

**LEBANESE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY**

**WOMEN IN THE ARAB SPRING**

By

**LARA SAID KABBOUT**

A thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts in International Affairs

School of Arts and Sciences  
June 2015



Lebanese American University  
School of Arts and Sciences - Beirut Campus

Thesis Approval Form

Student Name: Lara Kabbout I.D. #: 200301831

Thesis Title : Women in the Arab Spring

Program / Department: International Affairs/Social Sciences

School: Arts and Sciences

Approved by:

Signatures Redacted

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Imad Salamey

Signatures Redacted

Committee Member Dr. Samira Aghacy

Signatures Redacted

Committee Member Dr. Tamirace Fakhoury

Date

26/06/2015



## THESIS COPYRIGHT RELEASE FORM

### LEBANESE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY NON-EXCLUSIVE DISTRIBUTION LICENSE

By signing and submitting this license, you (the author(s) or copyright owner) grants to Lebanese American University (LAU) the non-exclusive right to reproduce, translate (as defined below), and/or distribute your submission (including the abstract) worldwide in print and electronic format and in any medium, including but not limited to audio or video. You agree that LAU may, without changing the content, translate the submission to any medium or format for the purpose of preservation. You also agree that LAU may keep more than one copy of this submission for purposes of security, backup and preservation. You represent that the submission is your original work, and that you have the right to grant the rights contained in this license. You also represent that your submission does not, to the best of your knowledge, infringe upon anyone's copyright. If the submission contains material for which you do not hold copyright, you represent that you have obtained the unrestricted permission of the copyright owner to grant LAU the rights required by this license, and that such third-party owned material is clearly identified and acknowledged within the text or content of the submission. IF THE SUBMISSION IS BASED UPON WORK THAT HAS BEEN SPONSORED OR SUPPORTED BY AN AGENCY OR ORGANIZATION OTHER THAN LAU, YOU REPRESENT THAT YOU HAVE FULFILLED ANY RIGHT OF REVIEW OR OTHER OBLIGATIONS REQUIRED BY SUCH CONTRACT OR AGREEMENT. LAU will clearly identify your name(s) as the author(s) or owner(s) of the submission, and will not make any alteration, other than as allowed by this license, to your submission.

Name: Lara Kabbout

Signatures Redacted

Signature:



Date: June 08, 2015



### PLAGIARISM POLICY COMPLIANCE STATEMENT

I certify that:

- I have read and understood LAU's Plagiarism Policy.
- I understand that failure to comply with this Policy can lead to academic and disciplinary actions against me.
- This work is substantially my own, and to the extent that any part of this work is not my own I have indicated that by acknowledging its sources.

Name: *Lara Saïd Kabbout*

Signatures Redacted

Signature:

Date: *June 08, 2015*

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

This project would not have been possible without the support, understanding and kindness of many people. First I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Imad Salamey, who read my numerous revisions and made comments on earlier versions of the manuscript. I am deeply grateful for his help, professionalism and valuable guidance throughout this project. Many thanks also to my colleagues who offered constant guidance and support. Furthermore, without the respondents' passion, participation, and input, the validation survey could not have been successfully conducted.

And finally, a special thanks to my beloved husband, Ali Awad, who has endured this long process with me, always offering support and love throughout. Words cannot express how grateful I am to him for all the sacrifices that he has made. Thank you.

# Women in the Arab Spring

Lara Said Kabbout

## ABSTRACT

What are the root causes of gender inequality in the Arab region? Are corrupt and incompetent regimes responsible for the historic subjugation of Arab women? The Arab Spring appears to have presented an opportunity to end corrupt regimes and pave the way for an era of freedom and equality, which women's rights advocates have long pursued. This thesis examines the question of whether the Arab Spring, in which Islamists in many countries rose to power, has positively impacted the status of women in the region. A comparative pre-post research study is conducted in order to reveal the impact of Arab Spring on the status of women in Egypt and Syria. Various gender status indicators are utilized to measure the impact. Findings are triangulated by relying on surveys and personal interviews with women leaders in both countries. The results indicate significant deterioration in the status of women since 2011. Moreover, possibilities and political alternatives concerned with the future of Arab women are briefly discussed.

**Keywords:** Arab women, Women's rights, Arab Spring, Egypt, Syria, Islamists

“All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 1)

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Chapter 1: Introduction	
1.1 Why women in Arab Spring? .....	1
1.2 Historical Status of Women in Egypt and Syria.....	2
1.3 Examining women’s ways forward.....	7
1.4 Research plan.....	9
Chapter 2: Literature review	
2.1 Introduction.....	13
2.2 Overview of the Arab Spring.....	15
2.2.1 Women in Egypt before 2011.....	18
2.2.2 Egyptian Women at the heart of the Arab Spring Revolutions.....	19
2.2.3 Women in Syria before 2011.....	25
2.2.4 Women in the Syrian Conflict.....	26
2.2.5 Syrian Women looking forward.....	28
2.3 The rise of Islamists and the future of women.....	29
Chapter 3: Methodology	
3.1 Introduction.....	37
3.2 Conceptual design/ research planning.....	38
3.2.1 Methods and tools employed.....	38
3.2.2 Data collection.....	39
3.2.3 Research design .....	39
3.3 Survey respondents’ identity.....	41
3.4 Survey questions.....	41
3.5 Interviewees’ Identity.....	47
3.6 Interview questions .....	47
Chapter 4: Results and Discussion	
4.1 Introduction.....	51
4.2 Egypt.....	52
4.2.1 Surveys summary.....	52
4.2.2 Interviews summary.....	63
4.3 Syria.....	66
4.3.1 Surveys summary.....	68
4.3.2 Interviews summary.....	75
4.4 Observations.....	78
4.5 Data utilization.....	81
Chapter 5: Conclusion	
5.1 Summarizing content .....	92
5.2 Women under political Islam.....	93
5.3 Conclusion.....	95
5.4 Women’s way forward.....	97
Bibliography.....	99



## List of Tables

Table 4.1 Female representation in the Egyptian parliament and Constituent Assembly.....	53
Table 4.2 Ranking: How states compare for women in politics.....	82
Table 4.3 Ranking: How states compare for women in the economy.....	83
Table 4.4 Ranking: Women in Education.....	84
Table 4.5 Ranking: How states compare for women in the family.....	85
Table 4.6 Ranking: How states compare for women in society.....	86
Table 4.7 Ranking according to the Global Gender Gap Report 2013.....	87
Table 4.8 Ranking according to the Global Gender Gap Report 2013.....	87
Table 4.9 Women in national parliaments, situation as of 1st December 2014.....	88

## List of Figures

Figure 1.1 Women’s rights in the Arab World.....	6
Figure 4.1 Comparison according to the Global Gender Gap Report (2010-2013).....	89
Figure 4.2 Ranking according to Thomson Reuters foundation 2013.....	90
Figure 4.3 Level of deterioration of the status of women according to the collected surveys.....	91

# **Chapter One**

## **The Introduction**

### **1.1 Why Women in the Arab Spring?**

Much has been said about the Arab Spring. The protests that broke out in Tunisia in December 2010 and afterwards spread into many other Arab countries attracted the attention of many political and social researchers and activists. They identified many elements of these massive yet spontaneous movements in need of analysis in order to understand their causes, and more importantly their impacts. One very important aspect of these protests is their impact on the status of women in the region. Arab women in general have long faced discrimination in Arab countries and from very early on the effects of the Arab Spring on women's rights and social status have been under scrutiny.

Not only did women participate directly in demonstrations, but many took the initiative to lead and organize protests, as well as participating in cyber activism. As a result, women's role in the Arab Spring was undoubtedly significant. However, as Islamist groups and parties took the reins of power in many of the countries that experienced upheavals, many expressed worries about the status of Arab women (Bertrand, 2013).

Egypt and Syria have always been two of the most politically influential countries in the Arab world. Both states became unstable at the beginning of the Arab Spring, and neither has come anywhere close to fully recovering. The substantial

involvement of Islamists in the political and military struggle in these two countries is a key factor in their continuing instability. Moreover, the significant role of women in the revolutions in these two countries, along with the effects of the revolutions upon one another, makes Egypt and Syria a particularly interesting model for our study. Their geographical locations in different continents, also makes our research more comprehensive.

## **1.2 Historical Status of Women in Egypt and Syria**

A wide variety of factors shape the role of women as prescribed by Islam. The various schools of Sharia law expound various rights and duties, but even the most exacting of these interpretations is not exhaustive. The life of Muslim women is generally guided by Islamic laws working in conjunction with cultural norms and traditions which vary greatly between regions (Baffoun, 1982). The majority of Arab countries have adopted religious courts to deal with family law, distinguishing it from civil law. These courts typically give women the status of minors. However, adoption of Islam by the state doesn't always have a negative impact on women's rights, as evidenced by the case of Tunisia, where polygamy was prohibited pre-Arab Spring (Michalak, 2013).

Women in Egypt constitute nearly half of the population. In 2012, the female population was estimated to be 49.79% according to the World Bank (The World Bank, 2012). Veiling and gender separation in public places have historically been common practices throughout Egypt. However, women's rights have historically developed with the change of regimes. In 1956, Jamal Abdul Nasser won the presidential election and a

new constitution was approved. The Egyptian Constitution recognized gender equality and gave women the right to vote. Women began to appear in the public sphere and the subject of gender equality was widely discussed in a wide variety of cultural media, ranging from films to songs. In 1959, women got the same rights to men with regards to wages and compensation (Osman, 2012).

Abdul Nasser was well-known for encouraging policies that favored women's rights and prohibiting gender discrimination, and he did so in hope that women would support him in his construction of a new socialist society. He used education as a means of achieving the unification and development of Egypt. In 1962, Abdul Nasser declared that women "should be freed from all social barriers", and women's participation in public life began to increase. They joined the Egyptian parliament and started their own businesses. Hekmat Abu Zeid was the first woman to serve as Minister of Social Affairs in Egypt. Moreover, women were frequently chosen as representatives and prominent employees. The percentage of women in education continued to grow until it equalled that of men (Osman, 2012). After Abdul Nasser's death in October 1970, Sadat succeeded him as president of Egypt. Sadat was influenced by Islamists movements which Abdul Nasser had clearly rejected. Women's rights deteriorated under his rule, ultimately compelling women to launch a new battle to reclaim them. Sadat regime was characterized by policies that discriminated against women. Following the assassination of Anwar Sadat in 1981, Hosni Mubarak became the President of Egypt. Mubarak's rule has had extensive effects on the functioning of Egyptian society and politics (Sullivan, 1986). Under Mubarak, Egyptian women's access to education and ability to sue for divorce was made far easier. However, sexual harassment continued to take place behind closed doors. In other words, Egyptian society turned a blind eye to rampant sexual

violence. Women's ability to move freely and their right to legal protection were not addressed under the Mubarak regime, and harassment was not considered a legal offence (Abdelhadi, 2008).

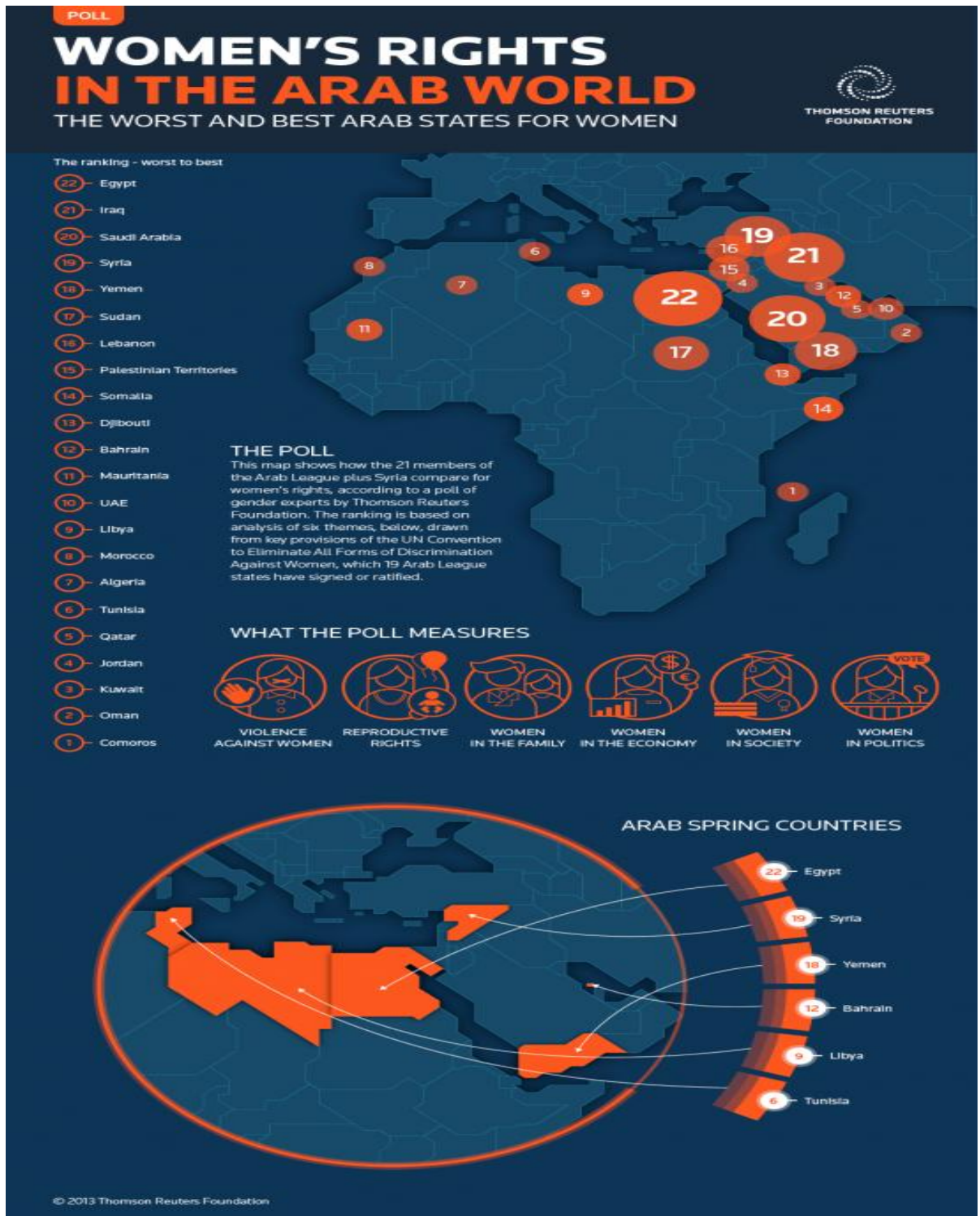
With regards to the status of women in Syria, they have had the formal right to vote since 1949. However, the lack of democracy under the Assad regime meant that this right was of little substantive value. The ruling Ba'ath party suppressed opposition groups and only allowed Ba'ath members to run in elections. As a result, women in Syria were unable to effectively participate in political decision making during the four decades of Assad's rule. Moreover, the Syrian culture is extensively influenced by Islamic values and is generally a patriarchal society. These facts further restricted women's ability to be genuinely involved in many aspects of life, especially politics (Charles & Denman, 2012).

On the eve of the Syrian revolution, despite the promulgation of some more traditional laws such as defining a marriage contract as an agreement between the groom and the bride's father, Syrian women had far more extensive legal rights than most of the other Arab women. For example, with regards to divorce, Syrian women have the right to retain custody of children until they are fifteen years old. Furthermore, married women can hand over the Syrian nationality to their children, a right which is not enjoyed by many of their Arab counterparts (Charles & Denman, 2012, p. 203).

However, the status of women in both Syria and Egypt has changed radically over the course of the Arab Spring. For example, sexual harassment was rife in the crowds of the numerous massive protests that took place in Egypt since 2011 (Caspani,

2013). In Syria, the military conflict has forced many Syrians to flee from their homes. This, along with severe economic deterioration has left millions of Syrian women in miserable conditions. Indeed, a recent poll by Thomson Reuters (2013) on the state of women's rights in Arab countries three years after beginning of the revolts indicates that of the states which were part of the Arab Spring, Syria and Egypt are now the two worst places for women (see Figure 1.1 below).

Figure 1.1 Women's rights in the Arab World





### **1.3 Examining Women's Ways Forward**

Women constitute around half of the population, so the effects of the Arab Spring on this vast group cannot be underestimated. If the uprisings empower women, and help them to undertake effective and beneficial roles in their families and communities, this will undoubtedly have a positive impact on the growth of these nations as a whole. Conversely, should subjugation and discrimination continue, this can only contribute to the underdevelopment of these nations. The Arab Spring initially bore the promise of a better, more liberal future for Arabs; a future of prosperity, development, and freedom (Mabrouk, 2012). However, this cannot happen if half of the population continues to be subjected to discrimination and harassment. Thus, it follows that in order to fully understand the impact of these uprisings and their potential implications for society, we must examine the status of women and their rights in light of the Arab Spring in general, and in Egypt and Syria specifically.

This paper examines contemporary real-life situations and employs several different methods and ideas to analyze how the Arab Spring has altered the situation for women. It presents several economic, social, cultural and political indicators which can help to understand the extent to which women have been empowered or disenfranchised. These factors are then used to evaluate the status of women prior to and during the revolutions of the Arab Spring.

A large number of analysts specializing in the region identify a direct link between Islamists' rise to power and the deterioration of Arab women's rights (Fairweather, 2008). They assert that Islamists' conservatism, along with their

orthodox and often puritanical interpretations of religious texts leads them to restrict women's public role, maintain their legal weakness, and impose gender discrimination (Fairweather, 2008).

Himelfarb (2011), a veteran Washington journalist, has extensively criticized the American government for its failure to publicly denounce what he calls the rising Islamists' anti-Western, anti-pluralism, and anti-women rights statements and actions.

Namazie (2011) believes that the only way for women to ensure their rights' explicit preservation is for the state to become fully secular. In the speech at the International Conference 'Islam in Western Countries' which was held in Turin, she criticizes "any attempts to promote 'good' versus 'bad' versions of Islam and Islamism". Instead, she argues isolated and removed from the public sphere. Instead, the focus ought to be on combating substantive cases of suffering caused by oppressive interpretations, and how it can be used to positively reshape politics in numerous countries especially those having a Muslim majority.

Other researchers disagree. For instance, Dr. Isobel Coleman, a senior fellow for U.S. Foreign Policy at the Council on Foreign Relations and director of the Council's Women and Foreign Policy program, argues that the movement of Islamists into politics is actually changing their attitude towards women (Fairweather, 2008). She believes that potential transition is driven by the Islamists' need to appeal to female voters, and their desire to improve their image in the minds of other segments of society. Abdellatif and Ottaway (2007) also suggest that Arab women and Islamic parties can cooperate in a

way that would benefit both sides. Islamists need women voters for their democratic quest for power, and they also need to disprove claims that Islamists pose a danger to women. As a result, having women in their ranks will no doubt benefit them. At the same time women can operate from within the Islamist movements and as a result influence policies without the risk of being accused of pursuing a western agenda.

#### **1.4 Research Plan**

The research approach is based on semi-structured interviews and literature collection in order to assess post-Arab Spring attitudes, opinions, and behavior. This analytical and empirical project utilizes survey based data collection approach along with to existing data to triangulate the analysis. It targets a sample of men and women from different Arab states via Skype calling, with a view to describing what people feel or think about the subject of women and their rights. To simplify, it is a one-shot post-research design because it is confined to a single time-period that covers the first three years following the 2011 revolutions.

The research methodology requires gathering relevant data and facts from the specified documents and analyzing them in order to construct a critical evaluation of the subject. It is located within a particular social, cultural, and historical context. There is a heavy reliance on historical and comparative researches in order to analyze women's experiences in different societies during the Arab Spring. Descriptive analysis is used in order to depict the status of women in the Arab world. Furthermore, this feminist and cultural research discusses gender and identity issues being shaped by the Arab Spring.

In addition to survey data collected by Skype calling, additional data is collected from credible newspaper articles, interviews, reports, books, and social media, including documented events as well as theoretical arguments. Live interviews are carried out with women from different Arab universities, mainly from Egypt and Syria during the “WEP GENDER COURSE” workshop (Nordic-Arab Network of Research on Women’s Empowerment) which was held in Jordan, to further explore the research question.

Observations related to Arab women are conducted using various techniques and methods. Questions are designed to give respondents the opportunity to express their thoughts on what they consider to be the most pressing issues for women and the factors that most affected women in their countries. Recent research on intercultural communication and interview design is discussed to validate collected data.

This research investigates the actual impact that the rise of Islamic movements had on Arab women in their struggle to preserve their rights and further develop their stance as active and effective members of their communities. Other questions are raised and possible answers are provided. For example, did the Arab Spring give women a platform to express their demands, anxieties, and views? Do they now receive more attention? Is it still too soon to evaluate the influence of the Arab Spring on women’s rights? (Haerens & Zott, 2013) A tabulated comparison of the views and attitudes of different Arab women in Egypt and Syria indicates that in certain areas the Arab Spring may have been a strong determinant of both positive and negative change. Comparative country analysis shows both advances and setbacks.

The next chapter is a review of the literature concerning the implications of the Arab Spring for women. These reviews illustrate the theories and methods that previous researchers have used as a framework for their research.

In chapter three, the research methodologies are used to examine the discussion surrounding the question of how the so-called Arab Spring affected women. This chapter introduces the methods and tools employed to collect and analyze the data. It sketches the question-and-answer dialogue used, in order to criticize and evaluate different practices and ways of thinking. After comparing respondents' thoughts and actions, possible conclusions can be established.

Chapter four offers an overview of the economic, social, cultural and political indicators related to women's empowerment in Egypt and Syria. It examines a wide variety of indicators, including: the extent of women's representation in politics and civil society, the role of cultural factors with the potential to restrict women's full participation in society, women's financial independence, discrimination against women with regards to property rights and employment, the reasons for women accepting undesirable marriages and avoiding divorce, and the most dangerous forms of violence against women such as marital rape, child marriages, female genital mutilation, and human trafficking. This entails gathering and processing related data from a wide variety of sources in order to analyze the facts and accurately characterize the influence of the Arab Spring had on the social position of women.

Finally, the last chapter offers a summary of the research findings. Further suggestions concerning the improvement of the status of women in the relevant countries is also provided.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Literature review**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

Reporters who closely followed the events of the Arab Spring often noted the substantial participation of women in many of the uprisings. Haleh Esfandiari, the director of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, asserts that women played a key role in the demonstrations of 2011 in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria, Bahrain, and other Arab Spring countries. “During the uprisings, there was no gender segregation among the demonstrators—not in Cairo’s Tahrir Square, Manama’s Pearl Square, nor on the streets of Tunis, Sana’a, and Tripoli. Women and men stood side by side, marched together, protected each other from government forces, and were united in calling for reform and regime change” Esfandiari affirmed (cited in Heideman & Youssef, 2012).

Many different, often conflicting arguments and studies have been presented to explain both the factors that pushed women to contribute so extensively to the Arab Spring, and the extent to which they benefitted from it. Shirin Ebadi, an Iranian Lawyer and Activist, believes that gender discrimination in the Arab world was the driving force behind the major role women played during the Arab Spring. She argued that the so-called Arab Spring has not yet begun, and substantive social change will not begin until women achieve equal rights (cited in Heideman & Youssef, 2012).

Noor Al Jehani, the executive Director of the Doha International Institute for Family Studies and Development (DIIFSD), claimed that the Arab Spring's effect on women is complicated. The revolution was supposed to lead to gender equality, while instead most women are facing more extensive discrimination and violence. Al Jehani argued that the Arab Spring is still an ongoing process and the reforms are still incomplete, especially with regards to gender equality. The World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index ranks countries in terms of women's participation in economy, education, health and politics: countries such as Turkey, Egypt, Syria and Yemen were some of the worst amongst the 135 countries studied (United Nations, 2013).

Rola Dashti, a Kuwaiti government minister, noted that Arab women did not isolate themselves during the 2011 revolution. On the contrary, they were fighting in the same boat allied with Arab men in their struggle. Dashti argued that women are disappointed with the effects of the Arab Spring so far. Women are almost completely absent from positions in the new governments and parliaments, and their social position continues to deteriorate. Dashti described the Arab Spring for women as the "spring without flowers" (cited in Heideman & Youssef, 2012).

This research paper analyzes two contradictory hypotheses. The first claims that the recent Arab Spring events opened a window of opportunity that will eventually lead to the improvement of the status of women, while the second claims that the Arab Spring has only contributed to its deterioration. This second hypothesis is based on the



claim that the uprisings cannot benefit women while Islamists are in power, since democracy and political Islam are genuinely incompatible.

## **2.2 Overview of the Arab Spring**

What follows is a short comparison of most of the countries affected by the Arab Spring. Tunisia, which was one of the most secular Arab states before the Islamist Ennahda party won elections in 2011, scored highest with regards to its respect for women's rights, mainly due to the introduction of the Code of Personal Status in 1956 (Charrad, 2007). Before the Arab Spring, Tunisia supported women's rights. These rights included: access to contraceptives and abortions, marital and divorce rights, a minimum marriage age, the right to vote, the prohibition of the veil or headscarf. However, the most important aspect of the code of Personal Status that differentiated Tunisia from other Arab countries was the abolishment of polygamy (Charrad & Zarrugh, 2013).

During the 2011 Tunisian protests, women of all socio-economic classes and generations took part in the demonstrations. They led and organized the protests through cyber activism and social media (Beardsley, 2011). After the revolution, however, new rules and laws were implemented; polygamy became legal, and Tunisia's first free elections required alternation between male and female candidates. Increasingly, women have come under pressure to be veiled. There have been several cases of young Tunisian Muslim girls being moved to Syria to serve sexually in what is known as jihad al nikah. In the new assembly which formed in 2011, forty nine women gained seats, forty two of which are members of Ennahda Islamist party (Byrne 2011).

In Libya, where laws concerning family and women were largely inspired by Islamic laws before the Arab Spring, polygamy was legal but limited and rare. Women had access to education but were largely excluded from politics and dissuaded from wearing the veil. During the 2011 protests, they transported medication and weapons to the rebels. They led and organized protests through social media, such as Facebook, YouTube, flickr, twitter, mobile phones, and blogs. “There is one part of the narrative that everyone seems to agree on: women were a crucial motivating factor in the midst of the struggle for freedom. Whether it was the hundreds of Libyan women who traveled with the men to the frontlines to form makeshift kitchens or the women positioned inside Qaddafi strongholds who smuggled guns and information, women carved out a space for their participation” (Omar, 2011). After the revolution, the situation for women became unclear, but one of the first announcements made by the interim government suggested that all laws that contravene Sharia law would be canceled and polygamy would become legal. A draft law ensuring women's quota in parliament had failed (Oliver, 2012). However, an electoral law mandated that each list must alternate between male and female candidates in order to ensure that women would be nominated. Women won thirty-three of the two hundred seats in the 2012 parliamentary elections (Langhi, 2012). Despite their successful participation in politics, women still face barriers to achieving leadership positions and participating in the public sphere. Taking care of the children, home, and family remains their primary responsibility (Caspani, 2013).

In Saudi Arabia, there was no education gap prior to the Arab Spring, but because of the absence of an elected parliament, women’s political participation and representation was negligible. Saudi law requires women to have the consent of a male

guardian in order to travel, work, own property, open a bank account, or even undergo medical surgery. It was the only country where women cannot drive, or even ride a bicycle. Like Libya, the Saudi law is based on the Islamic Sharia. The Islamic law allows women to work on condition that it does not influence their primary responsibility of taking care of their children and their household. Saudi women are required to wear a veil which covers their face (Balaa, n.d.).

The Arab Spring and media may have played a critical role in influencing the development of women's rights in Saudi Arabia. Since 2015, women in Saudi Arabia will have the right to vote and to hold office in the Kingdom's Shura Council. Furthermore, they will have the right to work in various sectors without approval from their male relatives. Saudi Arabia has also recently passed a law criminalizing domestic violence (Begum, 2013). On October 26, 2013, the "Women2Drive" campaign supported Saudi women's protests calling for their right to drive. Many women drove and published online videos in defiance of the ban (Bager, 2013).

The Arab Spring also changed the face of two of the most influential leading Arab countries, Egypt and Syria. These two Arab Spring countries in particular have long played key roles in shaping the political image of the whole region. Further study regarding the case of these two countries is appealing for two main reasons. Their stability, as well as the regional power and influence that these two countries wielded in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century prior to the Arab uprisings, makes them the most appropriate case-studies in order to better understand what drove the Arab Spring. The also may give us some indication as to the impact of the Arab Spring on the region as a whole. Furthermore, the Arab Spring has had a cataclysmic effect on women in Egypt

and Syria. Observers have recently drawn attention to the dramatically deteriorating conditions facing the citizens of these two countries, with women bearing a disproportionate share of these sufferings.

### **2.2.1 Women in Egypt before 2011**

Prior to the revolutions, women's rights in Egypt evolved with the change of regimes. Egyptian traditions generally implied having as little contact as possible between the two genders. Veiling and gender separation in public places have always been common practices throughout Egypt (Guenena & Wassef, 1999). However, the period of Jamal Abdul Nasser's rule was famous for promoting policies that favored women's rights and restricted all kinds of gender based discrimination, while simultaneously continuing to discourage the political representation of women (Guenena & Wassef, 1999, 26). On the other hand, the Sadat and Mubarak regimes were characterized by policies that discriminated against women, and in the case of the former, the policies catered to Islamists.

The Egyptian Center for Women's rights (ECWR) claimed that in 2008, 83% of women, including those wearing the veil, had been sexually harassed in Egypt, and 65% of men asserted that they had harassed women (Estrin, 2011). Harassment is not the only form of sexual abuse that Egyptian women have been suffering - most women in Egypt are subjected to female genital mutilation (FGM), otherwise known as female circumcision. The process involves the partial removal of the external sexual organs and it is sometimes carried out using a knife or a blade without any anesthesia (El-Zanaty et al., 1996, p. 171). Egyptian women, in particular the non-working, condone this

procedure and consider it a “good tradition” with multiple advantages (El-Zanaty et al., 1996, p. 172). The Egypt Demographic and Health Survey (EDHS) performed in 2000 suggested that 97% of married women have been circumcised. According to the EDHS, the main reasons behind Female Genital Mutilation were cultural, religious, and based on a common belief that it is better for personal hygiene (Tag-Eldin et al., 2008). In 2003, a different study prepared by the Egyptian Ministry of Health and Population concluded that more than 69% of the total circumcised married women do not object to this procedure being performed on their daughters.

### **2.2.2 Egyptian Women at the heart of the Arab Spring Revolutions**

During the 2011 protests, women were leading and organizing demonstrations through cyber activism. Women joined the revolution as activists, protesters, and frontline fighters. However, the number of cases of reported sexual harassment cases in public squares and streets rose exponentially, to a large degree committed by security forces and men who were opposed to women participating in the protests. Consequently, this violence created an atmosphere of fear amongst women in the Tahrir Square. For instance, a video showing military force soldiers stripping a woman’s top off and stamping on her chest, while other men held her on the ground caused 10,000 women to demonstrate in Cairo in December 2011 (The guardian, 2012). Mona Eltahawy, a well-known Egyptian journalist, claimed that she was sexually assaulted and hit by Egyptian security forces while reporting the protests in Egypt. "5 or 6 surrounded me, groped and prodded my breasts, grabbed my genital area and I lost count how many hands tried to get into my trousers," she claimed (Eltahawy, 2011).

Mob attacks were widespread in 2011. These mob attacks started in 2006 but they did not gain much attention. However, as of 2011, attacks have become more visible and aggressive with the new government. Women of a wide variety of different ages have been grabbed, beaten, assaulted and possibly raped in Tahrir Square (Aumeer, 2012). However, this statistical rise may be in part due to the fact that women are more likely to report cases of sexual assault.

Moushira Khattab, a former Minister of Family and Population in Egypt, recognized the decisive role that Egyptian women played in the 2011 revolution. Women and men were united, and together they called for political and social change. Afterwards, this partnership was broken, and women were mistreated and abused in the Tahrir Square, the same place where they were calling for freedom, dignity, and equality. Khattab asks: “With religious parties controlling it, the question becomes: Will this parliament be willing and able to produce a constitution that guarantees equal rights to all Egyptians regardless of gender or religion?” (Heideman & Youssef, 2012)

Following the 2011 Egyptian Revolution, President Mohamed Morsi won the 2012 presidential elections. Morsi was one of the most important members of the Islamist Muslim Brotherhood movement and the ex-president of an Islamic political party called the Freedom and Justice Party. Shahira (2011) describes the tasks the Muslim Sisterhood, the Muslim Brotherhood female section, performed in contributing to the foundation of the Freedom and Justice Party and convincing new members to join this party in April 2011. However, Morsi’s rule was marked by many controversies and ultimately ended in failure, as his new administration failed to bring prosperity to the

majority of the Egyptian population. By April 2013, millions of Egyptians demonstrated against Morsi, resulting in the division of Egypt into two rival groups: Morsi and Islamist followers on one hand, and moderates mainly on the other. On 3 July 2013, Morsi was ousted and imprisoned with nearly all of the Muslim Brotherhood leaders.

Jenny Montasir (2013) expresses worries regarding the status of women in Egypt, in light of the Muslim Brotherhood's rise to power. She believes that the Morsi regime caused setbacks for women on many levels during the first year of his presidency. Two prominent examples were the promulgation of a constitution that did not explicitly recognize women's rights and gender equality, and perhaps more tellingly the act of removing the pictures of unveiled women from school-books. As a result, Montasir recognizes the need for women to be innovative in their methods for achieving equality and recognition of their rights, in light of the new political facts. Mervat Tallawy (cited in Montasir, 2013) insists that the movement for women's liberation will not stop no matter how much the ruling party attempts to suppress them. "We are not desperate. In Egypt... the fall of the existing system will be because of women. They don't sit at all. Their voice is raised at demonstrations, signing petitions – they are everywhere. We will not accept the situation. We will fight it until the end. Either they will put us in jail or they will change their attitudes."

The United Nations unit working for the empowerment of women announced that 99.3% of Egyptian women had been sexually harassed in 2013. In January of the same year, the Human Rights Watch (HRW) declared that nineteen women had experienced mob sexual assaults. Ninety-one sexual attacks were reported to have occurred between 30 June and 3 July 2013. It should also be noted that the attackers

were preventing women from publicly taking part in the protests (Human Rights Watch, 2013). Ramy Aly (cited in Caspani, 2013), the editorial consultant for an Egyptian TV program, noted that the harassers blame women for dressing inappropriately. Aly discussed many factors that encourage sexual harassment. These mainly include high unemployment rates that lead to difficulty in getting married and so sexual frustration, poverty, as well as a traditional image of woman that limits them to only taking care of children and the household (Caspani, 2013).

During the 2013 revolution, Stoter (2013) revealed that women continued to experience difficulties while taking part in the protests, especially with the government's desperate efforts to stop these from happening. However, women believed that men's violence should not stop them from participating and ensuring that their voices were heard. Moreover, non-governmental and non-political groups such as Tahrir Bodyguard group played a significant role during the protests by protecting women from assaults. In November 2013, seven women were punished and fourteen went to jail because they were found gathering and holding weapons at the protests (El Sirgany, 2013).

On 12 November 2013, a poll of gender experts by Thomson Reuters Foundation concluded that "sexual harassment, high rates of female genital cutting and a surge in violence and Islamist feeling after the Arab Spring uprisings have made Egypt the worst country in the Arab world to be a woman". The poll gives a complete image of the situation of Arab women's rights three years after the events of 2011, after measuring different aspects that affected women and their rights. Egypt scored the worst in almost all categories. Discriminatory laws, forced marriages, high rates of female genital mutilation and sexual harassment, increasing violence against women, low rates of



female participation, lack of women's rights in the constitution, and the rejection of the quota system are all factors that made Egypt the worst Arab state with respect to women in 2013 (Boros, 2013).

According to the United Nations Refugees International, many Egyptian women have been left widowed, displaced, or exposed to kidnapping and rape. The instability and conflict has extensively affected women, in addition to the increase of domestic violence. "The social acceptability of everyday sexual harassment affects every woman in Egypt regardless of age, professional or socio-economic background, marriage status, dress or behavior", said Noora Flinkman, the project manager at a Cairo-based rights group that fights against sexual violence. Flinkman added that "it limits women's participation in public life. It affects their safety and security, their sense of worth, self-confidence and health" (cited in Boros, 2013).

Boros (2013) believes that the Arab Spring was a major setback for women's rights in Egypt. The revolution offered women the promise of equal rights, but this is a promise which still yet to be fulfilled. "We removed the Mubarak from our presidential palace but we still have to remove the Mubarak who lives in our minds and in our bedrooms," Egyptian journalist Mona El Tahawy said. "As the miserable poll results show, we women need a double revolution, one against the various dictators who've ruined our countries and the other against a toxic mix of culture and religion that ruin our lives as women."

Unlike Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the third worst country in the poll, has witnessed some improvements. Women in Saudi Arabia have more employment chances and a

greater public voice than other Arab countries, though Saudi Arabia is the only country that forbids women from driving (Boros, 2013). Moreover, in Arab states such as Tunisia and Libya, female representation in parliaments and government increased in the post-revolution period due to the alternative electoral law which mandates that each list must alternate between male and female candidates in order to ensure that women were elected (Coleman, 2013).

Coleman (2013) argued that women's participation in the Egyptian parliament might not reflect a boost in respect for women's rights. For instance, half of the female representatives in the last Egyptian parliament belonged to the Islamist Freedom and Justice Party. However, Coleman stated that this could be seen as a remarkable step forward, because it is a means to increasing female political participation. In other words, "Having a voice at the table – even if it is quiet – can be better than having no voice at all" (Coleman, 2013).

Likewise, Haas & Lesch (2013) hold that the change in Egypt is a process that takes place gradually over a long period of time. The uprisings over the course of the past three years were only small steps towards a huge revolution in the future. They argue that the case of Egypt is a very complicated one, in which change and stability need a lot of time to be attained. Moreover, the people will continue to demonstrate in order to reach their goal of a fair and democratic society that supports gender equality.

Montasir (2013), on the other hand, observes that women in Egypt must not only face a political challenge, but also a cultural one. Feminist organizations must reach out to a wider array of social classes, especially in rural areas where women are in need of

more assistance, but whose problems cannot be resolved by national policy but rather by small-scale communal change. Moreover, a global vision must be achieved that focuses on media campaigns and education reformation. The way in which men are raised in Arab societies should also be reassessed and efforts must be made to change how they see women (Montasir, 2013).

### **2.2.3 Women in Syria before 2011**

The ability for effective political participation was minimal for most women in Syria during the four decades under the Assad regime. Moreover, the Syrian culture is to a large extent influenced by Islamic values and is generally a patriarchal culture. This fact has further restricted women's ability to be genuinely involved in many aspects of life, especially politics (Charles & Denman, 2012).

Other challenges that face Arab women in general, and especially Syrian women, with regards to politics and decision making include: cultural expectations that women often find hard to resist, gender discrimination in childhood where girls are taught that they have different duties and rights to boys, low confidence levels, and a lack of productive interaction between organizations concerned with women's issues (Al Maaitah et al, 2011:15). It seems that most women in Syria have adapted to the role that has been allocated to their gender - to stay in and manage their households. Any further interest or participation in social or political activity seems almost unnatural for women in Syria.

Both the law of personal status and the criminal code in Syria are discriminatory towards women on certain issues relating to marriage and inheritance. Moreover, a law

that was implemented in the 1960s prevents children having a Syrian mother and a non-Syrian father from holding the Syrian nationality (Human Rights Watch, 2012). However, a new counter law was later drafted to allow the passing on of nationality from mother to children. It must also be noted that Syrian women gained numerous rights that other Arab women still lack. Firstly, the Syrian constitution recognizes equality between the two genders. When marital disagreements occur for example, Syrian women have the right to keep their children until they are fifteen. As for the right of education, there is negligible difference between the sexes with regards to completing school and university education, in a country that boasts very high literacy levels among its citizens. Indicators concerned with literacy rates and work score very high for women in Syria (CIA, 2013). However, the patriarchal nature of the Syrian society, as well as other factors discussed earlier, present a sizable obstacle which hinders Syrian women's ability to make effective use of their education and invest their knowledge in work, or in the socio-political domain. Moreover, women in Syria generally wear outfits that resemble those worn in the west (Charles & Denman, 2012).

#### **2.2.4 Women in the Syrian Conflict**

The revolts in Syria started in March 2011 as an attempt to overthrow the Assad regime. Hafez Al Assad had been ruling Syria for several decades before Bashar succeeded him. Many saw in Bashar an open minded and educated man who intended to modernize Syria and slowly transition to a democracy. Bashar indeed performed some social and economic reforms in the first years of his presidency and created an atmosphere of political openness, accompanied with announcing "amnesties to political prisoners of all persuasions, licensing of private newspapers, a shake-up of the state-

controlled media apparatus, provision of political forums and salons in which open criticism and dissent were tolerated”. However, despite this he postponed any political restructuring due to his belief that such step is more complex and requires more time. Another reason, some believe, was the influence of elements of the old regime that had been present during the rule of Hafez Al Assad. These figures warned Bashar that the growing power of the prodemocracy groups would eventually topple the current regime if the state of openness and freedom continued (Haas & Lesch, 2013).

Syrians were encouraged by the outcome of uprisings they witnessed in other Arab Spring countries such as Egypt and Tunisia, where protests alone were sufficient to topple the regime. While they hoped to emulate the same successful journey, this was not to be the case. The peaceful demonstrations were met with a brutally violent crackdown by the Syrian armed forces. In response, the Free Syrian Army was assembled, mainly from Syrian army defectors, in order to protect these demonstrations and defend civilians from the attacks (Charles & Denman, 2012).

At first, women’s participation in the revolts was clear. A large number of women protested in the streets of Baniyas against the imprisonment of their male relatives by the regime forces. Moreover, Syrian women formed small groups to raise money, food, and supplies for suffering families in areas that had been severely impacted by the conflict. “In some cases, Syrian women alone interrupted the Arab League patrols and took inspectors to meet affected families when the security forces attempted to mislead the monitors and take them to pro-regime inhabited areas” (Roman, 2012). However, as

the ferocity of the war increased and women were being raped and civilians wounded and murdered by regime forces, women's role in the opposition steadily diminished. Most Syrian women were forced to change their focus from revolution to survival (Files, 2013). In addition to the militarization of the conflict, some believe that the growth of Islamic groups within the opposition further weakened this role. "In some areas women were forced to separate from men during protests and to wear a veil" (Elali, 2013).

In the Thomson Reuters poll that targeted the condition of women in different Arab countries three years after the start of the Arab Spring, Syria ranked among the worst four out of twenty-two countries studied. The poll suggests that the status of women in Syria tremendously deteriorated mainly due to the ongoing military conflict. "Syria's civil war has had a devastating impact on women at home and in refugee camps across borders, where they are vulnerable to trafficking, forced and child marriage and sexual violence", the survey concludes (Boros, 2013).

### **2.2.5 Syrian Women Looking Forward**

It is clear that the status of women improved under the Assad regime, especially during the last ten years, after President Bashar Al Assad took power. Syrian women gained better political representation, equal access to education, and had begun to challenge dominant male-biased traditions in their society. However, many factors still prevented the vast majority of Syrian women from genuinely becoming involved in social and political life. It is true that the Arab Spring failed to deliver on its promise to expand women's capabilities; however, it has provided them with a platform from which they have operated for the first time as leaders in a still patriarchal society (Charles &

Denman, 2012). Elali believes that Syrian women are already looking towards the post-Assad phase. They want to ensure that the future government will support women's rights, improve their status, and reassess discriminatory laws. In order to better contribute to the future of Syria and play an active role in all levels of society, "peaceful activists are now working on gaining more knowledge in democracy, justice and active citizenship so that they can play a role in resolving problems that are being born today under extreme violence" (Elali, 2013).

### **2.3 The rise of Islamists and the Future of Women**

The previous sections summarized the course of the Arab Spring in several countries, focusing on Syria and Egypt, which are two of the most important and influential Arab states. These sections also examined the status of women throughout the Arab world, and how the rise to power of Islamists that accompanied the Arab Spring could have had an immediate effect on their struggle for equal rights. This section explores arguments presented by writers who have attempted to evaluate and predict the future of women in light of the Arab Spring. Does the Arab Spring provide an answer to the pertinent problems affecting women in Arab countries? Or will it present additional challenges for these women, particularly with the emergence of Islamist political powers in many parts of the Arab world? Many argued that the Arab Spring can only add to the suffering of women, since Islamists will attempt to extend discrimination against them in the name of religion. Others believe that this fear is exaggerated, claiming that Islamists' participation in the political field and their integration in democratic systems will

ultimately force them to become pragmatic and more tolerant, especially with regards to women rights.

The compatibility of Islam and politics and its effect on women has been point of academic interest long before the start of the Arab Spring. Huntington (1993) suggests that future world conflicts will be based on cultural differences, which he refers to as the “clash of civilizations”. He believes that with time, civilizations accumulate strongly held values that are very hard to change. These fundamental irreconcilable differences, along with other factors will inevitably lead to a clash between the different civilizations, he claims. Huntington divides civilizations into two categories. The first group can be easily westernized while the other is highly unlikely to embrace western values. He identifies Islamic civilizations as being amongst the major anti-western civilizations that are highly resistant to western values, democracy and gender equality being the most prominent of these.

Javed (cited in Asbali & Javed, 2013) claims that the Arab Spring, which started as a movement for freedom, has now turned into something else. The rise to power of groups which adhere to strict Islamic ideologies has disappointed many of those who believed that genuine liberalism, democracy and secularism would follow the revolutions. Javed offers the decision of the new Libyan government to permit polygamy as an example. However, despite being unable to free societies from the chains of religion and proving to be no quick fix for the countries’ problems, Javed admits that the Arab Spring has at least given rise to a form of political freedom that was previously not found at all in most of the Arab countries (Asbali & Javed, 2013).



Likewise, Himelfarb (2011) prefers to name the phase that the Arab world is going through as 'the Arab winter'. He elaborates on the violent history and anti-western agendas of Islamist parties that rose to power in countries like Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya. Himelfarb focuses on the Muslim Brotherhood, its connection with terrorist groups like Al Qaeda, and its ultimate goal of implementing the rule of the Islamic caliphate across the globe. As a result, he believes that Islamic rule of the Arab world would eventually put an end to hopes of modernization. Finally, Himelfarb criticizes the way the American government embraced these parties, and criticizes its failure to recognize the potential threat that they pose (Himelfarb, 2011).

Rend Al-Rahim (cited in Heideman & Youssef, 2012), the Executive Director of the Iraq Foundation, also labels the Arab Spring as a 'bleak season'. Despite playing a major role in the uprisings, women only gain nine out of five hundred seats in the Egyptian parliament in the elections held after the 2011 revolution. The Kuwaiti government currently has no female representatives. In Libya, the armed men who are now in control implemented the Sharia law, and in Yemen, the male fighters have also converted their military dominance into a political one, Al-Rahim claims. As a result, the future of women's rights does not look bright, given the current situation across the region. However Al-Rahim doesn't blame Islam for the deterioration in the status of women. Instead, she blames the conservative, male-dominated culture that uses Sharia to perpetuate the patriarchy. Al-Rahim suggests that women publicly pursue human rights, instead of calling them women's rights, because the ruling men are resistant to calls to respect the rights of the female gender.

Fatima Kassem (cited in Heideman & Youssef, 2012), a former director at the UN Center for women, refuses to judge the Arab Spring yet. However, she recognizes the correlation between the growth of Islamic parties in the Arab countries and the declining status of women. She criticizes the Islamists who benefited from the significant participation of women in the uprisings, and then asked them to go home. Kassem asks people not to be deluded by the numbers and statistics that are being presented about female participation in politics. The real indicator for women's progress is the extent to which women are genuinely involved in the decision-making process in their countries. As a result, she urges women to vote only for what she calls "women-friendly" Islamists.

Like Fatima, Yesim Arat (cited in Heideman & Youssef, 2012), the Vice Rector for Academic Affairs of the Bogazici University in Turkey, admits that the period after the revolts witnessed attempts to marginalize women yet again. However, she believes that it will be hard for anyone to suppress women in an "interdependent and connected world" where the internet and media facilitates the rapid transfer of information. Women nowadays are becoming more educated and more aware of their rights and as a result, the recognition of their deserved rights will only be a matter of time, she claims (United Nations, 2013).

Namazie (2011) on the other hand calls for secularism. She believes it is the only means for women to achieve recognition of their rights. In her speech at the International Conference, she attacks Islam not because of its intrinsic nature, but because of its destructive effects on numerous human beings across the globe. She dismisses all debates that focus on Islam and that "promote 'good' versus 'bad' versions of Islam and

Islamism”. Instead, she calls for valuing people as human beings whose rights, demands, and well-being are far more important than any ideology or religion.

Many writers, on the other hand, argued that the rule of Islamic parties is not necessarily bad for women. For instance, Dr. Isobel Coleman, a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations and director of the Council's Women and Foreign Policy program in New York, argues that as Islamic parties are increasingly involved in politics, they are forced to become more pragmatic. “The movement of Islamists into politics is actually changing their attitude towards women”, she claims. Coleman believes that Islamists are doing so for two main reasons. The first is their need to appeal to women because they ultimately need their votes, and the second is their need to present themselves as moderate parties to external observers and skeptics. He claims that the advantage that Islamic parties have over secularists is that while the latter can only appeal to the educated urban class who are a minority, the former can reach out to the poorer classes of people, where women could benefit a lot if Islamic parties adopt female-friendly policies. Coleman gives the example of the Islamic AKP ruling party in Turkey which has recently taken the issue of women rights into consideration in their agenda (Fairweather, 2008).

Abdellatif and Ottaway (2007) also suggest that Arab women and Islamic parties can cooperate in a way that would benefit both sides. Islamists need women voters in order to get power democratically; they also need to refute all claims that characterize Islamists as a danger to women. Simultaneously, as more educated women are joining Islamic parties over the recent years, they are putting pressure on these parties to

recognize their rights. Women can operate from within the Islamist movements and as a result they do not risk being seen as breaking the conservative cultural norms and values. However, Islamic male leaders in these parties remain reluctant to give women key positions and allow them to be involved in decision-making. However, Abdellatif and Ottaway confirm that Islamic women are slowly pushing for equal rights and forcing debates regarding their inferior role and voicing their aspiration for its enhancement (Abdellatif and Ottaway, 2007).

As the revolutions spread over the Arab world and Islamic parties were able to come to power in several countries, many argued that fear for the future of the Arab world in light of these new political facts was not justifiable, and provided several reasons for this conviction. Asbali (cited in Asbali and Javed, 2013), for example, criticizes all those who believe that the Arab Spring should have converted the Arab world into a western-like model in order to be labelled as a success. She finds the comparison between the West, where values of democracy and freedom have been deeply rooted for hundreds of years, and the Arab world, that has for so long suffered from autocracy and suppression, extremely unhelpful. Asbali finds the fact that the Arab Spring was not able to benefit women, highly expected. No problem that has existed for hundreds of years can be eliminated in a fortnight, she claims. However, despite not making a radical impact, the Arab Spring at least triggered debate over women's rights in the Arab world, and some breakthroughs have been made. "There are now more women in Tunisia's Congress than our own equivalent. A matter of years ago, in Libya, it was seen as scandalous for a women to pursue a Law degree, yet now the highest position in Benghazi's judiciary is held by a woman", Asbali explains. An awakening

has started that will need a lot of time. However, the first step has been taken, and this is all what matters for now, she says (Asbali and Javed, 2013).

Similarly, the Economist (2013) examines a common argument presented by many scholars who closely followed the development of the Arab Spring, and attempts to refute it. This argument states that no Arab Spring country was able to achieve stability and most of those countries elected Islamists. These Islamists adhere to a form of Islam that is in conflict with democracy. It follows that the Arab Spring was a total failure, and the Arab countries would be better off if it had never occurred. The Economist article claims that this view is inaccurate, noting that most historical revolutions that eventually lead to modern democratic systems were violent and lengthy. As for the Islamists' ascension to power, the cases of Malaysia and Indonesia are presented as examples of how Islamic systems can accommodate modernity and democracy if given time. Had the rule of the Muslim Brotherhood been given more time in Egypt, it would have been slowly moderated, ultimately becoming a more resilient and Democratic Party, the Economist (2013) claims. It concludes that the importance of the Arab Spring revolutions reside in their awakening values in the minds of the Arab masses. The old political systems were incapable of improving the terrible situation that Arab men and women had lived with for decades. If anything, the Arab Spring provided welcome hope for these people.

This research paper examines the hypothesis that the Arab Spring will ultimately improve the status of women after the extensive period of discrimination and oppression that most women in the region have been subject to. The next chapter establishes the research methodologies and approaches discussed in order to assess post-Arab Spring

beliefs. It introduces the procedures employed to gather data that are used to test the hypothesis. The approach is based on semi-structured interviews and question-and-answer dialogues in order to analyze and interpret the different ways of thinking. Analytical and empirical methods are used to describe what people think about women and their rights in the first three years following the 2011 revolutions, specifically in Egypt and Syria. Women's experiences during the Arab Spring in these two countries are compared using historical, comparative, and descriptive researches.

# Chapter 3

## Methodology

### 3.1 Introduction

Chapter two examined the status of women in many Arab countries prior to the 2011 uprisings. Many women played a key role in toppling repressive political regimes that had ruled these countries for decades. It focused on the cases of Egypt and Syria where despite their extensive contributions to the revolutionary movements, women still face tremendous difficulties in almost all aspects of life. In order to understand the reasons behind this further deterioration of status and rights, many arguments were presented. These mainly focused on the rise of political Islam in the wake of the Arab Spring and its effect on women and its compatibility with democracy. Lastly, a hypothesis was stated. It was suggested that the recent Arab Spring events have only contributed to the deterioration of the status of women and can never benefit women as long as Islamists rule, since democracy and political Islam are genuinely incompatible.

Three years after the start of the 2011 uprisings, the status of Arab women and their future remain unclear. However, the different views that were considered offer little basis for establishing a clear characterization of the impact of the Arab Spring on women. Therefore, in order to clarify our understanding of the disparate pieces of information and theories, and to generate comprehensible observations, research will be

undertaken in order to collect various data concerning the status of women during the Arab Spring.

## **3.2 Conceptual Design/ Research Planning**

### **3.2.1 Methods and Researches employed**

This chapter establishes the research methodologies and approaches in order to assess post-Arab Spring attitudes, opinions, and behavior. It introduces the procedures used to gather data in order to test the previously stated hypothesis. Different methods mainly analytical and empirical are used to compare women's experiences throughout the Arab Spring and examine changes in their status and rights following the rise of Islamic movements. This chapter will also seek to examine the difference between both men and women's views on issues concerning women. The approach is based on semi-structured interviews and question-and-answer dialogues in order to analyze and interpret the different ways of thinking. Questions are designed to explore respondents' thoughts and beliefs with regards to what they consider to be the most pressing issues for women, and the factors that most affected women in their countries.

This research employed both quantitative and qualitative data collection instruments, but it was entrenched in a qualitative epistemological position that set the research within a specific social, cultural, and historical background. There was a heavy reliance on historical and comparative research to compare women's experience in different societies during the Arab Spring. Descriptive research was used to portray the status of women in the Arab world. The observations and reactions of respondents were gathered to answer the research questions. Furthermore, the study included feminist



research where, gender and identity issues, which are in the process of being shaped by the Arab Spring, were discussed. To simplify, it is a *one-shot post-research design* because it is confined to a single time-period that covers the first three years following the 2011 revolutions.

### **3.2.2 Data Collection**

This research employs subjective methods such as interviews to collect relevant data. In the months of October and November 2013, I participated in the “WEP GENDER COURSE” seminar (Nordic-Arab Network of Research on Women’s Empowerment) which was held in Jordan, to further explore my research question. The workshop was organized by the Nordic Arab Network in collaboration with the Center for Women’s studies affiliated with Jordan University. Live interviews were carried out with women from different Arab universities, mainly from Egypt and Syria. In addition to the live interviews and survey data collected through social media tools, additional data was collected from credible newspaper articles, reports and books, including documented events, statistical data, and theoretical analysis. Furthermore, a number of interviews and surveys were conducted with Egyptian citizens and Syrian refugees in Lebanon.

### **3.2.3 Research Design**

The research design refers to the overarching method of combining the different components of the research in a coherent manner. In this research, the case studies of Egypt and Syria were chosen as a blueprint for the collection, measurement, and analysis

of data in order to address the research question and draw a clear and well-supported conclusion. Given the different methods of data collection, we should know what data ought to be collected in order to effectively answer the research question. It is important to search for evidence that provides a compelling test of our hypothesis; otherwise the conclusions drawn will be weak and unconvincing.

This chapter offers an analysis of the indicators that can to a large extent demonstrate the status of women and their level of empowerment in both Egypt and Syria. These include political, economic, educational, familial, and social indicators. The chapter also considers the questions raised in interviews in order to facilitate the analysis of data in the next chapter and clarify the kind of influence that the Arab Spring had on the status of women. Survey questions were aimed at identifying changes in the status of women after the Arab Spring. They were chosen and asked in such a way as to ensure relevancy and reflect the gender context of each country. They also measured responses across the following five categories: women in politics, economy, education, family and society.

The first set of indicators includes women's representation in parliament, government and other political fields. The second includes women's enrollment in the labor force and aims to assess female-male disparities. It determines women's capacity for self-sufficiency and financial independence. The third examines women's access to education at both elementary and higher levels. The fourth set of indicators is concerned with family issues such as women's access to contraceptives, their access to abortions, their marital and divorce rights, and the minimum marriage age. The fifth indicator

focuses on the role of women in society. It examines factors that prevent women from effectively participating in society.

### **3.3 Survey Respondents' Identity**

Respondents were not randomized; they mainly include Egyptian and Syrian activists and citizens who experienced first-hand the effects of the Arab Spring. Female respondents were favored in both countries. In Syria, respondents who experienced the rule of Islamic rebels were favored, because their input is generally of more use to our study. Female respondents varied from housewives, to employees, to self-employed women. Respondents were interviewed individually. Their ages ranged from twenty to fifty-five years old.

### **3.4 Survey Questions**

Questions were designed to provide insightful data with regards to the ways in which the Arab Spring has potentially affected women. These were presented as statements. The survey statements were unambiguous and focused. Respondents were asked to choose whether they agree or disagree with a statement. Responses ranged from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree,” totaling in five answer possibilities. For people whose response was “neither agree nor disagree”, a “neutral” option was included. Each option was assigned a grade (1 = strong agree to 5 = strongly disagree). After respondents finished the survey, they attain a certain grade that will be used in the survey analysis.

## **Egypt Survey**

In the case of Egypt, the survey was composed of eighteen questions in total, including five questions concerning the respondents' personal information: name, age, gender, nationality and country of employment. The completion time of the survey did not exceed ten minutes. The survey's form is shown below:

### Agreement Scale:

- 1: strongly agree
- 2: agree
- 3: neutral
- 4: disagree
- 5: strongly disagree

### Personal Information:

- 1. Name
- 2. Age
- 3. Gender
- 4. Nationality
- 5. Country of employment

### Women in Politics:

- 6. During the Muslim Brotherhood ruling period, laws that discriminated against women were eliminated.

1     2     3     4     5

7. During the Muslim Brotherhood ruling period, women's representation in the political field was enhanced.

1     2     3     4     5

Women in Economy:

8. During the Muslim Brotherhood ruling period, females' right to equal employment with males was boosted.

1     2     3     4     5

9. During the Muslim Brotherhood ruling period, discrimination against women in the workplace was being punished.

1     2     3     4     5

Women in Education:

10. During the Muslim Brotherhood ruling period, female access to education was made easier.

1     2     3     4     5

11. During the Muslim Brotherhood ruling period, females giving up their education became less likely.

1     2     3     4     5

Women in Family:

12. During the Muslim Brotherhood ruling period, the number of forced marriage cases decreased.

1     2     3     4     5

13. During the Muslim Brotherhood ruling period, inheritance laws that favored males were eliminated.

1     2     3     4     5

14. During the Muslim Brotherhood ruling period, household violence against women was being punished.

1     2     3     4     5

15. During the Muslim Brotherhood ruling period, it became easier for women who wished to dissolve their marriage to get a divorce.

1     2     3     4     5

Women in Society:

16. During the Muslim Brotherhood ruling period, sexual harassment against women in public places was being punished.

1     2     3     4     5

17. During the Muslim Brotherhood ruling period, female genital mutilation became a less common practice.

1     2     3     4     5

18. During the Muslim Brotherhood ruling period, men and women who committed the same crimes were receiving exactly the same punishment.

1     2     3     4     5

**Syria Survey**

In the case of Syria, the survey was composed of seventeen questions in total, including five questions revealing the respondents' personal information: name, age,

gender, nationality and country of employment. The completion time of the survey did not exceed ten minutes. The survey's form is shown below:

Agreement Scale:

- 1: strongly agree
- 2: agree
- 3: neutral
- 4: disagree
- 5: strongly disagree

Personal Information:

- 1. Name
- 2. Age
- 3. Gender
- 4. Nationality
- 5. Country of employment

Women in Politics:

- 6. In the regions ruled by Islamic opposition groups, women's representation in the political field was enhanced.

1     2     3     4     5

Women in Economy:

- 7. In the regions ruled by Islamic opposition groups, females' right to equal employment with males was boosted.

1     2     3     4     5

8. In the regions ruled by Islamic opposition groups, discrimination against women in the workplace was being punished.

1     2     3     4     5

Women in Education:

9. In the regions ruled by Islamic opposition groups, female access to education was made easier.

1     2     3     4     5

10. In the regions ruled by Islamic opposition groups, females giving up their education became less likely.

1     2     3     4     5

Women in Family:

11. In the regions ruled by Islamic opposition groups, the number of forced marriage cases decreased.

1     2     3     4     5

12. In the regions ruled by Islamic opposition groups, household violence against women was being punished.

1     2     3     4     5

13. In the regions ruled by Islamic opposition groups, it became easier for women who wished to dissolve their marriage to get a divorce.

1     2     3     4     5

14. In the regions ruled by Islamic opposition groups, the number of marriages of under aged girls decreased.

1     2     3     4     5



### Women in Society:

15. In the regions ruled by Islamic opposition groups, sexual harassment against women in public places was being punished.

1     2     3     4     5

16. In the regions ruled by Islamic opposition groups, men and women who committed the same crimes were receiving exactly the same punishment.

1     2     3     4     5

17. In the regions ruled by Islamic opposition groups, women are allowed to own mobile phones and have access to the internet.

1     2     3     4     5

### **3.5 Interviewees' Identity**

Interviews were carried out with Egyptian and Syrian activists who specialize in women's issues and may have special insights and knowledge regarding the role and future of women in the post-Arab Spring period. Activists were interviewed individually. Their ages ranged from twenty to fifty five years old.

### **3.6 Interview Questions**

Most interview questions required long and detailed answers that can help to better understand the role of women in initiating the Arab Spring, and how the subsequent rise of Islamists affected them. The interview questions were clear and concise. These were open-ended questions with no restricted responses or choices. Despite requiring more time to answer and being more challenging, these questions

could help us draw a clearer and more detailed picture regarding the status of women in Egypt and Syria.

### **Egypt Interview**

In the case of Egypt, sixteen questions were asked in the interview, including five questions concerning the interviewees' personal information: name, age, gender, nationality and country of employment. The completion time of the survey did not exceed twenty minutes. The interview questions are listed below:

#### Personal Information:

- 1- Name
- 2- Age
- 3- Gender
- 4- Nationality
- 5- Country of employment

#### Questions:

- 6- In your opinion, how did women contribute to the Arab Spring in Egypt?
- 7- In your opinion, how did the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood to power in Egypt affect the status of women?
- 8- Do you think that sexual harassment in Egypt became more common during the Arab Spring?
- 9- In your opinion, how did women in Egypt contribute to the 2<sup>nd</sup> revolution?
- 10- Have you ever been to any protest? If yes, which one? Did you ever see a woman assaulted in the streets or in Tahrir square?

- 11- As a woman, do you think that your currently acquired rights are sufficient? (For women only)
- 12- Do you think that the 2<sup>nd</sup> revolution will boost the status and rights of women in Egypt? If yes, how?
- 13- As a woman, are the promises of the revolution living up to your expectations?
- 14- Do you think that the Arab Spring gave women a platform for their voices to be heard?
- 15- Do you believe that political Islam can accommodate democracy and preserve and boost women rights?
- 16- What do you think is the best solution to improve the status of women rights in Egypt?

### **Syria Interview**

In the case of Syria, fifteen questions were asked in the interview, including five questions concerning the interviewees' personal information: name, age, gender, nationality and country of employment. The completion time of the survey did not exceed twenty minutes. The interview questions are listed below:

#### **Personal Information:**

- 1- Name
- 2- Age
- 3- Gender
- 4- Nationality
- 5- Country of employment

Questions:

- 6- In your opinion, how did women contribute to the Arab Spring in Syria?
- 7- In your opinion, how did the rise of Islamic opposition powers in Syria affect the status of women?
- 8- Do you think that sexual abuse against women in Syria became more common during the Arab Spring?
- 9- Have you ever been to any protest? If yes, describe the role that women played in it.
- 10- As a woman, do you think that your currently acquired rights are sufficient?  
(For woman only)
- 11- In your opinion, how did the status of women in Syria change since the occurrence of the Arab Spring?
- 12- As a woman, are the promises of the revolution living up to your expectations?
- 13- Do you think that the Arab Spring gave women a platform for their voices to be heard?
- 14- Do you believe that political Islam can accommodate democracy and preserve and boost women rights?
- 15- What do you think is the best solution to improve the status of women rights in Syria?

# **Chapter 4**

## **Results and Discussion**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Chapter three laid out in detail the different approaches used in this research paper to gather data for validating the main hypothesis stated. The research targeted women's status in both Egypt and Syria on different levels and proposed using several indicators to do so. Retrieved data from reports and surveys will now be grouped, analyzed, and measured against those indicators. These include: political, economic, educational, familial, and social indicators. Moreover, interviews aimed at making more general inquiries regarding the status of women were also conducted with seven Egyptian and five Syrian activists. These were either live interview sessions done in Lebanon, or carried out using Skype or email for those living abroad.

The Egyptian survey was completed by thirty-two individuals, while the Syrian survey was completed by nineteen. Most of the respondents were women who had been either directly involved or at least aware of the recent socio-political changes in their countries. Moreover, many of these, mainly Syrian, individuals, preferred not to reveal their identities because of concerns for their safety, despite guarantees of complete discretion.

## 4.2 Egypt

### 4.2.1 Surveys Summary

#### *Women in Politics*

Despite playing leadership roles in the movements that eventually led to ending Mubarak's regime, it is widely believed that women in Egypt failed to improve their political status afterwards. Female representation in parliaments and government in Arab states, such as Tunisia and Libya, increased after the 2011 revolutions, due to an alternative electoral law implemented to ensure that women were elected. Conversely, in Egypt only one woman was required to be on the lists and most parties pushed female candidates to the bottom of the list. As seen below in Table 4.1, female representation in the Egyptian parliament reached its highest level in 2010-2011, where it was 14% and 12% in the years 2010 and 2011 respectively. This was due to the quota system established under Mubarak's rule, which allocated 64 seats to women. Some believe that this quota law is not beneficial in reinforcing women's political activity and it might not enhance women's rights, claiming instead that it could negatively affect the quality of female representation. Others claim that the quota system for women is necessary since it forces the presence of women in parliament. In 2012, women only won eight seats out of four hundred ninety-eight in the elected parliament, and female representation decreased to 1.6% in 2012. This is mainly because the quota system was eliminated. On the other hand, female representation in the 2013 Constituent Assembly, the committee for the formation of a new Constitution of Egypt, increased by 4% by 2012 as seen in Table 4.1 below (Guenena, 2013).

Table 4.1 Female representation in the Egyptian parliament and Constituent Assembly

<b><u>Female</u></b>	<b><u>2010</u></b>	<b><u>2011</u></b>	<b><u>2012</u></b>	<b><u>2013</u></b>
<b>Parliament</b>	14%	12%	1.6%	-
<b>Constituent</b>	-	-	6%	10%

According to the 2013 World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report as shown in Table 4.7, Egypt ranked 128 out of 136 countries when it came to the political empowerment gap between men and women. Just before the start of the Arab Spring, in 2010, Egypt ranked 125 out of 134 countries in the same category (The Global Gender Gap Report, 2013).

Moreover, in 2013, the Thomson Reuters foundation initiated a study which investigated the situation of women in 22 Arab league countries following the events of the Arab Spring. It surveyed over 300 gender experts, analyzed the data, and drew conclusions by ranking countries in order of the status of women in different areas. As seen in Table 4.2, Egypt ranked 20<sup>th</sup> out of 22 countries when it came to politics. Only Saudi Arabia and Bahrain came behind (Thomson Reuters Foundation, 2013).

Likewise, the Egypt survey that was undertaken as part of this research included questions whose answers can be used to evaluate the political status of Egyptian women. In the survey, the sixth question focuses on laws which discriminate against women during the Muslim Brotherhood ruling period as the first political indicator. Similarly, the seventh question focuses on women's representation in the political field as the

second political indicator. A statistical summary of the answers to these two questions is shown below:

1- During the Muslim Brotherhood ruling period, laws that discriminated against women were eliminated.

Strongly agree: 0%

Agree: 0%

Neutral: 3.1%

Disagree: 9.3%

Strongly disagree: 87.5%

2- During the Muslim Brotherhood ruling period, women's representation in the political field was enhanced.

Strongly agree: 0%

Agree: 0%

Neutral: 3.1%

Disagree: 6.2%

Strongly disagree: 90.6%

### *Women in Economy*

Most experts agree that Egyptian women's contribution in economy had been lacking under the Mubarak regime. According to the EuroMed gender equality program, a program funded by the European Union to promote gender equality in the euro med region, cultural and societal factors may have always been the primary causes for the economic marginalization of women. It claims that women struggle to work in pivotal



roles in a patriarchal society, where men believe that women's only job is to become wives and mothers. This mentality is particularly prevalent in rural areas (EuroMed Gender Equality, 2008-2011).

On the other hand, Mona El-Naggar claims that the problem for women is not the absence of job opportunities, but rather the low quality of work available for them. This usually leads them to prefer marriage to non-liberating jobs, she claims. Moreover, she believes that Mubarak's decision to shift Egyptian economy towards the private sector has harmed women, since the government sector had always offered a stable and rewarding workplace for them (Naggar, 2010).

However, after the Muslim Brotherhood's ascension to power in Egypt, there were no signs of an intention to radically change the economic situation in Egypt, which had been steadily deteriorating during the Mubarak Era. Moreover, it is claimed that "when it came to fighting poverty and strengthening under-privileged groups, no fundamentally new moves were made" (Roll, 2013). Many activists also claimed that the new constitution, which was drafted by the Muslim Brotherhood party and later approved, restricted economic rights for women. They argued that the constitution, in multiple articles, asserted that the role that women play as wives and mothers preceded their right to work. This, they believed, would legalize discrimination in favor of men over women in the job market (Alami, 2013).

According to the 2013 World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report as shown in Table 4.7 below, Egypt ranked 125 out of 136 countries when it came to economic participation and the opportunity gap between men and women. Just before

the start of the Arab Spring, in 2010, Egypt ranked 121 out of 134 countries in the same category (The Global Gender Gap Report, 2013).

Moreover, according to the Thomson Reuters 2013 poll results for the best country for women from an economic perspective, as shown in Table 4.3 below, Egypt ranked 19<sup>th</sup> out of a total of 22 countries (Thomson Reuters Foundation, 2013).

Likewise, the Egypt survey that we undertook included questions whose answers can be used to evaluate the economic status of Egyptian women. In the survey, the eighth question targets the equal rights of employment between men and women during the Muslim Brotherhood's ruling period as the first economic indicator. Similarly, the ninth question targets the penalization of discrimination against women in the workplace, as the second economic indicator. A statistical summary of the answers to these two questions is shown below:

1. During the Muslim Brotherhood ruling period, females' right to equal employment with males was boosted.

Strongly agree: 0%

Agree: 0%

Neutral: 21.8%

Disagree: 31.2%

Strongly disagree: 46.8%

2. During the Muslim Brotherhood ruling period, discrimination against women in the workplace was being punished.

Strongly agree: 0%

Agree: 0%

Neutral: 12.5%

Disagree: 34.3%

Strongly disagree: 53.1%

### *Women in Education*

Despite struggling in most aspects of life, women in Egypt possessed better rights to education than in many of the other countries in the region prior to the Arab Spring. Even though female illiteracy rates have always been high in Egypt, especially in rural areas, many reports claimed that Egyptian women are as well-educated as Egyptian men. Moreover, an article in the Global Press Journal in November 2011 indicated that half of university students were females (Clemence, 2013). Another paper also claims that in Egypt “women attend primary and secondary schools at the same rate as men, and outscore them on international tests of math and science” (Stucki, 2011).

However, with the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood party to power, many feared that Egyptian women would lose their right to education, along with their right to work. The new constitution not only denied women access to work and receive education when it conflicts with their domestic responsibilities, but it also approved of marriage of very young girls. Such clauses in the new constitution had the potential to restrict the education of millions of girls in the future, they claim.

According to the 2013 World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report, as shown in Table 4.7 below, Egypt ranked 108 out of 136 countries when it came to the educational gap between men and women. Just before the start of the Arab Spring, in 2010, Egypt ranked 110 out of 134 countries in the same category (The Global Gender Gap Report, 2013).

Moreover, on a question of whether girls are expected to leave education at a younger age than boys, the Thomson Reuters 2013 poll results claim that Egypt rank 16<sup>th</sup> out of a total of 22 countries, as revealed in Table 4.4 below (Thomson Reuters Foundation, 2013).

Likewise, the Egypt survey that was collected as part of this research included questions whose answers can be used to evaluate the status of Egyptian females with respect to education. In the survey, the tenth question targets the ease of women's access to education during the Muslim Brotherhood's ruling period as the first educational indicator. Similarly, the eleventh question targets the probability of women leaving education, as the second educational indicator. A statistical summary of the answers to these two questions is shown below:

1. During the Muslim Brotherhood ruling period, females' access to education was made easier.

Strongly agree: 0%

Agree: 6.2%

Neutral: 46.8 %

Disagree: 21.8%

Strongly disagree: 25%

2. During the Muslim Brotherhood ruling period, females giving up their education became less likely.

Strongly agree: 0%

Agree: 0%

Neutral: 78.1 %

Disagree: 15.6%

Strongly disagree: 6.2%

### *Women in Family*

The role of women in Egyptian families differs from that of men. For the majority, it consists only in raising children, being good and obedient wives, and remaining within family boundaries. This role has historically been shaped and supported by religious laws and cultural norms. Meanwhile, laws that govern family issues such as marriage, divorce, and inheritance laws have always favored men over women.

Many activists hoped that with the emergence of the Arab Spring, biased family laws would be eliminated in favor of modern laws that would truly respect women's rights. Instead, the contrary occurred. After the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood party to power, many Islamists pushed for establishing family laws that are based on Sharia law. Despite not being in total accord with Sharia law, the new constitution drafted in 2012 removed the clause that set a minimum age for marriage for women, for example. This, many believe, would open the door for forced marriages among very young girls (Alami, 2013).

According to the Thomson Reuters 2013 poll results as displayed in Table 4.5 below, Egypt ranked 19<sup>th</sup> out of a total of 22 countries when it came to the role of women in family and the ability of taking decisions related to marriage and divorce issues (Thomson Reuters Foundation, 2013).

Likewise, the Egypt survey that was undertaken as part of this research included four questions whose answers can be used to evaluate the status of Egyptian women in families. In the survey, questions twelve, thirteen, fourteen, and fifteen investigated familial issues involving women such as marriage, divorce, inheritance laws, and household violence during the Muslim Brotherhood ruling period. A statistical summary of the answers to these four questions is shown below:

1. During the Muslim Brotherhood ruling period, number of forced marriage cases decreased.

Strongly agree: 0%

Agree: 0%

Neutral: 81.25%

Disagree: 12.5%

Strongly disagree: 6.25%

2. During the Muslim Brotherhood ruling period, inheritance laws that favored males were eliminated.

Strongly agree: 0%

Agree: 0%

Neutral: 28.1%

Disagree: 18.7%

Strongly disagree: 53.1%

3. During the Muslim Brotherhood ruling period, household violence against women was being punished.

Strongly agree: 0%

Agree: 0%

Neutral: 3.1%

Disagree: 12.5%

Strongly disagree: 84.3%

4. During the Muslim Brotherhood ruling period, it became easier for women who wished to dissolve their marriage to get a divorce.

Strongly agree: 0%

Agree: 0%

Neutral: 6.2%

Disagree: 21.8%

Strongly disagree: 71.8%

### *Women in Society*

Women in the Egyptian society have for many years been discriminated against in many ways. As in other fields of life such as politics and education, many reasons drove activists to fear for the rights of Egyptian women in society under the Muslim Brotherhood rule. One of these signs was the Brotherhood's attempt to repeal a law that punished physicians who practice female genital mutilation (Aswany, 2013). Moreover, when they learned in March 2013 that the U.N. was preparing a declaration on women's

rights that would protect women from violence and allow them to travel and work without their husbands' consent, the Muslim Brotherhood warned that such a declaration would lead to the complete disintegration of society (Kingsley, 2013).

According to the Thomson Reuters 2013 poll results presented in Table 4.6 below, in a poll showing the best countries to be a women, Egypt ranked 14<sup>th</sup> out of a total of 22 countries (Thomson Reuters Foundation, 2013).

Likewise, the Egypt survey that was undertaken as part of this research included three questions whose answers can be used to evaluate the status of Egyptian women in society. In the survey, question sixteen targets the cases of sexual harassment against women in public places during the Muslim Brotherhood ruling period, as the first societal indicator. Similarly, question seventeen targets the continuity of the act of female genital mutilation as the second indicator. In addition, question eighteen targets the equality between both genders when it comes to legal issues such as punishment, as the third societal indicator. A statistical summary of the answers to these three questions is shown below:

1. During the Muslim Brotherhood ruling period, sexual harassment against women in public places was being punished.

Strongly agree: 0%

Agree: 0%

Neutral: 0%

Disagree: 0%

Strongly disagree: 100%



2. During the Muslim Brotherhood ruling period, female genital mutilation became a less common practice.

Strongly agree: 0%

Agree: 0%

Neutral: 9.3%

Disagree: 21.8%

Strongly disagree: 68.7%

3. During the Muslim Brotherhood ruling period, men and women who committed the same crimes were receiving exactly the same punishment.

Strongly agree: 0%

Agree: 0%

Neutral: 0%

Disagree: 31.2%

Strongly disagree: 68.7%

#### **4.2.2 Interviews Summary**

A summary of the answers given during the interviews conducted with Egyptian activists is shown below:

**1- In your opinion, how did women contribute to the Arab Spring in Egypt?**

All interviewees claimed that women participated heavily in the movements that took place in Egypt. They stressed that their role in the uprisings was just as important and effective as that of men. And despite

suffering from arrests and violence by regime forces, they never backed down. Some interviewees even mentioned names of female martyrs who were killed in Tahrir Square during the protests.

**2- In your opinion, how did the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood to power in Egypt affect the status of women?**

Three interviewees believed that the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood party to power was a significant setback for women and their rights because of their Islamic fundamentalism and their “distorted” understanding of women’s role in society. The other interviewees believed that the Muslim Brotherhood party ruling period was too short for them to affect the status of women in Egypt.

**3- Do you think that sexual harassment in Egypt became more common during the Arab Spring?**

Most interviewees believed that sexual harassment had always been a common practice in Egypt. They claimed that it was only when the media drew attention to the subject during the protests, that the matter became well-known. Only one interviewee claimed that this practice flourished with the protests because of the country’s security chaos at that time.

**4- In your opinion, how did women in Egypt contribute to the 2<sup>nd</sup> revolution?**

All interviewees claimed that women’s participation in the 2013 protests increased for two main reasons. The first was the feeling among all protestors that none of the goals that they sought after in the first revolution was achieved with the Muslim Brotherhood’s ascension to power. The

second was the atmosphere of support provided by the security forces during the protests.

**5- Have you ever been to any protest? If yes, which one? Did you ever see a woman assaulted in the streets or in Tahrir square?**

Five interviewees participated in at least one protest. Three of them witnessed sexual harassments, one of whom was personally harassed.

**6- As a woman, do you think that your currently acquired rights are sufficient? (For women only)**

All female interviewees believe that Egyptian women's rights are not yet fully respected.

**7- Do you think that the 2<sup>nd</sup> revolution will boost the status and rights of women in Egypt? If yes, how?**

All interviewees said that they hoped so. However, two of them believed that it will take a very long time for women to reach their goals.

**8- As a woman, are the promises of the revolution living up to your expectations?**

Most of the interviewees were disappointed with the achievements of the Arab Spring in Egypt so far.

**9- Do you think that the Arab Spring gave women a platform for their voices to be heard?**

All interviewees believed that the Arab Spring provided both women and men with a platform for them to express their hopes and demands. However, most of them claimed that the protestors were not able to make use of this opportunity to trigger real change.

**10- Do you believe that political Islam can accommodate democracy and preserve and boost women rights?**

Most interviewees preferred secularism. They believe that Islam should be confined to the personal life of people.

**11- What do you think is the best solution to improve the status of women rights in Egypt?**

Some interviewees believed that Egyptian women should unite and use their voices in elections as a way to force governments to adopt women friendly agendas. Other interviewees focused on social reformation in order to empower women and make them believe in their rights. This, they believe, is the most important prerequisite for women to improve their status.

### **4.3 Syria**

In Syria, the role of women changed after the Syrian revolution in the regions ruled by Islamic opposition groups to one of secondary status. The status of women in these regions has become governed by religious laws in accordance with Sharia.

It was widely believed that women have long been marginalized under the Assad regime when it comes to politics. As shown in Table 4.9 below, statistics compiled by Inter-Parliamentary Union in May 2012 ranked the participation of women in national

parliaments at only 12%, notably lower than the average of the Arab states 14.9%, where there were 30 seats for women out of 250 (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2014).

“It is a fact that in the past women got seats in parliament and ministerial positions in Syria. But we should not kid ourselves, it was all window dressing”, claimed Hind Kabawat, International Counsel, Human Rights Activist, and Director of the Conflict Resolution Program of Syria, George Mason University. The dictatorial regime in Syria wanted to cover the signs of repression and the prejudice so they awarded women with ministerial positions give the illusion of equality (cited in Heideman & Youssef, 2012).

On the other hand, Islamic extremists such as ISIS believe that women have no role whatsoever to play in politics. As for other fields in life, their role can be summarized as follows:

When it comes to economy, women can work as doctors and teachers only if there is a shortage in the number of males. In all cases, women’s work should not exceed three days a week and on condition that it doesn’t conflict with their household responsibilities.

When it comes to education, women’s education should end at the age of fifteen and it is deemed unnecessary and worthless to have a degree. Education should focus mainly on Islamic religious studies, Quran learning, and other skills such as cooking and knitting in order to prepare them for their future household responsibilities.

As for the role of women in family, it consists of raising children, keeping the house neat and clean, and remaining within family boundaries. Moreover, it is legal for women to marry at the age of nine.

As for the role of women in society, she is expected to remain covered and “maintain society from behind”. Certain activities such as plastic surgeries and cutting hair are strictly forbidden. Fashion shops and beauty salons are viewed as evil places (Saul, 2015).

### **4.3.1 Surveys Summary**

#### *Women in Politics*

According to the 2013 World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report as indicated in Table 4.8 below, Syria ranked 112 out of 136 countries when it came to the political empowerment gap between men and women. Just before the start of the Arab Spring, in 2010, Syria scored 107 out of 134 countries in the same category (The Global Gender Gap Report, 2013).

Moreover, as shown in Table 4.2 below, when it came to politics, Syria ranked 17<sup>th</sup> out of 22 countries according to the Thomson Reuters foundation in 2013 (Thomson Reuters Foundation, 2013).

Likewise, the Syria survey that was undertaken as part of this research included one question whose answer can assist in evaluating the political status of Syrian women. In the survey, the sixth question targets the representation of women in politics in the

regions ruled by Islamic opposition groups as a political indicator. A statistical summary of the answer to the question is shown below:

1- In the regions ruled by Islamic opposition groups, women's representation in the political field was enhanced.

Strongly agree: 0%

Agree: 0%

Neutral: 50%

Disagree: 31.2%

Strongly disagree: 18.7%

### *Women in Economy*

According to the 2013 World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report as shown in Table 4.8 below, Syria ranked the last out of 136 countries when it came to the economic participation and opportunity gap between men and women. Just before the start of the Arab Spring, in 2010, Syria ranked 130 out of 134 countries in the same category (The Global Gender Gap Report, 2013).

Moreover, according to the Thomson Reuters 2013 poll results for the best country for women to be in from an economic perspective as shown in Table 4.3 below, Syria ranked the 20<sup>th</sup> out of a total of 22 countries (Thomson Reuters Foundation, 2013).

Likewise, the Syria survey that was undertaken as part of this research included questions whose answers can be used to evaluate the economic status of Syrian women. In the survey, the seventh question targets the equal rights of employment between men and women in the regions ruled by Islamic opposition groups as the first economic

indicator. Similarly, the eighth question targets the penalization of discrimination against women in the workplace, as the second economic indicator. A statistical summary of the answers to these two questions is shown below:

1. In the regions ruled by Islamic opposition groups, females' right to equal employment with males was boosted.

Strongly agree: 0%

Agree: 0%

Neutral: 0%

Disagree: 6.2 %

Strongly disagree: 93.7%

2. In the regions ruled by Islamic opposition groups, discrimination against women in the workplace was being punished.

Strongly agree: 0%

Agree: 0%

Neutral: 0%

Disagree: 9.3%

Strongly disagree: 90.6%

### *Women in Education*

According to the 2013 World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report as shown in Table 4.8 below, Syria ranked 96 out of 136 countries when it came to the educational gap between men and women. Just before the start of the Arab Spring, in



2010, Syria ranked 104 out of 134 countries in the same category (The Global Gender Gap Report, 2013).

Moreover, on a question of whether girls are expected to leave education sooner than boys, the Thomson Reuters 2013 poll results claim that Syria rank 19<sup>th</sup> out of a total of 22 countries as revealed in Table 4.4 below (Thomson Reuters Foundation, 2013).

Likewise, the Syria survey that was undertaken as part of this research included questions whose answers can be used to evaluate the status of Syrian females with respect to education. In the survey, the ninth question targets the ease of females' access to education in the regions ruled by Islamic opposition groups as the first educational indicator. Similarly, the tenth question targets the probability of females leaving education, as the second educational indicator. A statistical summary of the answers to these two questions is shown below:

1. In the regions ruled by Islamic opposition groups, female access to education was made easier.

Strongly agree: 0%

Agree: 0%

Neutral: 6.2%

Disagree: 9.3%

Strongly disagree: 84.3%

2. In the regions ruled by Islamic opposition groups, females giving up their education became less likely.

Strongly agree: 0%

Agree: 0%

Neutral: 6.2%

Disagree: 12.5%

Strongly disagree: 81.2%

### *Women in Family*

According to the Thomson Reuters 2013 poll results as displayed in Table 4.5 below, Syria ranked last out of a total of 22 countries when it came to the role of women in family and the ability of taking decisions related to marriage and divorce issues (Thomson Reuters Foundation, 2013).

Likewise, the Syria survey that undertaken as part of this research included four questions whose answers can be used to evaluate the status of Syrian women in families. In the survey, questions eleven, twelve, thirteen and fourteen investigated familial issues involving women such as marriage, divorce, and household violence in the regions ruled by Islamic opposition groups. A statistical summary of the answers to these four questions is shown below:

1. In the regions ruled by Islamic opposition groups, number of forced marriage cases decreased.

Strongly agree: 0%

Agree: 0%

Neutral: 0%

Disagree: 0%

Strongly disagree: 100%

2. In the regions ruled by Islamic opposition groups, household violence against women was being punished.

Strongly agree: 0%

Agree: 0%

Neutral: 15.6%

Disagree: 62.5%

Strongly disagree: 21.8%

3. In the regions ruled by Islamic opposition groups, it became easier for women who wished to dissolve their marriage to get a divorce.

Strongly agree: 0%

Agree: 0%

Neutral: 6.2%

Disagree: 56.2%

Strongly disagree: 37.5%

4. In the regions ruled by Islamic opposition groups, the number of marriages of under aged girls decreased.

Strongly agree: 0%

Agree: 0%

Neutral: 3.1%

Disagree: 3.1%

Strongly disagree: 93.7%

## *Women in Society*

According to the Thomson Reuters 2013 poll results presented in Table 4.6 below, in a poll ranking countries in order of which is the best to be a woman, Syria ranked 21<sup>st</sup> out of a total of 22 countries (Thomson Reuters Foundation, 2013).

Likewise, the Syria survey that was undertaken as part of this research included three questions whose answers can be used to evaluate the status of Syrian women in society. In the survey, question fifteen targets the cases of sexual harassment against women in public places in the regions ruled by Islamic opposition groups, as the first societal indicator. Similarly, question sixteen targets the equality between the genders when it comes to legal issues such as punishment, as the second indicator. Similarly, question seventeen targets women's access to social media in the regions ruled by Islamic opposition groups, as the third societal indicator. A statistical summary of the answers to these three questions is shown below:

1. In the regions ruled by Islamic opposition groups, sexual harassment against women in public places was being punished.

Strongly agree: 0%

Agree: 0%

Neutral: 3.1%

Disagree: 3.1%

Strongly disagree: 93.7%

18. In the regions ruled by Islamic opposition groups, men and women who committed the same crimes were receiving exactly the same punishment.

Strongly agree: 0%

Agree: 0%

Neutral: 65.6%

Disagree: 21.8%

Strongly disagree: 12.5%

19. In the regions ruled by Islamic opposition groups, women are allowed to own mobile phones and have access to the internet.

Strongly agree: 0%

Agree: 31.2%

Neutral: 15.6%

Disagree: 15.6%

Strongly disagree: 37.5%

#### **4.3.2 Interviews Summary**

A summary of the answers given during the interviews conducted with Syrian activists is shown below:

##### **1- In your opinion, how did women contribute to the Arab Spring in Syria?**

Most respondents believed that women played a very important role in the Syrian revolutions. They were protesting and supporting male protestors despite being arrested, harassed, and threatened by security forces. One

activist believed that women were being persecuted as part of an external agenda that aimed at destroying Syria.

**2- In your opinion, how did the rise of Islamic opposition powers in Syria affect the status of women?**

All respondents believed that the rise of Islamic powers affected all Syrians including women in a very negative way.

**3- Do you think that sexual abuse against women in Syria became more common during the Arab Spring?**

All respondents believed that it became more common. Most of them believed that both Assad's forces as well as Islamic extremists were responsible for this. Only one respondent believed that extremists, mainly ISIS, were the only group to practice such abuse.

**4- Have you ever been to any protest? If yes, describe the role that women played in it.**

Three respondents participated in protests in Syria. Two of them protested against Assad's ruling regime. They believed that women played the same role as men in the streets. Moreover, they claim that women sheltered and took care of men who were assaulted by security forces. One respondent, on the other hand, participated in a pro-Assad regime protest which she claims was very peaceful and had male and female participants from all ages and backgrounds.

**5- As a woman, do you think that your currently acquired rights are sufficient? (For woman only)**

All participants claimed that their rights as women differ depending on the region they live in after the war started in Syria. These vary greatly, from needing improvement under the Assad regime, to disastrous in the regions where Islamic fanatics prevail. Female respondents who oppose the Assad regime claim that their prime problem with this rule is with their rights as citizens rather than as women.

**6- In your opinion, how did the status of women in Syria change since the occurrence of the Arab Spring?**

All respondents believe that all Syrians' lives deteriorated after the revolution, and not just women's. However, women are the most affected because of their weakness, the burdens that they carry during war, and because of the rise of Islamic extremists who believe in the dominance of men over women.

**7- As a woman, are the promises of the revolution living up to your expectations?**

All women responded negatively.

**8- Do you think that the Arab Spring gave women a platform for their voices to be heard?**

Most respondents believed that at first the Arab Spring gave them the opportunity to speak up and demand a democratic rule that would provide prosperity and freedom for them. However, with time the revolution was militarized and all peaceful demands were marginalized.

**9- Do you believe that political Islam can accommodate democracy and preserve and boost women rights?**

All respondents believe that the solution for women lies in secularism. Most of them, however, believe that the Assad's regime, despite being superficially secular, needs to be changed because it is a genuine dictatorship. Only one believed that the Assad regime could be the answer for women after some reformation.

**10- What do you think is the best solution to improve the status of women rights in Syria?**

All respondents believe that only a secularist and democratic rule and an open society would ultimately allow women to reach their long sought dream of freedom and equality in Syria.

## **4.4 Observations**

### **Egypt**

When it comes to the status of women in the field of politics in Egypt, the following can be observed. As seen in Figure 4.1, Egypt's rank increased from 125 to 128 after the Arab Spring. According to Figure 4.2, Egypt ranked the 20th out of 22 Arab league countries. Moreover, as seen in Figure 4.3, Egypt scored 4.8555 out of a total of 5 for the level of deterioration in the politics field according to the thirty-two collected surveys.

As for the status of women in economy in Egypt, the following can be observed. As seen in Figure 4.1, Egypt's rank increased from 121 to 125 after the Arab Spring.



According to Figure 4.2, Egypt ranked the 19th out of 22 Arab league countries. Moreover, as seen in Figure 4.3, Egypt scored 4.322 out of a total of 5 for the level of deterioration in the economy field according to the collected surveys.

Concerning the status of women in education in Egypt, the following can be observed. As seen in Figure 4.1, Egypt's rank decreased from 110 to 108 after the Arab Spring. According to Figure 4.2, Egypt ranked the 16th out of 22 Arab league countries. In Figure 4.3, Egypt scored 4.4635 out of a total of 5 for the level of deterioration in the education field according to the collected surveys.

As for the status of women in the family in Egypt, the following can be observed. In Figure 4.2, Egypt ranked the 19th out of 22 Arab league countries. Moreover, as seen in Figure 4.3, Egypt scored 4.2376 out of a total of 5 for the level of deterioration in the family field according to the collected surveys.

When it comes to the status of women in the society in Egypt, the following can be observed. In Figure 4.2, Egypt ranked the 14th out of 22 Arab league countries. Moreover, as seen in Figure 4.3, Egypt scored 4.7544 out of a total of 5 for the level of deterioration in the society according to the collected surveys.

## **Syria**

When it comes to the status of women in the field of politics in Syria, the following can be observed. As seen in Figure 4.1, Syria's rank increased from 107 to 112 after the Arab Spring. According to Figure 4.2, Syria ranked the 17<sup>th</sup> out of 22 Arab league countries. Moreover, as seen in Figure 4.3, Syria scored 3.683 out of a total of 5

for the level of deterioration in the politics field according to the nineteen collected surveys.

As for the status of women in economy, in Syria, the following can be observed. As seen in Figure 4.1, Syria's rank increased from 130 to 136 after the Arab Spring. According to Figure 4.2, Syria ranked the 20<sup>th</sup> out of 22 Arab league countries. In Figure 4.3, Syria scored 4.9175 out of a total of 5 for the level of deterioration in the economy field according to the collected surveys.

Concerning the status of women in education, in Syria, the following can be observed. As seen in Figure 4.1, Syria's rank decreased from 104 to 96 after the Arab Spring. In Figure 4.2, Syria ranked the 19<sup>th</sup> out of 22 Arab league countries. In Figure 4.3, Syria scored 4.7595 out of a total of 5 for the level of deterioration in the education field according to the collected surveys.

As for the status of women in family in Syria, the following can be observed. In Figure 4.2, Syria ranked last out of a total of 22 Arab league countries. In Figure 4.3, Syria scored 4.5671 out of a total of 5 for the level of deterioration in the family according to the collected surveys.

When it comes to the status of women in society in Syria, the following can be observed. In Figure 4.2, Syria ranked the 21<sup>st</sup> out of 22 Arab league countries. In Figure 4.3, Syria scored 3.986 out of a total of 5 for the level of deterioration in the society according to the collected surveys.

## **4.5 Data Utilization**

The Arab Spring produced two different models of Islamic rule in Egypt and Syria. In Egypt, despite their short ruling period, Islamists were able to come to power using democratic means and had many aiding and supporting factors for a potentially successful rule. On the other hand, in Syria, the inability to topple the Assad regime slowly drove the country into a bloody war in which militant Islamic powers were able to rule many parts of Syria.

The analysis of the data collected in this chapter will be utilized in Chapter five to answer the question of whether the Arab Spring would boost women's rights or not and make conclusions regarding how these two models of Islamic rule affected women. Moreover, based on the conclusions established, suggestions on how to enhance the status of Arab women in general will be presented. Limitation and possible expansion of the research will also be discussed.

Table 4.2 Ranking: How states compare for women in politics

<b>COUNTRY</b>	<b>RANKING (worst to best)</b>	<b>SCORE</b>
Saudi Arabia	22	13.752
Bahrain	21	12.275
<b>Egypt</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>12.094</b>
Yemen	19	12.04
Lebanon	18	11.453
<b>Syria</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>11.436</b>
Iraq	16	11.407
Algeria	15	11.129
Somalia	14	11.077
Sudan	13	10.807
Libya	12	10.469
Tunisia	11	10.465
Palestinian territories	10	10.399
UAE	9	10.208
Morocco	8	9.847
Mauritania	7	9.42
Qatar	6	9.412
Kuwait	5	9.093
Jordan	4	9.019
Oman	3	8.652
Comoros	2	8.406
Djibouti	1	8.262

Source: Thomson Reuters foundation 2013

Table 4.3 Ranking: How states compare for women in the economy

<b>COUNTRY</b>	<b>RANKING(worst to best)</b>	<b>SCORE</b>
Palestinian territories	22	10.682
Saudi Arabia	21	10.196
<b>Syria</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>9.995</b>
<b>Egypt</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>9.955</b>
Djibouti	18	9.844
Yemen	17	9.838
Sudan	16	9.765
Lebanon	15	9.351
Iraq	14	9.328
Algeria	13	9.129
Jordan	12	8.926
Libya	11	8.922
Qatar	10	8.749
UAE	9	8.688
Tunisia	8	8.611
Somalia	7	8.486
Bahrain	6	8.48
Morocco	5	8.289
Mauritania	4	8.283
Kuwait	3	8.125
Oman	2	7.902
Comoros	1	7.424

Source: Thomson Reuters foundation 2013

Table 4.4 Ranking: Women in Education

<b>COUNTRY</b>	<b>RANKING(worst to best)</b>	<b>SCORE</b>
Iraq	21	3.771
Yemen	20	3.765
<b>Syria</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>3.7</b>
Sudan	19	3.7
Somalia	18	3.5
Mauritania	17	3.4
<b>Egypt</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>3.276</b>
Djibouti	15	3.273
Saudi Arabia	14	3.2
Palestinian territories	13	3.1
Comoros	12	2.875
Morocco	11	2.8
Libya	10	2.7
Algeria	9	2.6
Tunisia	8	2.455
Jordan	7	2.385
UAE	6	2.364
Lebanon	5	2.333
Kuwait	4	2.3
Oman	3	2.2
Qatar	2	2.091
Bahrain	1	1.417

Source: Thomson Reuters foundation 2013

Table 4.5 Ranking: How states compare for women in the family

<b>COUNTRY</b>	<b>RANKING(worst to best)</b>	<b>SCORE</b>
<b>Syria</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>11.872</b>
Iraq	21	11.844
Saudi Arabia	20	11.579
<b>Egypt</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>11.306</b>
Yemen	18	11.217
Sudan	17	10.824
Lebanon	16	10.772
Palestinian territories	15	10.738
Djibouti	14	10.319
Kuwait	13	10.2
Oman	12	9.955
UAE	11	9.897
Tunisia	10	9.871
Qatar	9	9.849
Bahrain	8	9.764
Libya	7	9.706
Algeria	6	9.668
Mauritania	5	9.244
Morocco	4	9.045
Jordan	3	8.769
Somalia	2	8.759
Comoros	1	7.775

Source: Thomson Reuters foundation 2013

Table 4.6 Ranking: How states compare for women in society

<b>COUNTRY</b>	<b>RANKING(worst to</b>	<b>SCORE</b>
Iraq	22	11.847
<b>Syria</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>11.619</b>
Sudan	20	11.487
Yemen	19	11.207
Somalia	18	10.403
Mauritania	17	10.226
Saudi Arabia	16	9.934
Palestinian territories	15	9.92
<b>Egypt</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>9.872</b>
Morocco	13	8.898
Djibouti	12	8.816
Libya	11	8.717
Jordan	10	8.23
Comoros	9	8.05
Algeria	8	7.884
Tunisia	7	7.851
Lebanon	6	7.784
Oman	5	7.603
UAE	4	7.297
Kuwait	3	7.03
Qatar	2	6.968
Bahrain	1	6.31

Source: Thomson Reuters foundation 2013



Table 4.7 Ranking according to the Global Gender Gap Report 2013

# Egypt

	OVERALL		ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION		EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT		HEALTH AND SURVIVAL		POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT	
	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score
<b>Gender Gap Index 2013 (out of 136 countries)</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>0.594</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>0.443</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>0.920</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>0.977</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>0.035</b>
Gender Gap Index 2012 (out of 135 countries)	126	0.597	124	0.454	110	0.925	54	0.977	125	0.035
Gender Gap Index 2011 (out of 135 countries)	123	0.593	122	0.457	110	0.908	52	0.977	126	0.031
Gender Gap Index 2010 (out of 134 countries)	125	0.590	121	0.453	110	0.899	52	0.977	125	0.031
Gender Gap Index 2009 (out of 134 countries)	126	0.586	124	0.450	107	0.900	89	0.972	129	0.023
Gender Gap Index 2008 (out of 130 countries)	124	0.583	120	0.437	105	0.902	84	0.972	124	0.023
Gender Gap Index 2007 (out of 128 countries)	120	0.581	120	0.421	101	0.909	83	0.972	123	0.022
Gender Gap Index 2006 (out of 115 countries)	109	0.579	108	0.416	90	0.903	66	0.974	111	0.022

Source: The Global Gender Gap Report 2013

Table 4.8 Ranking according to the Global Gender Gap Report 2013

# Syria

	OVERALL		ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION		EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT		HEALTH AND SURVIVAL		POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT	
	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score
<b>Gender Gap Index 2013 (out of 136 countries)</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>0.566</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>0.251</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>0.968</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>0.976</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>0.070</b>
Gender Gap Index 2012 (out of 135 countries)	132	0.563	135	0.274	107	0.931	61	0.976	111	0.070
Gender Gap Index 2011 (out of 135 countries)	124	0.590	129	0.409	109	0.914	61	0.976	110	0.060
Gender Gap Index 2010 (out of 134 countries)	124	0.593	130	0.398	104	0.936	60	0.976	107	0.060
Gender Gap Index 2009 (out of 134 countries)	121	0.607	120	0.461	104	0.931	68	0.976	116	0.060
Gender Gap Index 2008 (out of 130 countries)	107	0.618	107	0.508	101	0.927	65	0.976	112	0.060
Gender Gap Index 2007 (out of 128 countries)	103	0.622	104	0.524	99	0.927	63	0.976	100	0.059

Source: The Global Gender Gap Report 2013

Table 4.9 Women in national parliaments, situation as of 1st December 2014

WORLD CLASSIFICATION									
Rank	Country	Lower or single House				Upper House or Senate			
		Elections	Seats*	Women	% W	Elections	Seats*	Women	% W
110	<b>Cyprus</b>	5 2011	56	7	12.50%	---	---	---	---
111	<b>Sierra Leone</b>	11 2012	124	15	12.10%	---	---	---	---
112	<b>Georgia</b>	10 2012	150	18	12.00%	---	---	---	---
"	<b>Jordan</b>	1 2013	150	18	12.00%	10 2013	75	9	12.00%
"	<b>Syrian Arab Republic</b>	5 2012	250	30	<b>12.00%</b>	---	---	---	---
113	<b>Suriname</b>	5 2010	51	6	11.80%	---	---	---	---
114	<b>Ukraine</b>	10 2014	420	49	11.70%	---	---	---	---
115	<b>India</b>	4 2014	543	62	11.40%	1 2014	243	31	12.80%

Figure 4.1 Comparison according to the Global Gender Gap Report (2010-2013)

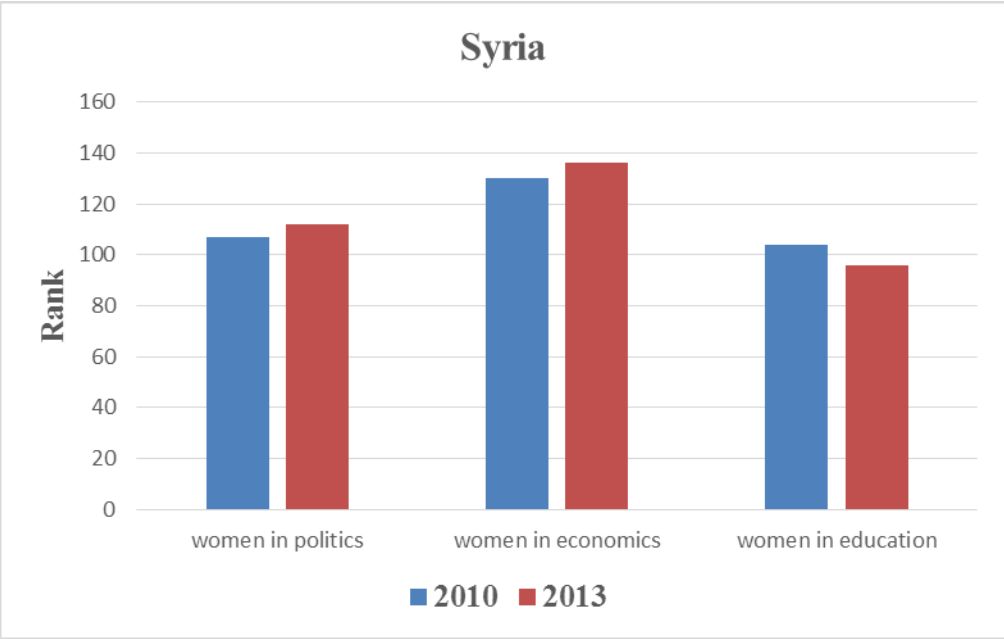
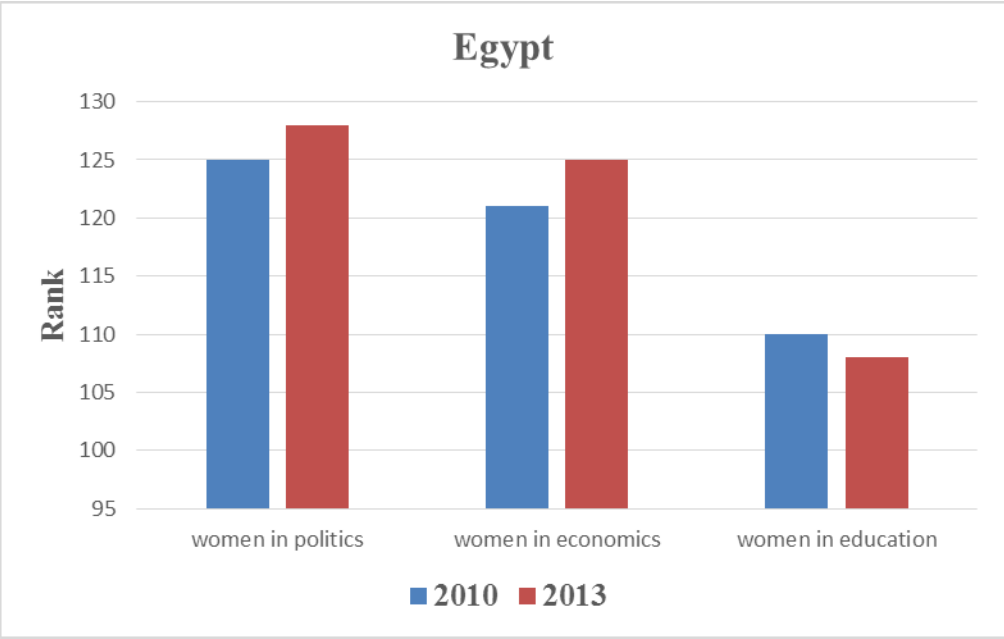


Figure 4.2 Ranking according to Thomson Reuters foundation 2013

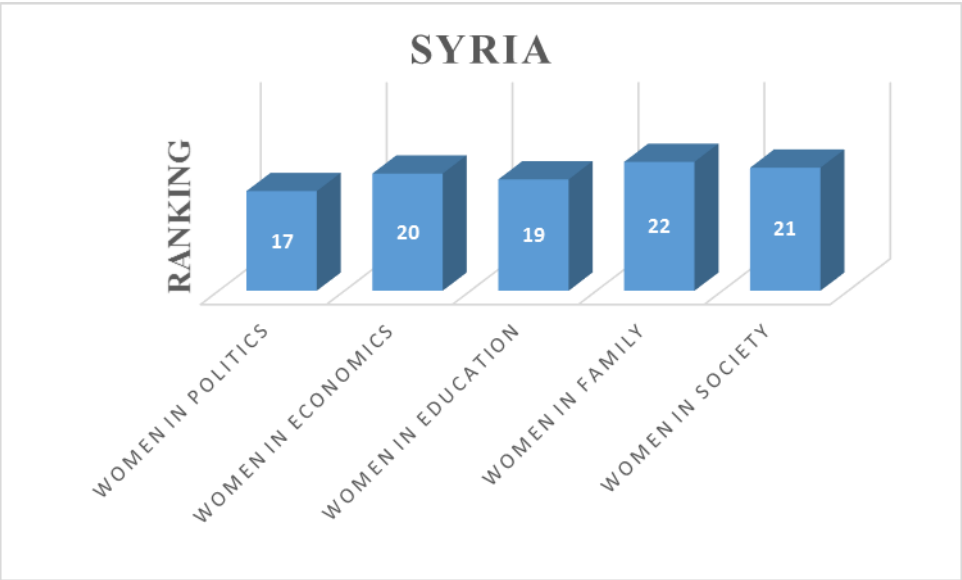
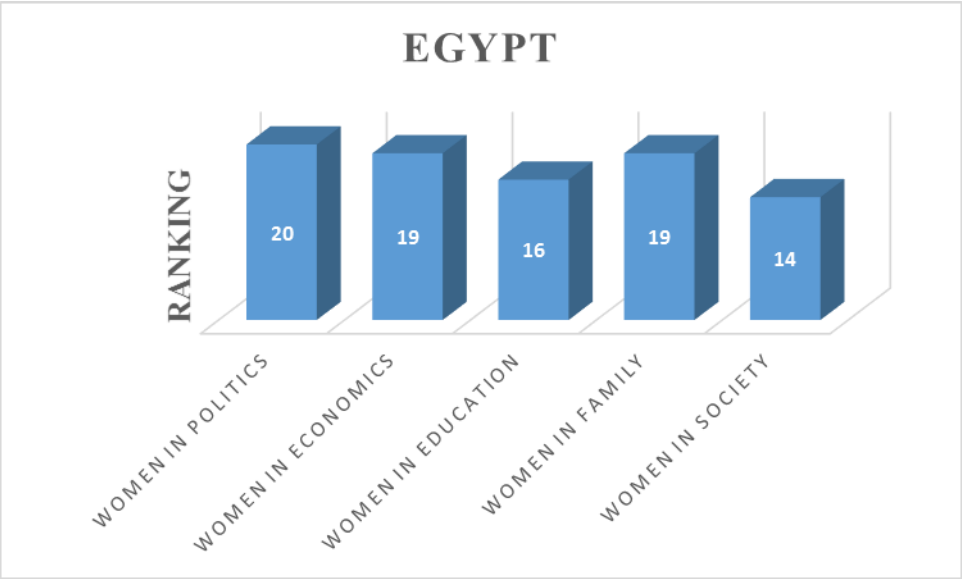
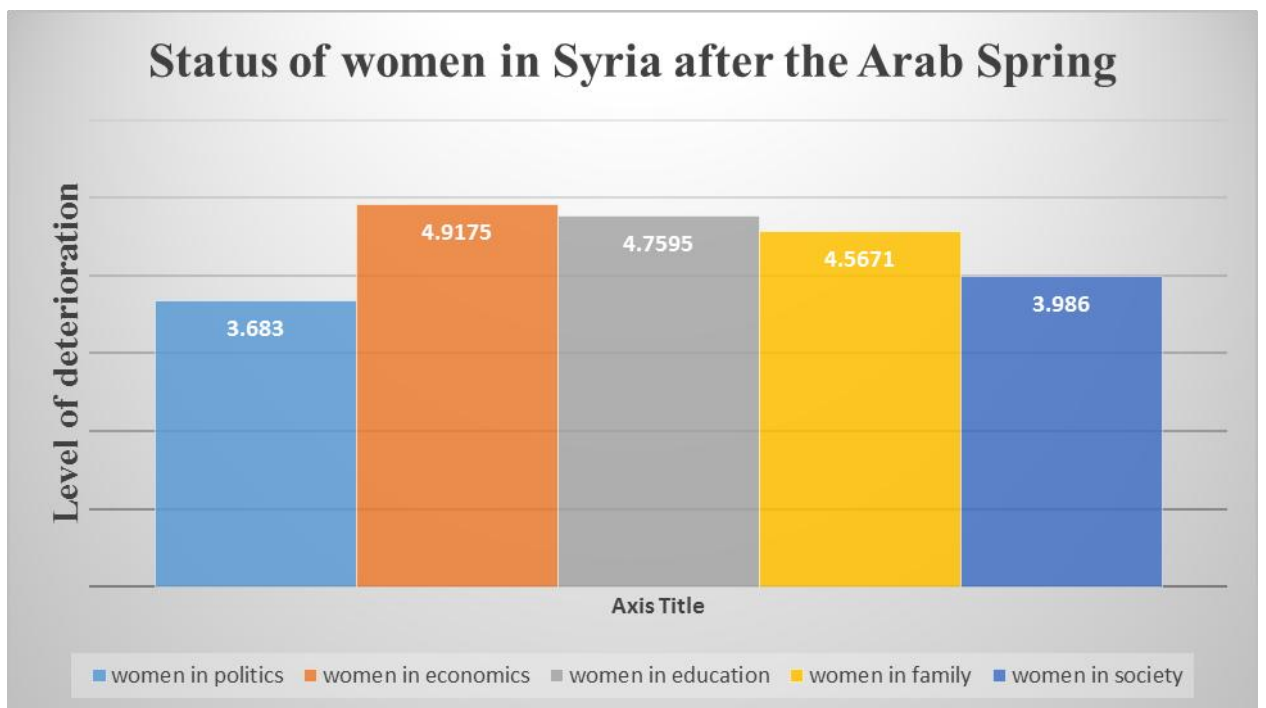
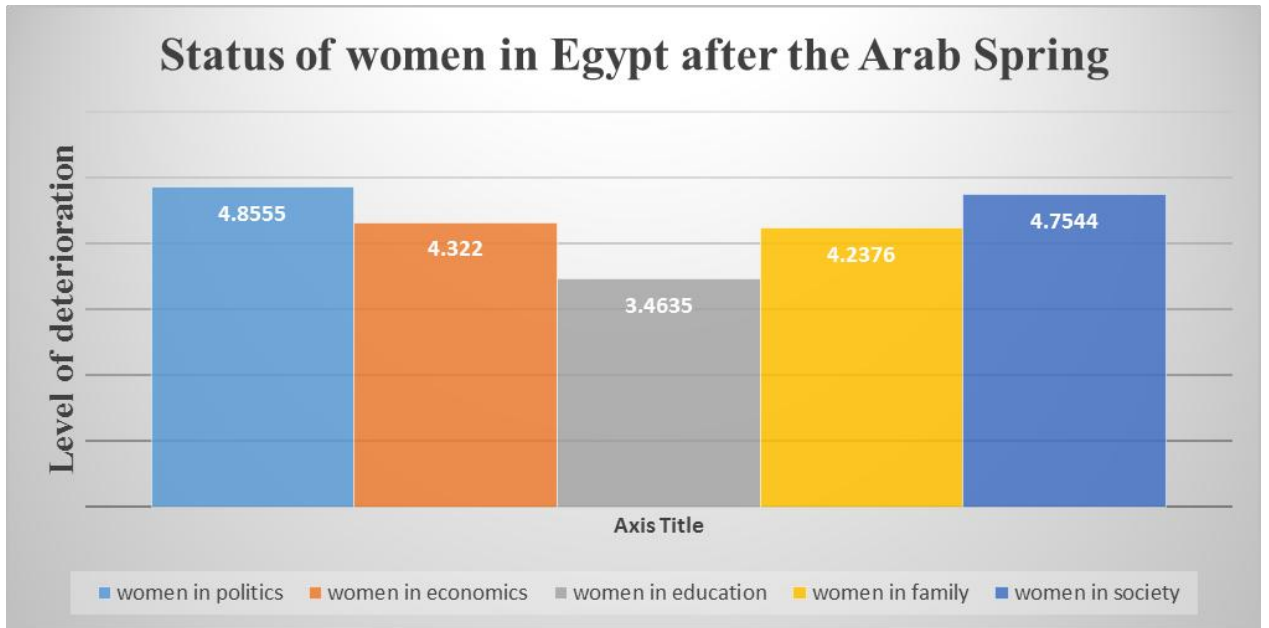


Figure 4.3 Level of deterioration of the status of women according to the collected surveys



# Chapter 5

## Conclusion

### 5.1 Summarizing content

This study sheds light on the situation of women in Egypt and Syria throughout the Arab Spring. It recognizes the significant rise of Islamic powers in the Arab world during this period and attempts ascertain whether this can be beneficial for women in their pursuit to enhance their status and acquire more of their deserved rights. In other words, it explores two contradicting claims: the first claims that political Islam can benefit women while the second claims that it cannot, and tests the validity of each to arrive at the correct conclusion. To do so, several indicators were utilized in addition to the collection and analysis of many studies, facts, and opinions.

The introduction of this research paper firstly depicts the evolution of the status of women in Syria and Egypt in the last couple of decades. It discusses the occurrence of the Arab Spring, the role that women had played in it, as well as the potential effects that such changes can have on the status of women in the future. Moreover, it explains why the cases of Syria and Egypt were chosen as a model for study and finally, sets the initial plan for the course of the whole study.

Chapter two examines and summarizes much of the scholarly work, observations, and opinions related to the study of this research paper. This involves the role that women played in the initiation and sustainability of the Arab Spring

revolutions, their status before and after the 2011 events, as well as the future of women in countries governed by Islamists. Moreover, in this chapter, the main hypothesis to be tested is stated.

Chapter three describes the methodologies used in this research in order to test the stated hypothesis. It proposes using different indicators to measure the evolution of the status of women with the rise of Islamists. Statistical data, reports, surveys, and interviews are mainly utilized for data collection.

Chapter four presents, summarizes, and analyzes the collected data. Moreover, comparative graphs are constructed in order to draw conclusions based on precise empirical data.

## **5.2 Women under Political Islam**

This final chapter should answer the question of whether or not the Arab Spring, that brought Islamists to power in many parts of the Arab world, will enhance the status of women or not. This question can be answered by examining multiple indicators of the status of women in two Arab countries which are Egypt and Syria. These indicators are associated with different aspects of Arab women's lives, including politics, economy, education, family, and society. Comparisons of these indicators between the two periods of time, the period just before the occurrence of the Arab Spring and the period approximately two years after its occurrence, are made. These comparisons, in addition to the opinions and observations of activists in these two countries, are employed in order to answer the research question.

## **The Global Gender Gap Report**

In reference to Figure 4.1 above, one can notice that the initial rank of both Egypt and Syria regarding the gender gap in the fields of politics, economics, and education in 2010 had been above 100. This indicates that the status of women in these fields had already been disappointing just before the occurrence of the Arab Spring. However, in 2013, the gap changed in the two countries in a very similar way. Two years after the start of the Arab Spring, the gap in the fields of politics and economics widened in both countries. In the field of education, a slight improvement can be noticed.

## **The 2013 Thomson Reuters Foundation poll**

Two years after the occurrence of the Arab Spring, a poll was conducted by Thomson Reuters Foundation in Arab countries to investigate the status of women in these countries. A summary of this poll showing where women stand in different aspects of life in Egypt and Syria is shown in Figure 4.2 above. One can instantly observe the high ranking that both Egypt and Syria score for the status of women in politics, economics, education, family, and society. This clearly indicates a tremendous deterioration of women rights in Egypt and Syria in all fields after the occurrence of the Arab Spring.

## **Collected Surveys**

After collecting, summarizing, and analyzing the surveys that investigate how the status of women changed after the rise of Islamists to power in both Syria and Egypt, the result is presented in Figure 4.3 above. From a scale of 0 to 5 where 0 indicates a



complete positive transition of women rights and 5 indicating a complete negative transition, most indicators score numbers close to 5 for both Egypt and Syria. This indicates a noticeable deterioration in the status of Egyptian and Syrian women in all political, economic, educational, social, and familial aspects during the two years after the occurrence of the Arab Spring.

### **Activists Interviews**

Most interviewed Egyptian activists concede that the Arab spring did not set off any positive transition in any of the aspects of Egyptian females' lives. This fact, they claim, is largely due to the Muslim Brotherhood's rule post Arab Spring. Syrian activists, on the other hand, blame different sides for the tragic situation that Syrian women have faced in the years following the start of the Arab Spring. Some blame the war in general, while others blame the Assad regime or other opposition parties in particular. However, all of them concede that the status of women deteriorated tremendously in the areas where different Islamic parties prevail.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

The overwhelming majority of indicators, observations, opinions, and analysis performed in this study bring us to the following conclusion: Islamic rule in Syria and Egypt was not able to positively impact the status of women; in some areas, it even caused further deterioration. The status of women across the different political, economical, societal, and familial fields clearly reached alarmingly low levels two years after the rise of Islamists in Egypt and Syria.

Islamic movements and parties in the Arab and Islamic world are numerous and divergent. These usually differ in how they interpret religious texts and share relatively varying perspectives and values on different religious, political, and societal aspects. Some interpret and practice a very extreme version of Islam such as ISIS and Al Qa3ida. Others are more moderate such as the Muslim Brotherhood party. In Egypt and Syria, Islamic powers at both ends of the spectrum were able to rule during the Arab Spring and these had devastating effects on the status of women because in spite of their differences, they all seem to share a similar view of women and a similar understanding of the role that she ought to play in various fields of life. As a result, despite the shortage of empirical data regarding the status of Arab women under the rule of Islamists in countries other than Egypt and Syria in our study, it would be safe to assume that the status of women in these other Arab Spring countries also found little improvement. Now does this necessarily imply that political Islam needs to be entirely abandoned in order for women to become empowered and regain their rights?

It is true that women had already been discriminated against in many aspects prior to the rise of Islamists in Egypt and Syria. It is also true that in Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood party was only allowed to rule for a relatively short time; and in Syria, Islamists could only control particular regions under very turbulent conditions because of the ongoing war in the country. As a result, it could be claimed that the issue of enhancing the status of women may have not been a priority and could have been later addressed had they been given more time and stability. It could also be claimed that Islamic movements, if given enough time, might be forced to become more pragmatic and liberal. Islamic AKP ruling party in Turkey is usually given as the most prominent

example of how Islamic movements can evolve to become more female-friendly. Unfortunately, this model is scarce in the Arab and Islamic world. There are many more examples of Islamic rules that have thrived for decades and still treat women as second class citizens and adopt policies that largely discriminate against them. For example, consider Turkey and Malaysia. Despite having two of the most female-friendly governments in the Islamic world, they are still seen as lacking in this respect when compared to the western world. Turkey ranked 120 out of 136 countries according to the 2013 Global Gender Gap while in Malaysia; women are still believed to be discriminated against in Sharia courts, especially when it comes to family-law matters.

#### **5.4 Women's way forward**

The question of whether or not there is such a thing as a best ruling model for women in the Arab world, and what it entails, is beyond the scope of this research paper. However, if we assume that political Islam is to be completely overlooked, examining and finding alternatives becomes a necessity.

Among the most appealing alternative political systems to be examined in future research would be those that treat their citizens equally regardless of their gender, race, religion, or ethnicity. Secular and/or pluralist systems may be ideal in this respect for women in the Arab world. While Islamism confines women to a limited role, secularism and/or pluralism guarantee equality of rights and obligations for all people and groups including women. Moreover, while Islamism aims at following and spreading a religious agenda containing a fixed set of rules and ideas, these systems tend to adapt and instead

consider the wellbeing of their citizens and the preservation of their rights as their utmost priority.

Unfortunately, achieving a political system that can guarantee women equality is only one of many challenges that face them in their lengthy journey towards real change. The majority of Arab women, especially those who live in rural areas, are not sufficiently educated, weak, and most have adapted to their inferior role in their families and their society. This means that before pursuing political reformations, women have to address a more complicated challenge, and that is the cultural one. As Mona El Tahawy explained, there needs to be a double revolution, one at the political level and the other at the cultural religious one. Before expecting women to determine which political system suits them, protest against those who discriminate against them, or vote for those who will preserve their rights in governments, there needs to be an increase in both their education, and their belief in themselves and their ability to make a difference.

Through the Arab Spring, women proved to be a significant force in societies with the power to lead and participate in historical political changes despite having suffered long spells of abuse and discrimination. The Arab Spring has also helped in putting more focus on women's issues and rights especially with the rise of Islamism in many parts of the Arab world. After four years from the start of the Arab Spring, with Islamism's political power declining in Egypt and Tunisia, and war waged on radical Islamists in Libya, Syria, and Iraq, the future of women remains unclear amidst these political and military turbulences that are affecting the whole region.

## Bibliography

- Abdelhadi, M. (2008, July 18). Egypt's sexual harassment 'cancer'. Cairo, Egypt: *BBC News*. Retrieved from [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/7514567.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7514567.stm)
- Abdellatif, O. & Ottaway, M. (2007, June). *Women in Islamist movements: Toward an Islamist model of women's activism*. Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.
- Alami, M. (2013, January 13). Egypt constitution will be bad news for women, activists say. *USA Today*. Retrieved from <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2013/01/11/egypt-constitution-women-rights/1784135/>
- Al Maaitah, R., Al Maaitah, H., Olaimat, H., & Gharaeibeh, M. (2011, March). Arab women and political development. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 12(3, Pt. 2), 1-20.
- Asbali, N. & Javed, A. (2013, October 19). This House believes that the Arab spring has done more harm than good. *The Boar*. Retrieved from <http://theboar.org/2013/10/19/this-house-believes-that-the-arab-spring-has-done-more-harm-than-good/#.VWW9Lmcw9Mw>
- Aswany, A. (2013, December 08). Egypt's trouble with women. *New York Times*. Retrieved from [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/09/opinion/09iht-edalawany09.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/09/opinion/09iht-edalawany09.html?_r=0)
- Aumeer, L. (2012, September 7). Egypt's culture of sexual harassment: Grassroots activism is trying to combat prevalent sexual assault, but government efforts are also needed to tackle this social, cultural and political issue. *Facebook*. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?id=106572906078278&storyfbid=411222242259607>
- Baffoun, A. (1982). Women and Social Change in the Muslim World. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 5, 227-242.

- Bager, J. (2013, October 25) Forbidden to drive: A Saudi woman on life inside the Kingdom. *Time*. Retrieved from <http://ideas.time.com/2013/10/25/forbidden-to-drive-a-saudi-woman-on-life-inside-the-kingdom/>
- Balaa, H. (n.d.). Behind the closed doors of Saudi harems. *Arabian Echo*. Retrieved from <http://arabian-echo.com/downloads/author.pdf>
- Beardsley, E. (2011, January 27). In Tunisia, women play equal role in revolution. *National Public Radio*. Retrieved from <http://www.npr.org/2011/01/27/133248219/in-tunisia-women-play-equal-role-in-revolution>
- Begum, R. (2013, October 24). Give Saudi women the right to drive. *CNN*. Retrieved from <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/10/24/opinion/begum-saudi-women-driving/>
- Bertrand, E. (2013, March 25). Political and social rights: women after the Arab spring. *The Voice of Russia*. Retrieved from [http://sputniknews.com/voiceofrussia/2013\\_03\\_25/Political-and-social-rights-women-after-the-Arab-Spring-203/](http://sputniknews.com/voiceofrussia/2013_03_25/Political-and-social-rights-women-after-the-Arab-Spring-203/)
- Boros, C. (2013, 12 November). POLL-Egypt is worst Arab state for women, Comoros best. *Thomson Reuters Foundation*. Retrieved from <http://www.trust.org/item/20131108170910-qacvu/?source=spotlight-writaw>
- Byrne, E. (2011, October 28). The women MPs tipped to play leading roles in Tunisia's new assembly. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/oct/29/women-mps-tunisia-government>
- Caspani, M. (2013, January 29). Women sexually assaulted in Cairo clashes. *Thomson Reuters Foundation*. Retrieved from <http://www.trust.org/item/?map=women-sexually-assaulted-in-latest-cairo-clashes/>
- Caspani, M. (2013, May 10). Actor, dressed as woman, feels Egypt's sexual harassment. *Thomson Reuters Foundation*. Retrieved from <http://www.trust.org/item/20130510045933-gnoz8/>

- Caspani, M. (2013, May 27). Libya should seize unique opportunity to guarantee women's rights – HRW. *Thomson Reuters Foundation*. Retrieved from <http://www.trust.org/item/20130527191420-ta9ei/?source%20=%20hpbreaking>
- Charles, L. & Denman, K. (2012, October). Every knot has someone to undo it: using the capabilities approach as a lens to view the status of women leading up to the Arab Spring in Syria. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 13(5, Pt. 7), 195-210.
- Charrad, M.M. (2007, October 15). Tunisia at the forefront of the Arab world: two waves of gender legislation. *Washington and Lee Law Review*, 64(4), 1513-1527.
- Charrad, M. M. & Zarrugh, A. (2013, September 4). The Arab Spring and women's rights in Tunisia. *E-International Relations*. Retrieved from <http://www.e-ir.info/2013/09/04/the-arab-spring-and-womens-rights-in-tunisia/>
- Central Intelligence Agency. (n.d.). The World FactBook. Middle East: Syria. *Central Intelligence Agency*. Retrieved from <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/sy.html>
- Clarke, R.J. (2005). Research models and methodologies. *HDR Seminar Series*. Retrieved from <http://business.uow.edu.au/content/groups/public/@web/@commerce/documents/doc/uow012042.pdf>
- Clemence, S. (2013, November 20). Women losing education rights in Egypt since Arab Spring. *Deseret News National Edition*. Retrieved from <http://national.deseretnews.com/article/641/women-losing-education-rights-in-egypt-since-arab-spring.html>
- Coleman, I. (2013, October 4). Quotas and women in Egyptian politics. *Council on Foreign Relations*. Retrieved from <http://blogs.cfr.org/coleman/2013/10/04/quotas-and-women-in-egyptian-politics/>
- Egyptian women protesters sexually assaulted in Tahrir Square. (2012, June 9). *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/jun/09/egyptian-women-protesters-sexually-assaulted>

- Elali, N. (2013, January 24). Syria's female revolution: Syrian women at the forefront of a struggle. *NOW*. Retrieved from [https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/reportsfeatures/syrias\\_female\\_revolution](https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/reportsfeatures/syrias_female_revolution)
- El Sirgany,S. (2013, December 2). Police arrest head of defense team for female Egyptian protesters. *CNN*. Retrieved from <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/12/02/world/meast/egypt-protests/>
- Eltahawy, M. (2011, November 24). Mona Eltahawy reportedly detained, sexually assaulted in Egypt. *The Huffington Post*. Retrieved from [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/11/24/mona-eltahawy-egypt-sexual-assault\\_n\\_1111841.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/11/24/mona-eltahawy-egypt-sexual-assault_n_1111841.html)
- El-Zanaty, F., Hussein, E. M., Shawky, G., Way, A. A. & Kishor, S. (1996). *Egypt demographic and health survey 1995*. Cairo: National Population Council. Retrieved from <http://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR71/FR71.pdf>
- EuroMed Gender Equality. (2008-2011). Enhancing equality between men and women in the EuroMed Region. *EuroMed*. Retrieved from [http://www.enpi-info.eu/mainmed.php?id\\_type=10&id=241](http://www.enpi-info.eu/mainmed.php?id_type=10&id=241)
- Fairweather, J. (2008, November 4). Islamists' rise could benefit women's rights. Retrieved from <http://muslimsagainstharia.blogspot.com/2008/11/depraved-islamists-rise-could-benefit.html>
- Files, F. (2013, July 5). Women organising to survive: Syria's civil war and beyond. Association for women's rights in development. *Thomson Reuters Foundation*. Retrieved from <http://www.trust.org/item/20130705155822-kqita/>
- Guenena, N. (2013, August 20). Women in democratic transition: Political participation watchdog Unit. *Thematic Evaluation*. Retrieved from [http://www.un.org/democracypfund/sites/www.un.org.democracypfund/files/UDF-EGY-08-241\\_Final%20UNDEF%20evaluation%20report.pdf](http://www.un.org/democracypfund/sites/www.un.org.democracypfund/files/UDF-EGY-08-241_Final%20UNDEF%20evaluation%20report.pdf)
- Guenena, N. & Wassef, N. (1999). *Unfulfilled promises: women's rights in Egypt*. West Asia and North Africa Region: Population Council.



Haas, M. L. & Lesch, D. W. (2013). *The Arab Spring: change and resistance in the Middle East*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press.

Haerens, M. & Zott, L. M. (2013). *The Arab Spring*. Detroit: Gale/Cengage Learning.

Heideman, K. & Youssef, M. (2012). *Reflections on women in the Arab Spring: in celebration of International women's day 2012*. Brighton: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.

Himelfarb, J. (2011). Arab Spring or Islamist winter? *inFocus Quarterly: The Jewish Policy Center*, 5(Pt. 4). Retrieved from <http://www.jewishpolicycenter.org/2810/arab-spring-islamist-winter>

Human Rights Watch (2012, January 22). World report 2012: Syria. *Human Rights Watch*. Retrieved from <http://www.hrw.org/world-report-2012/world-report-2012-syria>

Human Rights Watch. (2013, July 3). Egypt: epidemic of sexual violence. *Human Rights Watch*. Retrieved from <http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/07/03/egypt-epidemic-sexual-violence>

Huntington, S. P. (1993). The clash of civilizations? *Foreign Affairs*, 72(3), 22-49.

Inter-Parliamentary Union (2014, December 1). *Women in national parliaments*. Retrieved from <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>.

Kingsley, P. (2013, March 15). Muslim Brotherhood backlash against UN declaration on women rights. Egypt, Cairo: *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/mar/15/muslim-brotherhood-backlash-un-womens-rights>

Kohut, A., Wike, R., Horowitz J.M., Carriere-Kretschmer, E., Poushter, J. & Ressler, M. (2010, July 1). Gender equality universally embraced, but inequalities acknowledged. Men's lives often seen as better. 22-Nation pew global attitudes project. *Pew Research Center: A special report done in association with the international herald tribune*. Retrieved from <http://www.pewglobal.org/files/pdf/Pew-Global-Attitudes-2010-Gender-Report.pdf>

- Langhi, Z. (2012, January 25). Libyan women's platform for peace: NTC considering draft electoral law. *Shabab Libya*. Retrieved from <http://www.shabablibya.org/news/news-flash-ntc-considering-draft-electoral-law-proposed-by-libyan-womens-platform-for-peace>
- Mabrook, M. F. (2012, June 1). The precarious position of women and minorities in Arab. *The Brookings Institution*. Retrieved from <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/up-front/posts/2012/06/01-egypt-mabrouk>
- Michalak, L. (2013). *Tunisia: Igniting Arab Democracy*. Retrieved from [http://www.diplomatshandbook.org/pdf/Handbook\\_Tunisia.pdf](http://www.diplomatshandbook.org/pdf/Handbook_Tunisia.pdf)
- Montasir, J. (2013, June 27). Voices: women's rights in Egypt – Re-examining a revolution. *Middle East Voices*. Retrieved from <http://middleeastvoices.voanews.com/2013/06/voices-womens-rights-in-egypt-re-examining-a-revolution-99467/>
- Naggar, M (2010, July 13). In Egypt, women have burdens but no privileges. *Middle East: New York Times*. Retrieved from [http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/14/world/middleeast/14iht-letter.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/14/world/middleeast/14iht-letter.html?_r=0)
- Namazie M. (2011, March 8). To defend women's rights, we must push back Islamism. Torino, Italy: *Free Thought Blogs*. Retrieved from <http://freethoughtblogs.com/maryamnamazie/2011/03/08/to-defend-womens-rights-we-must-push-back-islamism/>
- Oliver, H. (2012, January). Libya drops election quota for women. *Thomson Reuters Foundation*. Retrieved from <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/01/20/libya-women-idAFL6E8CK1SF20120120>
- Omar, M. (2011, November 2). Women and the Arab Spring. *United States Institute of Peace*. Retrieved from <http://www.usip.org/publications/women-and-the-arab-spring-0>
- Osman, A. Z. (2012, March 19). Women's movement: a stop at Egypt's socialist era. *Egypt Independent*. Retrieved from <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/womens-movement-stop-egypts-socialist-era>

- Roll, S. (2013, September 08). Egypt's business elite after Mubarak. A powerful player between generals and Brotherhood. *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik German Institute for International and Security Affairs*. Retrieved from [http://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/research\\_papers/2013\\_RP08\\_rll.pdf](http://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/research_papers/2013_RP08_rll.pdf)
- Roman, J. (2012, January 22). On the front lines in Syria, women's role is still undefined. Syria: *The National*. Retrieved from <http://www.thenational.ae/thenationalconversation/comment/on-the-front-lines-in-syria-womens-role-is-still-undefined>
- Saul, H. (2015, February 5). Life as a woman under ISIS: document reveals for the first time what group really expects from female recruits living in Syria and Iraq. Middle East: *The Independent*. Retrieved from <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/life-as-a-woman-under-isis-document-reveals-for-the-first-time-what-group-really-expects-from-female-recruits-living-in-syria-and-iraq-10025143.html>
- Shahira, A. (2011, 3 August). The feminine face of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood. *CNN*. Retrieved from <http://edition.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/meast/08/03/egypt.muslim.sisterhood/>
- Stoter, B. (2013, July 3). Egyptians form human shields to protect female protesters. *Al-Monitor*. Retrieved from <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/07/human-shield-protects-egyptian-women-protesters.html>
- Stucki, B. (2011, November 30). Women's education in Egypt is mystifying. *Collegiate times*. Retrieved from [http://www.collegiatetimes.com/opinion/columnists/women-s-education-in-egypt-is-mystifying/article\\_a111026c-7b50-540c-90ae-75fb4bff9682.html](http://www.collegiatetimes.com/opinion/columnists/women-s-education-in-egypt-is-mystifying/article_a111026c-7b50-540c-90ae-75fb4bff9682.html)
- Sullivan, E. L. (1986). *Women in Egyptian Public Life*. Syracuse, Newyork: Syracuse University Press.
- Tag-Eldin, M.A., Gadallah, M.A., Al-Tayeb, M.N., Abdel-Aty, M., Mansour, E. & Sallem, M. (2008). Prevalence of female genital cutting among Egyptian girls. *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*, 86(4), 269-274. Doi: [10.2471/BLT.07.042093](https://doi.org/10.2471/BLT.07.042093)

The Arab Spring: Has it failed? (2013, June 13). *The Economist*. Retrieved from <http://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21581734-despite-chaos-blood-and-democratic-setbacks-long-process-do-not-give-up>

Thomson Reuters (2013, November 12). Poll: Women's rights in the Arab World. *Thomson Reuters Foundation*. Retrieved from <http://www.trust.org/spotlight/poll-womens-rights-in-the-arab-world/>

United Nations. (2013, March 11). Impact of the Arab Spring on women's rights. *Inter Press Service*. Retrieved from <http://www.ipsnews.net/2013/03/impact-of-the-arab-spring-on-womens-rights/>