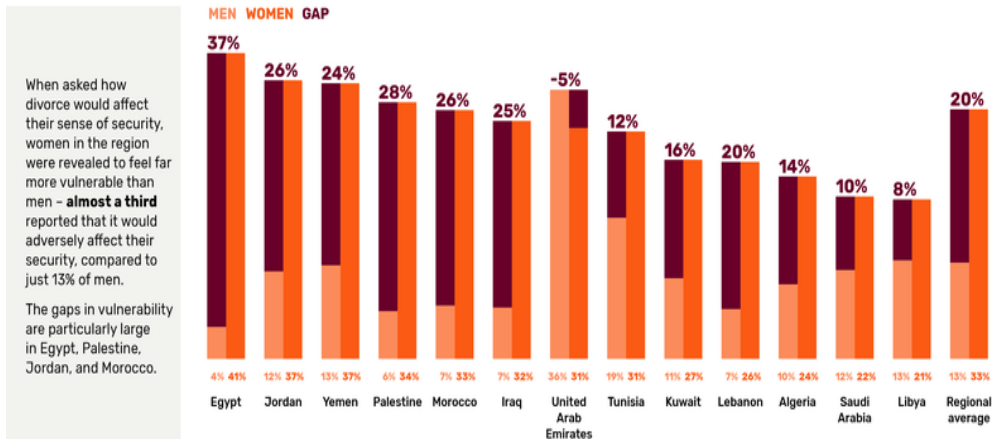
Male guardianship laws are not unique to the area; rather, they are part of a larger history and context that includes worldwide laws and traditions that provide men influence over women's lives or deny women equal legal standing as men. For example, married women were expected to obey their husbands, who were seen as their protectors in several European legal traditions, as well as in some European colonies and former colonies of Australia, Canada, and the United States of America, until far into the nineteenth century. They also lost some of their legal personhood when they married, as the property they held became the property of their husbands.

You must examine Saudi Arabia's history, which is relatively recent in compared to other nations in the region, in order to comprehend this. The country became what it is now due to an alliance between a [chief and a] preacher who was exiled for many years and found safety in a little village in central Arabia in the 18th century, according to Olivier Da Lage, a former Middle East correspondent and author of *The Geopolitics of Saudi Arabia*. He went under the name Mohammed Abdel Wahab. Sheik Mohamed al-Saud was the village's leader. According to Da Lage, this partnership was made possible because the local ruler protected the preacher for promoting Wahab's religion, which later came to be known as "Wahhabism."

The first Saudi state was destroyed by the Turks after they grew concerned about their influence as the alliance grew through time and stretched across the Arabian Peninsula. Then, many years later, in the 19th century, Egyptians and Turks acting as Turks' agents defeated a [second] Saudi state. The modern Saudi Arabia was established in 1932 after a series of unsuccessful republics rose and fell. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was its name. The stringent interpretation of Islam known as Wahabbism served as the cornerstone on which the Saudi kingdom was established each time. Even still, compared to now, women in the kingdom had a fair amount of independence prior to the foundation of the modern state in 1932.

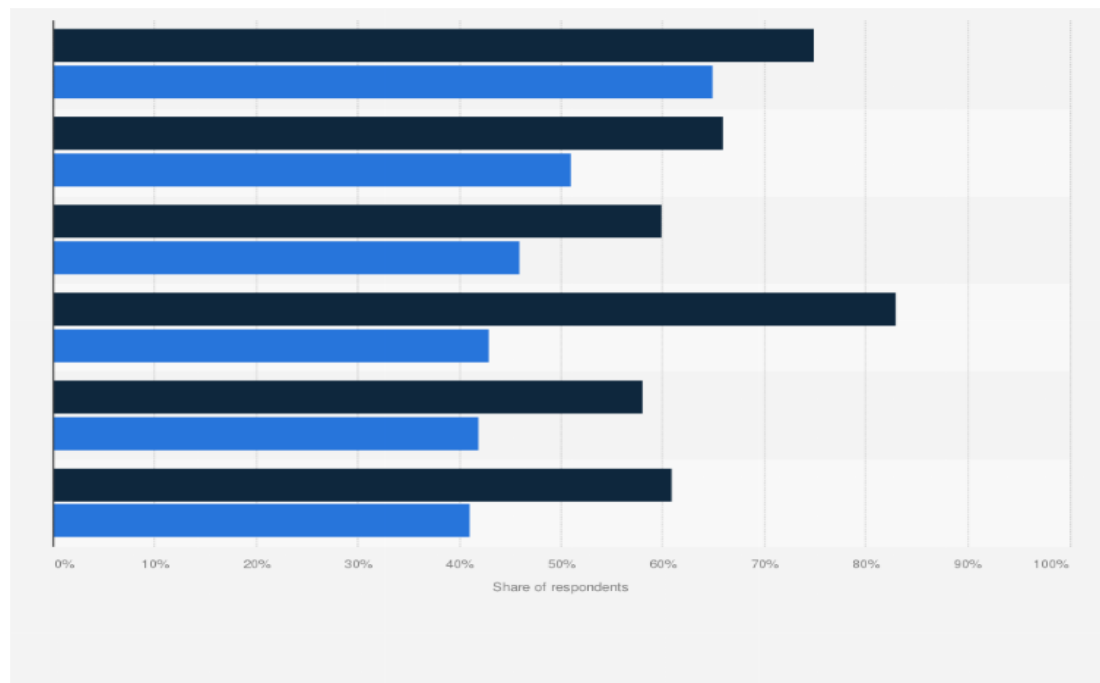
Current Situation

INSECURITY BY GENDER: WOMEN FEEL FAR MORE VULNERABLE THAN MEN WHEN FACED WITH THE PROSPECT OF DIVORCE



This graph depicts the current scenario and emphasizes both where and how the women feel. When questioned about how divorce will impact their feeling of security. Nearly a third of women in the region indicated that it would negatively influence their security, compared to just 13% of males. This indicates that women in the region feel much more vulnerable than men.

According to a 2019 survey on public opinion on the position of women in the Middle East, with 65 percent of female respondents, Iraq had the highest percentage of females who favored male autonomy in making family decisions. Jordan had the lowest percentage of female supporters (41%) of the nations examined.



Questions to Consider:

1. What has your country done in the past to remedy this injustice?
2. What is your country's plan moving forward?
3. How have the women population in your country reacted to harsher laws?
4. Has there been protesting occurring to rectify these offenses?

Topic 2: The Criminalization of LGBTQ+ Communities

Introduction

Community, defined by Google Dictionary, is “ a group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common...” or “a feeling of fellowship with others, as a result of sharing common attitudes, interests, and goals.” This word often comes with a welcoming connotation and the ideology that your community is a safe place; however, this is not the case for everyone. One group in particular often is oppressed in their communities if you were to be referencing the first description. This group is the LGBTQ+ community, which uses the second description of community to their advantage. Within this community, they have a strong sense of their worth and who they are. Nevertheless, many try to discriminate or squelch them down. In the past few years, there has been improvement in many countries; however, this is just the beginning, and there are many discriminatory actions taken against those in the community in the present. The main discriminatory actions are criminal charges established over their romantic interests. From January 2020 to the present day, there have been many criminal charges against the LGBTQ+ community in varying countries. Almost all of said criminal charges are issued with ill intent, and all have bent the line between human rights and what you can or cannot do to a human. The UN writes, “In some 77 countries, discriminatory laws criminalize private, consensual same-sex relationships – exposing individuals to the risk of arrest, prosecution, imprisonment — even, in at least five countries, the death penalty.” These absurd punishments are a reality for too many, and the criminalization of the LGBTQ+ communities is a blatant negligence towards their human rights.

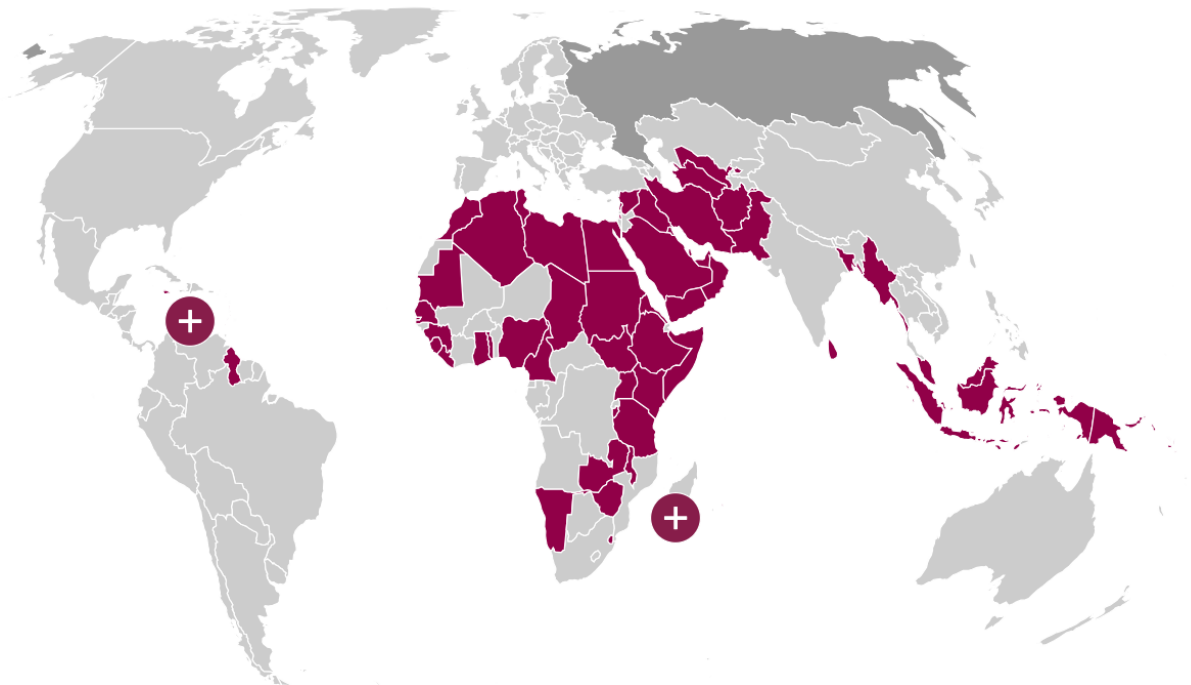
History

Although the LGBTQ+ community has been distinguished for almost all of human existence, they have not dampened their voices, and they will not be discouraged. We can see this through the history of LGBTQ+ protests and social movements. The LGBTQ+ community has not always been outwardly present in society, but within the last century that has changed drastically. There is evidence of homosexuality and same-sex relationships during almost every century, but most people apart of the community during that time were either shunned, confused, or closeted; which is not completely different from what some still go through in the present. According to APA.org, “the first known case of homosexual activity receiving a death sentence in North America occurred in 1566, when the Spanish executed a Frenchman in Florida.” (APA.org) The criminalization of the LGBTQ+ community is not a new idea, and this quote shows a close-to-home example.

In many history books, there are depictions of men and women cross-dressing in early modern Europe and America. At the time, cross-dressing was illegal in many places, but that didn’t stop them. The women often cross-dressed to get a job or to go to war, and the men often cross-dressed to fill in for women’s roles in plays. These people weren’t necessarily crossdressing because they were transgender, but the number of people doing it created a safe place where transgender people could feel themselves but also kept them somewhat safe from ridicule and even execution.

As time went by, common folk became more accepting; however, authorities and mostly upper-class people did not. According to APA.org, “But it would not be until 1973 that the American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality as an “illness” classification in its diagnostic manual. Throughout the 1950s and 60s, gay men and lesbians continued to be at risk for psychiatric lockup as well as jail, losing jobs, and/or child custody when courts and clinics defined gay love as sick, criminal, or immoral.” (APA.org) The 50s and 60s were a time of change, and this is when the LGBTQ+ community started raising their voice.

Current Situation



A map of countries that criminalize LGBTQ+ people. (HumanDignityTrust.org)

Even after all of the new support, there are still a heartbreaking amount of countries that criminalize the LGBTQ+ community. The map above shows the countries that still blatantly sho

Theme: Challenging Authority

Questions to Consider

1. What are the main issues happening in the criminal justice systems around the world?
2. What has your country done to help with this issue?
3. What are some long-term solutions for helping the LGBTQ+ community?

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