

The Arab spring and the politics of gender: assessing campaigns for women's rights in Egypt and Tunisia



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ABSTRACT

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The Arab Spring or, as some call it, Arab Awakening, started in December 2010. The reasons for the Arab Spring were numerous and diverse. For some time, sections of Arab societies have confronted the suppression of free discourse, human rights abuse monetary mismanagement, corruption and stifling of political disagreement.

As endless broadcast scenes from the Arab Spring affirmed, many women were on the barricades during the uprisings. Amid the uprisings many women and men stood and walked together, shielded each other from government forces, and joined in calling for social and political change. Be that as it may, once the regimes fell, the old forms of separation reappeared. Many women were harassed, beaten and pursued out of open spaces. Regrettably, just nine women were chosen to the Egyptian parliament at the time.

The thesis seeks to explore the way women's groups in Egypt and Tunisia framed their demands (in terms of citizenship rights) before and during the Arab Spring.

The fight for equal political citizenship, and the demands certain women's groups want for the right to equality in different aspects of life, are often framed in the liberal sense of what citizenship should be. I might not be arguing for liberalism, but during the Arab Spring, and after, women's claims of equality were often based on the notion of equality defined by liberalism.

The thesis investigates whether there have been legislative changes in terms of women's rights in Tunisia and Egypt through campaigns and protests. After reviewing the history of women's groups and campaigns over the years within Tunisia and Egypt, there have been changes, which is discussed in chapter 5 of the paper.

DECLARATION

I declare that *The Arab spring and the politics of gender: assessing campaigns for women's rights in Egypt and Tunisia* is my own work, that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

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Date: July 2022



Signed.....

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The Arab Spring was an uprising which addressed specific issues people were fighting against such as corruption and authoritarian rule. Many people were involved in the Arab Spring, including feminist groups, women's groups/organisations and youth groups. The thesis will look at women's groups before, during and after the movement and how successful they were in the uprising as well as what they achieved after the uprising. The 2011-12 uprisings were successful in the sense that the people overthrew the authoritarian regimes.

The 2010-11 phase of the Arab Spring appeared successful. Tragically, Tunisia is the lone exception to what is happening in other places. The uprising that brought forth the Arab Spring and brought down regimes, toppled tyrants and changed the regions outlook. However, five years in Tunisia is viewed as the sole example of overcoming the difficulty of the Arab revolts. Since Ben Ali's parting, Tunisians have upheld a fairly wide margin of freedom of speech and chased a messy and continuing transition to democracy, even though some of its neighbouring countries reeled under the revival of the authoritarian order (as in Egypt and Bahrain).

My central/main research explores what the demands of women's groups in the Arab Spring were and are, particularly in Egypt and Tunisia; and what the main issues are that women's groups are raising and whether these issues were met.

The aim of this study is to investigate whether the fight for women's rights and equal citizenship has improved or weakened since the Arab Spring. These rights that will be looked at include gender equality and the safety of the women, which include the fight against sexual harassment and Female Genital Mutilation, as well as demands for rights that arise from existing Inheritance and divorce laws. It is crucial to survey whether the Arab Spring has acquired genuine change for women in the countries, as they assumed a pivotal part in the uprisings over the regions and trusted that their endeavours would eventually enhance their social, political, and monetary standing.

Chapter 1 is an introduction to the research question and gives an overview of what the thesis will explore. Chapter 2 shows relevant literature in terms of the Arab Spring, Women in social movements and what those social movements want to accomplish. Chapter 3 an explanation and

justification of the research process chosen, explaining the data sources used and the limitations faced while doing research for the minithesis. In chapter 4 I give a brief overview of the history of women's organisations before and during the Arab Spring. Whereas in chapter 5, I discuss the contesting of women's rights after the Arab Spring. The ongoing challenges for women's rights is also looked at in chapter 5. The conclusion follows that, where I discuss the research findings.



CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Arab Spring

Mohamed Bouazizi was busy getting ready to sell fruits and vegetables, but was asked to produce a permit by the police, which he refused to do (NPR Staff, 2011). After being humiliated by the police he set himself on fire in front of a government building, and it is said that because of his act of pure desperation, people were able to relate to his story which sparked protests throughout the town (NPR Staff, 2011). The uprising, known as the The Arab Spring, thus began in December 2010 (Blakemore, 2019). I think that one cannot say that Bouazizi setting himself on fire is the sole reason for the protests starting, however, I do think that when he set himself on fire it allowed others to take a stand against their government because of the long forms of oppression. His public sacrifice started, what is known as, the Jasmine Revolution in Tunisia and this caused a wave of uprisings throughout the Middle East (Micallef, 2018).

The Arab Spring was known in the media as spontaneous uprisings but was anything but. It came from a history of patriarchy, repression of free speech, human rights abuses, economic mismanagement, and corruption (Murphy, 2012). The Arab Spring consisted of many people banding together to protest their authoritarian governments (Blakemore, 2019). According to Blakemore (2019) the Arab Spring was a pro-democracy protest/uprising. Pro-democracy refers to a political movement or political activism which is directed at creating a democratic government (Eisen, Kenealy, et al. 2019). The Arab uprisings can be described as a revolutionary wave that included demonstrations as well as protests that swept all around the Arab world (Salih, 2013:184). After only a year the uprisings had caused the downfall of two regimes, Tunisia, and Egypt (Salih, 2013:184). In all the Arab countries ordinary citizens went from making protests to sustained campaigning and these techniques included strikes, marches, rallies and demonstrations (Salih, 2013:184). The Arab Spring demonstrations were met with many violent responses from authorities (Salih, 2013:184). In October 2011, after starting in Tunisia eleven months earlier, the Arab Spring uprisings was able to overthrow three of the state's heads (Blakemore, 2019). One of these heads was Hosni Mubarak, the president of Egypt that resigned in February 2011 only 18 days after all the massive protests (Blakemore, 2019).

Throughout, *Invisible Arab: The Promise and Peril of the Arab Revolutions*, Bishara outlines how the Arab Spring protests started and how people reacted to it. According to some people the Arab Spring was spontaneous because the people of the Middle East and North Africa were fed up with corruption and dictatorship. Bishara (2012, Introduction, para. 7) argues that the Arab Spring was not sudden and that the image portrayed in Western media was focused more on a youth movement that was “spontaneously” created through social media. To show what led to the Arab Spring, Creedon (2012) points out that, Bishara talks about labour unions, religious groups, women’s groups and social organisers and how these groups were all active in the pre-revolution. Bishara (2012, Introduction, para. 16) points out that the Arab Spring protests were the perfect opportunity to reinvent and improve Arab ties to the rest of the world.

The Arab Spring, according to Bishara (2012, Preface, para. 12) was because “Arabs” themselves, not because of Western influence, took initiative and fought for their freedom and rights. As previously mentioned Bishara talks about the different aspects of the Arab Spring including pre-revolution, the role of the youth, the role and use of social media, and labour unions to name a few, through the course of the book. As this was written in 2012 it seems that Bishara had high hopes for the future. He saw a solution for the future where there is more of a democratised system, one that is void of religion. It is difficult to democratise a country where dictatorship and autocracy are so prominent. I do believe that it is important now more than ever to have the youth and marginalised groups more involved in politics without the fear of consequences.

Many women of the Middle East and North Africa played a significant role in bringing change during the Arab Spring. Whenever uprisings happened during the Arab Spring, many women were at the forefront of them (Murphy, 2012). Hamdy states in an article that media outlets showed men and women standing against authority: “—scenes of the sole man raising his arms in the face of water cannons, the assault on the demonstrators whose heads were bowed in prayer, young women and men falling to their deaths from sniper bullets.” (Hamdy, 2012:44). Some women were active participants in the Arab Spring but when the Arab Spring ended those same women that were on the barricades of the uprising, were still faced with a battle ahead of them as their fight for equal rights in education, politics, inheritance laws, and gender-based

violence against women still continues (Murphy, 2012). During the transition post-Arab Spring, women in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya have been greatly left out (Charrad & Zarrugh, 2013). This is quite shocking, especially since the Arab Spring was about dignity and bringing social justice (Charrad & Zarrugh, 2013). After the Arab Spring there was a sense of political and economic freedom (Charrad & Zarrugh, 2013). This empowerment, however, did not apply to women in the same and powerful sense as everyone else (Charrad & Zarrugh, 2013). During the time of the article written by Charrad & Zarrugh, female activists were side-lined in the political space after having played a prominent role in the overthrowal of government (Charrad & Zarrugh, 2013). In my opinion this is still relevant, however, more women have been included within the political and economic sphere.

After the Arab Spring, Shirin Ebadi (Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and Iranian Human Rights Lawyer and Activist) stated:

For years, women in these countries have suffered from gender discrimination. For this reason, in the popular uprisings in these countries, women played a prominent role; and without the presence of women, victory would not have been possible. Now at the moment of victory, the women in these countries demand their rights. Only when women achieve their rights can we say that the “Arab Spring” has commenced. So far, it would appear that the situation of Tunisian women is better than that of women elsewhere. We must wait for calm to return to Libya and Egypt, as well. It is only in societal calm that it is possible to talk of equal rights. I know that Arab women will not allow a culture of patriarchy once again to trample on their rights (Heideman & Youssef, 2012: 2).

One of the real powers conveying change to the Middle East is women’s groups. As endless broadcast scenes from the Arab Spring affirmed, a lot of women were on the blockades wherever uprisings happened (Karman, 2016). Tawakkol Karman from Yemen received a Nobel Peace Prize for her activism (Salih, 2018: 185). According to Tawakkol Karman (2016), the authoritarian regimes were shocked when they saw the extensive participation of women during the Arab Spring as they assumed that women would not partake in the protests but would rather remain in their submissive roles. Women will still have to fight for full rights and equality, even

after the Arab Spring. Many women, including women's groups, were dynamic members during demonstrations and the protests in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Libya, and more. These women and men stood next to each other, shielded each other from government powers, and called administration change (Salih, 2018: 185). Be that as it may, once the regimes fell, the old rules and beliefs soon followed (Karman, 2016). A lot of women were harassed, beaten, and pursued. Regrettably, just nine women were chosen to the Egyptian parliament. There will be no turning back as the women of Egypt, Tunisia, and the rest of the Middle East are resolved that the battle for women's rights must continue.

In *Women Rising: In and Beyond the Arab Spring* by Rita Stephan and Mounira M. Charrad (2020), they collated the insights of the often-marginalized voices including housewives, rural women, students, and artists. The book highlights women's political resistance in sixteen countries before, during, and after the Arab Spring of 2010/2011. The book further tells the story of Arab women's activism throughout the years in the form of essays by female activists and scholars (Stephan & Charrad, 2020). According to the media "Arab women" woke up and fought during the Arab Spring (Stephan & Charrad, 2020: 2). Stephan and Charrad (2020: 1) also mention that during the Arab Spring there were claims that "Arab women" were finally rising and standing up against oppression, however, this is not true. Women in the Middle East and North Africa were already active in protesting, voting, running for office, as well as leading organizations since as early as the 1920s. Stephan and Charrad (2020: 1) point out that after the Arab Spring, Tunisia showed signs of promise in terms of democracy, but continues to fight corruption and extremism. They also mention that Egypt had slowly been sliding into becoming a dictatorship and a sexually dangerous environment for the women of the country (Stephan & Charrad, 2020: 1). Stephan and Charrad (2020: 2) argue that a democratic transition to consolidation can be lengthy, challenging and somewhat messy. Women's voices are being heard now more than ever. Stephan and Charrad (2020: 2) believe that women are more aware of their collective power and, together, can fight against exclusion, and oppression. The result of the Arab Spring for women were increased participation in public life and increased representation when it comes to decision-making (Stephan & Charrad, 2020: 4).

The book explores and highlights activism of women before, during and after the Arab Spring. The essays included in this book shows the reader how many women have become part of the public space through their involvement in protests and so forth. It shows how women's political representation, in many countries, have grown and how they are slowly becoming part of the decision-making process. One can clearly see, through the book, that women's role in the struggle for democracy, social justice, and women's rights are incredibly important.

I want to look at the way women's groups in Egypt and Tunisia framed their demands before and during the Arab Spring. Definitions of social movements, political parties and NGO's will be discussed, and the remainder of the chapter will look at literature of women in Social movements, feminist groups in Tunisia and feminist groups in Egypt.

Social Movements, Political Parties and NGO's

Social Movement

The term "social movements" was first introduced by the German Sociologist Lorenz von Stein, in 1848, in his book *Socialist and Communist Movements since the Third French Revolution* (1848) (Social Movements, 2020). "A social movement is a deliberate collective endeavor to promote change in any direction and by any means, not excluding violence, illegality, revolution or withdrawal into "utopian" community..." (Wilkinson, 1971: 27).

When organized groups come together and work towards a common goal, this is called a social movement (Little & McGivern, 2014). Social movements are established when civil society wants to create change, want to resist change, or want to provide a civil society a political voice (Little & McGivern, 2014). Social movements are not spontaneous but requires a lot of resources and planning. If you look at the explanation given by Christiansen (2009), then one can deduce that because social movements require time and resources they do not occur just because people are upset about a certain policy or the ruling government. In other words, social movements create social change through holding mass demonstrations and so forth. Social movements can focus on a single social change or they can come together to fight against social change (Social Movements, 2020).

According to Freeman and Johnson (1999), when it comes to defining a social movement, it is difficult to give an exact definition. Unlike an interest group or political party, which is both stable entities which has stable political power, a social movement is somewhere in between (Freeman & Johnson, 1999).

Political Party

A genuine social movement, on the other hand, is always integrated by a set of constitutive ideas, or an ideology, although bonds of other nature may not be absent. Furthermore, a party is by definition related to a larger group, within which it operates against at least one partial group of similar character. Parties can appear in all kinds of corporate groups, but a political party by definition can occur only within a body politic, that is, only within a state. A social movement, on the other hand, need not be restricted to a particular state or to a national society. In fact, all major social movements have extended other the entire sphere of Western civilization and even beyond (Heberle, 1951: 11).

When building a democratic society, it is crucial to have different political parties involved. In his book *Politics*, Heywood (2002: 248) describes a political party as group of people who are organised so that they can win government power through elections. Political parties should not be confused with interest groups and/or social movements (Heywood, 2002: 248). Political parties unlike an interest group, wants to control public policy making through legal framework by capturing state power (Heywood, 2002: 248).

Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)

NGOs refer to all the organisations within a society that operates within civil society and does not form part of the government (Maslyukivska, 1999). Organisations that fall under the NGO umbrella include political groups, trade and labour unions, religious entities, chambers of commerce, and so forth (Maslyukivska, 1999). The aim of an NGO is to work with the people in civil society to help them improve their social and economics situations (Maslyukivska, 1999).

Women in Social Movements

Being defined as woman or man, biologically, means having different access to material and symbolic resources and rights. The concept of gender is part of a controversial discussion that is not as easy to understand as it seems. Judith Lorber (2008: 538) defines the concept of gender as being “a social institution based on three structural principles: the division of people in two social groups, ‘men’ and ‘women’; the social construction of perceptible differences between them; and their differential treatment, legitimated by socially produced differences”.

I look at the role gender plays in social movements because it is deeply rooted and stable within the economic, social, cultural, and religious systems. The specific gender roles set out by societies affect our individual behaviours and beliefs and how people act within these structures. Some well-known authors that have contributed to these debates include Judith Butler, Fatima Mernissi, and Nivedita Menon, to name a few.

Judith Butler’s book, *Gender trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, looks at gender identity and feminism (Butler, 2006). Butler talks about the importance of gender fluidity and talks about how gender is a performance by using the term performativity (Butler, 2006). To put her argument about how we behave according to social constructs, in simple terms, one can look at it the example of new-born babies. When a baby girl is born, she gets swaddled in a pink blanket. As she grows older, she is taught that pink is for girls and blue is for boys. She is told that girls play with dolls and has tea parties. She is taught that girls should be gentle, emotionally expressive, and nurturing. Boys, on the other hand, are wrapped in a blue blanket when born. They are taught to like sports and play with cars. They are also taught to hide emotions and to be problem-solvers. This is what Butler (2006) talks about when she says that people perform daily, as this is what they are taught growing up.

In her book, *Women’s Rebellion & Islamic Memory*, Fatima Mernissi (1996) wrote about the role of women in relation to contemporary Islam. Mernissi (1996), investigates the idea of gender roles and sexual identity within the Islamic world. In one of her arguments in her article, Meneley states that Arab government policies are repressive when it comes to women and it is a way for the government to keep the citizens from participating (Meneley, 2000: 614). Her

ultimate argument is that the best way for the Arab world to develop is to be freed from controlling traditions as well as the socially constructed roles given to women.

Menon's book, *Seeing like a feminist*, begins by retelling the story of a Delhi high court judgement in 1984 (Menon, 2012: 5-6). Menon (2012: 5-6) states, "the fundamental rights ensured to every Indian citizen by the constitution, were not applicable to the family: these rights must stop at the door of the home. Letting fundamental rights into the family, said the judge would be 'like letting a bull into a china shop'". She also added that, "The judge was in fact, absolutely right. If you bring fundamental rights into family, and if every individual in the family is treated as free and equal citizen, that family will collapse. Because the family, is based on clearly established hierarchies of gender and age, with gender trumping age; that is, an adult male is generally more powerful than an older female" (Menon, 2012: 6).

Menon (2012: 11) draws a distinction between gender and sex. She describes sex as being the biological difference between men and women and she describes gender as the range of cultural meanings attached to the basic difference (Menon, 2012: 11). Menon (2012: 12) also states that the "human body" is formed and shaped by culture, the physical environment, technology and so forth. According to Menon (2012: 31) it is the three interlinked features of the Indian families which are the root causes of the injustices and this also being the reason why it is deemed "normal". On pages 31 and 32 of her book Menon (2012: 31-32) states that: "The three key interlinked features of this 'Indian' family are-patriarchy (power distributed along gender and age hierarchies, but with adult men trumping older women); patriliney (property and name passing from father to son); and virilocality (wife moving to the husband's home.)". It is normalised for women to be the "weaker gender" as Menon writes "in whichever ways women are different... their difference is considered to be an inferior difference, not just a difference, or not a superior difference" (Menon, 2012: 83).

As mentioned above, in societies many beliefs and rules play a big role in the way citizens act. During these protests, uprisings, or social movements some people might feel uncomfortable because they were raised in a society where women participating on the frontlines might be socially unacceptable. However, others may want to go against these set rule set out by society

and fight for the nation to become more equal economically, socially, and politically where women and men have equal say in.

Some of the challenges faced by many women is the agreement that the public sphere in society is usually male dominant whereas the females are restricted to the private social sphere such as life at home (Roth & Horan, 2001: 3). When looking at Roth's statement it can be seen that due to these roles set out by society that when there is female participation in social movements it will have significant effects on both the public and private sphere and this proves to be a threat to the set social norms.

Uprisings are not social movements. When organized groups come together and work towards a common goal, this is called a social movement (Little & McGivern, 2014). Social movements are established when civil society wants to create change, want to resist change, or want to provide a civil society a political voice (Little & McGivern, 2014).

Crow, Grant and Ibrahim (1990: 67) states that the first Palestinian Intifada was one of the first uprisings where participation by women was significant in the region. During the Intifadas, many women participated in strikes, demonstrations, protests, creating grass roots institutions, leading civil society organisations, and putting economic and international pressure on Israel to negotiate (Speri, 2018). Because of the strong female participatio, it was assumed that the relationship between men and women would improve and that women would have more of a voice (Crow, Grant & Ibrahim, 1990: 67). Over two decades ago the Oslo Accords were agreed upon between Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and PLO leader Yasser Arafat (Speri, 2018). Women were also combating barriers imposed by their own society. The Oslo Accords was seen as a victory for diplomacy and turning point in the conflicts (Speri, 2018). After negotiations a Palestinian Authority was beginning to form, women were worried as to what would happen to their fight for their rights (Speri, 2018). Women had started making big strides in their leadership positions but there was always this realisation that when the "men returned" they would step back into their position and women would have to take a step back (Speri, 2018). Women even needed a male guardian to apply and receive a passport (Speri, 2018).

More examples of female participation include, the Kefaya movement in Egypt 2004-2006, which was a movement against Muhammad Hosni El Sayed Mubarak and his plans to make his

son his successor to his presidency (Mostafa, 2015: 123). Another example is the Green Revolution in Iran in 2009, which was a mass demonstration against the victory of Ahmadinejad's Presidency (Radsch, 2012: 19). The Green Revolution was a way to contest the rigged election of Ahmadinejad and the government (Dabashi, 2013). Security forces violently attacked those that were peacefully protesting (Tahmasebi-Birgani, 2010: 78). The Green revolution saw women of all backgrounds at the forefront of the protests, sometimes even showing up in greater numbers than men (Tahmasebi-Birgani, 2010: 78). Lastly is when Saudi women protested for their right to drive in the 1990s, after this right was taken from them in 1957 (Radsch, 2012: 19). This spurred activists to start fighting to have the ban lifted and resulted in the first protest that happened on November 06, 1990, where just under 50 women drove through Riyadh (The women to drive movement, 2020). During this protest some women got arrested and some even lost their work (The women to drive movement, 2020). After campaigning for more than 20 years the King of Saudi Arabia decreed, in September 2017, that women will now have the right to drive but it would only take effect as of June 2018 (Begum, 2017).

“Projects of saving other women depend on and reinforce a sense of superiority and are a form of arrogance that deserves to be challenged” (Abu-Lughod, 2013: 47). In many Muslim societies there is this presumption that the Muslim women require saving and that they are victims caught in arranged marriages, and so forth (Scott, 2015: 108). In the West, women were seen as being free individuals, that could make their own decisions (Scott, 2015: 108/109). One cannot compare the two, as they have different backgrounds and history. Lila Abu-Lughod, whom Joan Scott was discussing, is attempting to question the salvation story: to bring Muslim women from their social backwater to Western illumination, from “slavery to freedom” (Abu-Lughod, 2013).

There are three waves of feminism to contemplate in the history and emergence of universal feminism (Dixon, 2011). The first wave was recognized by women of colour “challenging white feminist assumptions on the primacy of ‘sex’” (Gurel, 2009: 86). The second wave of feminism is portrayed by the universal components of feminism and finished with the first UN Decade of women (1975-1985) which "accentuated the divides between Western and non-Western feminisms” (Gurel, 2009: 86). The third wave of feminism is driven by women from

underdeveloped nations who censure the Western suspicion that the essence of being female is sufficient to join women globally due to the cultural and socio-economical separation between Western women and the women from developing countries (Dixon, 2011).

“Acknowledging the necessity of recognizing multiple sources of domination in women's lives, some feminists refute the universalization of women's experience and recognize instead the differences among women from different social locations. Taking into account the many differences that make up the category "women," they allow feminism to deal more adequately with the complex and myriad issues we face today”, a view that is also endorsed by Butler (Yu, 2009: 11).

This radical approach is essential because according to Yu (2009: 14), “Western feminism, which ignores realities of women who are being confronted with diversities of values and religious lifestyle, has often been criticized of being essentialist, monolithic, and ethnocentric”. For some women, religious esteems are similarly as imperative as feminist ones, so they should discover a harmony between the two that works in their own societies.

According to Dixon (2011), although feminism is on the rise in many Muslim majority countries, they do it while not dismissing their fundamental values. “Women who try to defend their rights in Muslim contexts often are accused of importing a foreign ideology whenever they ask for social justice. Thus, many Islamic feminists first try to demonstrate that they are truly and genuinely rooted in their culture, expending considerable energy to distinguish themselves from ‘Western feminists,’ as, for instance, ‘Third World feminists’” (Ahmadi, 2006: 44).

In keeping with this idea that Western feminism and Third world feminism is different, Lybarger (2020: 6), states that women in the MENA regions are often victimised in many Western societies giving off the image that MENA women are powerless in their societies. Lybarger (2020: 6) also talks about how this misconception about MENA women being powerless can create an idea that they are not able to bring about change. If you look beyond what is shown in some Western media about the women of the MENA region then you can clearly see that women’s groups are quite prominent in social movements (Lybarger, 2020: 6). There is a difference between “women in social movements” and “women’s movements”. Women in social movements refers to social movements where the goal is not necessarily gender equality but

rather improving the economic, public and political spheres of a regime (Lybarger, 2020: 7). Women's movements, on the other hand, have a set main goal and that is advancing women's rights (Lybarger, 2020: 7). If you distinguish between the two then the Arab Spring can be seen as "women in movements/uprisings" as the main focus of the Arab Spring was not women's rights but rather the overthrowal of an authoritative regime. On the other hand, before and after the Arab Spring saw women's groups focus on fighting for better opportunities for women and for gender equality as well as other women's rights.

Lybarger (2020: 7), describes how even before the Arab Spring, there were struggles for freedom which allowed people of all classes and genders to participate and work together (Lybarger, 2020: 7-8).

Before the Arab Spring, women's rights movements were mostly based in Egypt in the 1920s, Morocco in the 1940s, Algeria in the 1970s and Tunisia in the 1980s, to name a few (Fanack.com, 2017). These movements were able to make changes and gain access in the educational, social and political spheres (Fanack.com, 2017).

There have been many movements over the years that have stood up against gendered violence. In 1920, Egyptian doctors stood up against Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) (UN Women, 2020). This campaign was driven by the "Egyptian Society of Physicians" and declared that FGM has many negative effects on one's health (UN Women, 2020). In 1993 the "Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women" was the first document to clearly state and define the different forms of violence against women (UN Women, 2020). In 2006 the "Gulabi Gang: Justice for women" was formed in Uttar Pradesh, India (UN Women, 2020). When a neighbour was being domestically abused by her husband, the women of the district took it into their own hands to put an end to the violence and have the husband admit to the abuse (UN Women, 2020). This local domestic abuse movement later became a state-wide movement where thousands of women dressed in pink (gulabi) to stand against the social injustices against women (UN Women, 2020). There has also been a rise in online activism with hashtags that show that women around the world collectively seek a life with gender equality and a life that is free of violence (UN Women, 2020). These hashtags include: #SendeAnlat #BringBackOurGirls #YesAllWomen #EverydaySexism #WomenShould #HeForShe #NiUnaMenos #MeToo

#YoTambien #QuellaVoltaChe #BalanceTonPorc #AnaKaman #TimesUp #FeministFriday (UN Women, 2020).

Gendered violence against women and young girls is one of the most common violations of someone's human rights across the world. Gendered violence happens to a lot of people, regardless of which country they reside in. This kind of violence happens during crisis or even on normal, any day situations. Gendered violence can happen to anyone, at any time, regardless of their ethnic status, age, social and/or economic situations. Gendered violence can include sexual or domestic violence and can come in the form of young marriage, trafficking, female genital mutilation (FGM) and different forms of "women/men killing" by men.

Gendered violence against women is one of the most significant dilemmas in the Arab regions (Chelala, 2019). Gendered violence can be against both men and women, but it is predominantly against women. Gendered violence affects regions in all spheres of life and can have a great impact on societies (Chelala, 2019). Over 30 percent of women in the Middle East and North Africa experience violence in their lifetime (Chelala, 2019). Women do not usually report the abuse for many reasons including traditional, social, and economic reasons (Chelala, 2019). Other reasons also included being afraid of their partners or family members. Women usually confide in family and friends about abuse instead of the authorities (Chelala, 2019). Violence against women can have many consequences not only to the women themselves but also in the society and within the family. Gendered violence can lead to physical consequences such as homicide where people are killed by their partners or ex-partners (Watts, Osam & Win, 1996: 46). Gendered violence can also lead to psychological consequences such as suicide (Stark & Flitcraft, 1991). Suicide can also be a result of depression or post-traumatic stress disorder due to the constant abuse or sexual assault (Stark & Flitcraft, 1991). Gendered violence can also affect productivity and employment rates (World Health Organisation, 1997).

Feminist groups in Tunisia

In 1956 the Code of Personal Status was adopted, and it included more progressive laws aiming at gender equality by banning polygamy and legalising abortion (Chebbi, 2019: 1). The Code of Personal Status also gave Tunisian women the right to own their own passport, bank account and being business owners (Chebbi, 2019: 1). Although this law was adopted there are still some

challenges when it comes to women's inclusion in the Tunisian political system (Chebbi, 2019: 1). Tunisia's electoral laws adopted a proportional representation list system but despite this the system still looks more fondly on candidates that are at the top of said list (Amor, 2016). This is a serious problem as women are not usually chosen by their specific parties for these positions (Amor, 2016). Even though the law more equality between men and women, it did not stop political parties to exclude women from participating in the political sphere (Amor, 2016). Informal meetings also happened in places where women are not allowed to enter and that are deemed as "male spaces", such as café's (Amor, 2016). The political parties also made a point to have meetings during the evening, when women were meant to be home with their children (Amor, 2016).

The road to increase women's participation in the political system, since the 1990s, has been long and slow. It was a long road but as of 2018 women make up 47 percent of local government compared to before (UN Women, 2018). Previously, women made up 13.3 percent of the municipal councils in 1990, 16.6 percent of municipal councils in 1995, 23 percent in regional councils in 2004 and 26 percent of municipal councils in 2005 (Development progress, 2014: 24).

Two feminist groups, Tunisian Women's Association for Research and Development (AFTURD) and Tunisian Association of Women Democrats (ATFD) were established soon after Zine El Abidine Ben Ali came into power in 1989 (Arfaoui, 2007: 57). AFTURD was established in 1989 because of political liberalisation in 1987 (Norbakk, 2016). This organisation was/is largely made up of women academics in response to the demands from many other women organisations to be included in the political sphere, to increase educational opportunities and to create a more equal society (Norbakk, 2016). The main purpose of the organisation is to obtain and carry out research on how to include women within the social and economic development of the society (Norbakk, 2016). The ATFD was also established in 1989 after the Copenhagen convention by Arab-Muslim women (Norbakk, 2016). The Copenhagen convention, or Copenhagen Climate Council, was created to bring global awareness to the importance of the United Nations Climate Summit (IISD, 2009). Leading up to the meeting, the

Council worked on solutions to climate change as well as looked at what is required to make a new global treaty effective (IISD, 2009).

Before the Arab Spring, women made up 26 percent of municipal councils in 2005 (Development progress, 2014: 24). After the Arab Spring in Tunisia, there were demands for equality in representation and participation, but women ended up only having 27 percent of the seats in their Parliament (Shah, 2013: 4). Many Tunisian women were actively involved in the protests through demonstrations, blog posts, unions, and political parties (Shah, 2013: 5-6). After the Arab Spring, Tunisia adopted more parity in their electoral laws, this law stated that 50 percent of the candidates must be women (Shah, 2013: 6).

According to Chebbi (2019), other than the political sphere, women wanted more equality in the public space. There are certain public spaces that are still showing signs of gender segregation such as coffee houses (Chebbi, 2019: 1). In the year 2013, a large group of Tunisian feminists joined a ceremony that is usually reserved for men in the Islamic tradition (Chebbi, 2019: 1). This was an organised act by Tunisian feminists who wanted to reclaim the public spaces (Chebbi, 2019: 1). The ceremony that they joined was to pay respect to a prominent politician, Chokri Belaïd, who was assassinated (Chebbi, 2019: 1). During the transitional period, after the fall of Ben Ali, Tunisian women's groups and activists helped create a constitution that legally protected many women's rights (Chebbi, 2019: 2). During the process of drafting the new constitution, many Tunisian feminists created and spread the mantra "talk to those you disagree with", this prompted politicians to include gender equality (Chebbi, 2019: 2). Women's groups and activists organised events where parliament members, policymakers and civil society could debate about what is considered principle laws for the constitution (Chebbi, 2019: 2).

On 26 July 2017, Tunisia made history by passing their first national law which would fight violence against women (UN Women, 2017). The law achieved more than 50 per cent of the votes (UN Women, 2017). The new law will put in place measures to prevent violence against women as well as to support survivors of violence (UN Women, 2017). UN Women, along with their UN partners, has been involved in the process since 2014 and they helped through reviewing the finalised law and providing recommendations (UN Women, 2017).

Tunisian women's groups also had demonstrations to fight against gender inequality. On National Day of Women and the anniversary of the Code of Personal Status, August 13, 2013, there were many conservatives who were still against the discussing and approving of the newest constitution draft (Chebbi, 2019: 2). Instead of celebrating, many women took to the streets to protest (Chebbi, 2019: 2). Women's groups and activist continue to protest when it is needed (Chebbi, 2019: 3). Two of these groups are Tunisian Women's Association for Research and Development (AFTURD) and Tunisian Association of Women Democrats (ATFD). These two groups continue to push the Tunisian government to look at and address pressing problems such as the economy and women's right issues (Chebbi, 2019: 3). To spread more awareness and to make more of an impact, women's groups and activists form alliances with other movements (Chebbi, 2019: 3)

Feminist groups in Egypt

Since the 1920s women's movements in Egypt have tended to focus on poverty, raising legal awareness, education for women, equality in the workplace, better health care and more political participation and representation (Al-Ali, 2002). In the past decade Egyptian women's movements have put reproductive rights and violence against women on their growing agenda (Al-Ali, 2002). Violence against women have always been widely discussed in Egypt and making this part of their agenda means that one cannot only look at it in the public sphere but also within the private sphere, within homes and families (Al-Ali, 2002).

The Arab Spring allowed women to participate alongside men to take down their authoritative regime and have more economic, social, and political freedom. During the Arab Spring, women were seen protesting and fighting alongside men, but after the Arab Spring the treatment of women reverted to how it used to be (Shah, 2013: 7). Women were not included in the decision-making process during the political transition, they were also not included in the constitutional committee neither were they allowed in the acting cabinet (Fadel & Hassieb, 2012). After the uprisings women were once again excluded from important decisions when preparing for the election in Egypt, and this sparked disappointment amongst rights activists (Fadel & Hassieb, 2012).

Rola Dashti, Former member of Kuwaiti Parliament and Chairman, Kuwait Economic Society said:

To date, with all the joy that accompanied the awakening's victory in a number of countries that embraced the revolutions, male practices to the contrary have disappointed women dreadfully and have not given a positive impression that they will engage women as partners and citizens with rights to participate in the formation of the future of their countries. In countries that have witnessed an Arab awakening, women's presence in transitional councils, new governments, and parliaments is almost non-existent, especially when compared to their role during the revolutions. These actions have created disappointments and frustrations among women as their aspirations in building their societies based on the principles of social justice and equality have been hijacked (Heideman & Youssef, 2012: 3-4).

Women's organisations produced statements which they sent to the Military council as well as to the Prime Minister, and in these statements they highlighted and criticized the absence of women in the decision-making process and positions (Shah, 2013: 8). Even though women were important assets during the Arab Spring, women's rights and equality were one of the first to be excluded from the new agenda by the Military council and the cabinet (Fadel & Hassieb, 2012).

In terms of sexual harassment that women faced during the Arab Spring and the exclusion of women in decision-making, Isobel Coleman, Senior Fellow for U.S. Foreign Policy, Director of the Civil Society, Markets, and Democracy Initiative, Council on Foreign Relations stated:

In Egypt, women have been excluded from important decision-making bodies, and fewer than ten women won seats in Egypt's new parliament – less than 2 percent of the 498 seats. Shocking incidents such as attacks on an International Women's Day march, sexual assaults against female activists and journalists, and the brutal beating of women in Tahrir Square have become markers for how deeply contested women's public role in society continues to be. Women seem to be faring better in Tunisia, where they have long benefited from the most expansive legal rights in the region. Al Nahda, the leading Islamist party which

swept Tunisia's National Constituent Assembly elections with 41 percent of the vote, has said that it will not seek to change the country's personal status laws but instead will focus on practical economic issues (Heideman & Youssef, 2012: 8).

Nazra for Feminist Studies was founded in Cairo in December 2007 and is led by Global Fund for Women's Board member, Mozn Hassan (Global Fund for Women, 2017). This women's rights organisation uses its power to strengthen the Egyptian feminist movement and tries to push gender and feminism awareness into the political and social spheres (Global Fund for Women, 2017).

Other campaigns include the "Be Aware of Your Rights" Campaign to combat violence against women and happens once a year between November and December (Nohafarag, 2017). The aims of this campaign are to raise awareness of the serious consequences of Violence Against Women (VAW) (Nohafarag, 2017).

Another Campaign is the "Hiatek Mahatat, Matkhalish Mahata Twa'afek" (Your life is made of stations, don't let a station stop you) which was initiated in November 2018 (Mounir, 2019). The campaigns allow and encourages women to stand up for their right's. Apart from this the campaign also encourages men to stand by women and help them take all opportunities (Mounir, 2019). The campaign looks at different topics such as sexual harassment, underage marriage, reproductive health and economic empowerment (Mounir, 2019). This campaign was started by Egypt's National Council for Women (NCW) along with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) (Mounir, 2019). The NCW was formed due to the command of the president in 2000 (Rahim & Fracoli, 2016). The members of the council are made up of 30 members which come from government, civil society and academia (Rahim & Fracoli, 2016). The NCW addresses the issues of sexual harassment and violence against women (Rahim & Fracoli, 2016). The United Nations Population Fund's mission is to make sure that "every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe and every young person's potential is fulfilled" (United Nations Population Fund, 2020). All UNPFA's funding is voluntary and comes from governments and other partners (United Nations Population Fund, 2020).

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

There are two types of methods of data analysis, namely qualitative research method and quantitative research method. Quantitative research includes the use of data to generate numerical data (Burnham, Gilland Lutz, Grant & Layton-Henry, 2008). This method is used to quantify attitudes, behaviours, opinions as well as other variables which will generate results from a larger sample population (Burnham, Gilland Lutz, Grant & Layton-Henry, 2008). Quantitative research data collection methods are a bit more organized than qualitative research data collection methods. Data collection approaches include surveys, longitudinal studies, face-to-face interviews, mobile interviews, online polls, and systematic observations and more (Burnham, Gilland Lutz, Grant & Layton-Henry, 2008).

The research is a qualitative study and draws on key texts in the analysis of the research question. The research area is limited to a study of Egypt and Tunisia during and after the Arab Spring. Qualitative methods have been used to identify intangible factors, such as social standards, socioeconomic status, gender roles, ethnicity, and religion (Mason, 2002). Qualitative Research is primarily exploratory research. It is used to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations. The methods of qualitative research aims to answer questions about what, how and why a phenomenon occurred instead of how much or how many, as it would in quantitative research (DeFranzo, 2011).¹

After careful consideration of different paradigms such as the constructionist paradigm, positivist paradigm and interpretivist paradigm, I decided that it would be best to use the interpretivist approach.

The interpretive paradigm gives the definition of “defines reality as created in that it is based on people’s subjective experiences of their internal world” (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). It is said that this paradigm allows the thought that people are the origin of their own thought as well as feelings. This paradigm is mainly used within the qualitative research method (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). The paradigm also aims at discovering how the subject understands life (Babbie, 1998). This paradigm starts at the point where our knowledge of reality is a social construction by different human actors and that it applies equally to researchers. The paradigm also emphasizes meaningful social action, socially constructed meaning and value relativism.

After careful consideration of different paradigms such as the constructionist paradigm, positivist paradigm and interpretivist paradigm, I have decided that it would be best to use the interpretivist approach.

Research process

The aim of this study is to investigate whether the fight for women's rights and equal citizenship has improved or weakened since the Arab Spring. These rights that will be looked at include gender equality and the safety of the women, which include the fight against sexual harassment and Female Genital Mutilation, as well as demands for rights that arise from existing Inheritance and divorce laws. It is crucial to survey whether the Arab Spring has acquired genuine change for women in the countries, as they assumed a pivotal part in the uprisings over the regions and trusted that their endeavours would eventually enhance their social, political, and monetary standing.

I will be using a bit of a comparative study, as I will be comparing Egypt and Tunisia and how women's rights have progressed before and after uprisings and social movements. I chose to do a comparative study because it can generate a better understanding into a phenomenon by providing descriptive context (Rule & John, 2011: 7). A comparative study can also be used to explore general problems or issues, however, only in a limited setting (Rule & John, 2011: 7). Other advantages of using a comparative study includes the fact that it can be used to either generate theoretical insights or develop and test an existing theory related to the case

Comparative research strategy involves comparing concepts. The areas being compared must also have the same body or commonalities between them. You pick ones that is most similar or most different. My research is based on a case study: the Arab Spring.

Data sources

The research will be conducted as a desktop research Secondary data is an analysis of data that was previously collected for someone else's primary purpose. There are many advantages and disadvantages of secondary data. Some of these advantages may include: time-saving; cost-effective; data could be based on populations that are difficult to access otherwise; beneficial for own research in the future; influence on the population by you as a researcher is limited; and

ethical considerations (Rouse, 2017). Disadvantages or limitations of secondary data includes: the researcher having limited control; the population has previously been research; data may not be suitable for re-analysis; there could be data gaps; outdated information or data; and ethical considerations (Rouse, 2017).

My research will be based on Secondary sources: online newspaper articles, academic journals, books, documentaries (on YouTube). Access to secondary data does not present any problem since these are easily available via online resources and in various libraries. Primary sources will be social media posts, legal documents (from local feminist groups) as well as civil codes.

Document analysis is a type of qualitative research method in which records are construed by the researcher to give voice, importance and meaning around a theme (Bowen, 2009: 27-40). Examining documents includes coding the content into different themes, for example: transcribing a focus group or interview (Bowen, 2009: 27-40). According to O’Leary (2014) there are three key document types which include public records, personal documents and physical evidence.

Bowen and O’Leary agree that it is of utmost importance to carefully assess and examine the subjectivity of documents and ones understanding of the data in order to ensure the credibility of one’s research (2009; 2014).

Limitations

In terms of limitations, access to some of the texts for analysis as well as language is a limitation to my research. Accessibility to primary sources can make it difficult to obtain since some of the primary sources I require are documents from women’s NGOs in Egypt and Tunisia. Another limitation includes my lack of proficiency in Arabic and therefore I understand that I will be relying heavily on English sources. The events of the research are interpreted according to what is available. There is, in my view, enough material written in English to do the project.

CHAPTER 4: OVERVIEW OF WOMEN'S ORGANISATIONS BEFORE AND DURING THE ARAB SPRING

A brief history of women's political organisations in Egypt

Women's movements in Egypt have been fighting for equal opportunities and justice for violence against women since the 1900s (Haggag, 2018). According to Kamal (2016: 4) when looking at women's movements one needs to go back to the first organized movement in 1919 which was a fight against British occupation. During this movement many women marched and protested and were met with violence, which led to many injuries as well as death (Kamal, 2016: 4). "In Egypt, feminists have been repeatedly asked by their comrades to postpone women's rights demands and unite all power and energy towards ending colonialism, in the past, and implementing social justice, in the present" (Kamal, 2016: 6). This means that when it comes to women's protests not all their demands are centred around feminist demands, some of the demonstrations, like during the Arab Spring of 2010, focus on social justice and the fight against political authoritarianism.

Kamal (2016: 7-14) describes four waves of women's organisation's demands during the 20th and 21st century. The first wave was about the demand for education and suffrage, during the late 19th century the early 1950s (Kamal, 2016: 7). During this period, in 1933, the first class of Egyptian women graduated from university and the first Egyptian Women's Party was established in 1942 (Haggag, 2018). From the 1950s into the 1970s, the second wave focused on state feminism and the working woman (Kamal, 2016:10). This wave was "characterised by the Nasserist regime's determination to contain and co-opt the feminist movement and was consistent with its rejection of independent political parties or other entities" (Haggag, 2018). During this wave of women's organisations had significant successes which was Article 31 of the 1956 constitution (Haggag, 2018). Article 31 declared that all Egyptians were equal in the eye of the law in terms of rights and duties (Haggag, 2018). This allowed women to vote and partake in legislative elections for the first time (Haggag, 2018).

From the 1980s to 2011, women's organisations fought for civil society feminism (Kamal, 2016:11). During this period, Egypt approved the UN Convention on the Elimination of all

Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (Haggag, 2018). In 1994, Cairo hosted the “International Conference on Population and Development” which was important for putting women’s rights on the “national agenda” (Haggag, 2018). The fourth wave started in 2011 and is currently ongoing, this is the demands for women’s right to have control over their bodies and fundamental women’s rights (Kamal, 2016:14). This wave began when the Arab Spring did. Although women were prominent during the Arab Spring there was also high levels of physical violence against them especially in the form of sexual harassment (Kamal, 2016 & Haggag, 2018). There was also a rise in organised feminist movements and internet activists aside from the feminist groups and women’s movements (Haggag, 2018).

The Egyptian Feminist Union (EFU) was the first women’s organisation developed under Huda Sha’arawi in 1923 (Sika & Khodary 2012, 92). The purpose of this organisation was to bring awareness to political and social equality between men and women and make it a reality (Sika & Khodary 2012, 92). The EFU has had many demands since their establishment in 1923 and is still fighting for those demands to be met. Some of the demands that they have fought for is the fight for gender equality, equal education opportunities, amending election laws to allow women the right to vote and fighting for divorce right’s and the right to ban polygamy, and to assure that divorce alimony is paid no matter where the ex-husband lives (Al-Ali, 2002: 6).

In 1942 the Egyptian Feminist Party was established (Sika & Khodary 2012, 92). Feminist movements made progress during the Nasser regime as this was the era where women were able to vote in 1956 (Sika & Khodary 2012, 92). This was done for the first time in the history of Egypt. Even as women made progress, they still had struggles when it came to family laws and its discrimination against women (Sika & Khodary 2012, 92). After the death of Nasser, the Sadat regime began and this led to movements and unions to be placed under strict state control (Sika & Khodary 2012, 93). Due to the restrictions placed upon them, all the hope and progress Egyptian women had in promoting equality in education, political participation and employment were severely restricted under the Sadat regime (Sika & Khodary 2012, 93).

2000 was the year that the National Council for Women was formed under the Mubarak regime (Sika & Khodary 2012, 94). The purpose of the council was to collaborate with other women’s organisations so that, together, they could strengthen the support for women’s development in

the public sphere of Egypt (Sika & Khodary 2012, 94). The NCW aims to empower women in the political sphere (Khodair & Hassib, 2015: 330). To improve the image of Egyptian women in media, the NCW have been working with media outlets to show a non-stereotypical society which is usually portrayed in some western media outlets (Khodair & Hassib, 2015: 330). The NCW even created a 'Media Watch Unit' where media messages are thoroughly monitored (Khodair & Hassib, 2015: 330). The NCW also wants to create more political participation where they support and encourage women to participate in the legislation and constitutional process (Khodair & Hassib, 2015: 331).

Regarding political support, two percent of the seats in parliament are held by women, that is roughly ten women out of 508 seats in the lower house (Alvi, 2015). In the upper house, women comprise 2.8 percent, which is about five women out of 180 seats (Alvi, 2015). In 2010, women were allowed a quota for participating in parliament but after the uprising in January 2011 the quota system ended (Sika & Khodary 2012, 95). Instead of the quota system, parties were required to nominate at least one woman to be part of their district list of candidates (International Idea, 2020). By 2015, in the Parliamentary elections, women made history by occupying 87 seats which is nearly 15 percent of the total seats (Fracolli, 2017). "A quota, imposed by Law No. 46 of 2014, required party lists to include a certain number of women; without this one-time quota, women's representation would have been about four percent, around the same as in previous elections held without a gender quota" (Fracolli, 2017). The NCW and the Egyptian Center for Women's Rights (ECWR) were overjoyed at the number of women within parliament (Fracolli, 2017).

Groups such as the New Woman Organisation communicated and worked with many different activist groups to develop an alternative to authoritarianism and patriarchy (Sika & Khodary 2012, 96). An example of how these different groups came together is the Ghazl al-Mahalla textile strikes of 2006 (Al-Wahaidy, 2017). Textile plant workers came together to demand that the government pay their yearly bonuses as was promised to them (Al-Wahaidy, 2017). "Women workers played an impressive role in the strike. The strike in December last year was started by 3000 women workers, and they are still active" (Alexander, 2007). How the New Woman Organisation handled helping the female workers during the strikes was by teaming up with

other leftist women's organisations and providing legal services, legal training and other workshops (Al-Wahaidy, 2017). This allowed the female workers in al-Mahalla to acknowledge their right to protest (Al-Wahaidy, 2017).

This specific group and their allies also started moving away from the traditional women's rights movement and started questioning the current situations around them (Sika & Khodary 2012, 96). When the uprisings occurred women, active and not active, decided to take their demands to the streets, however, their demands were less about women's emancipation and equality and more about the concerns against authoritarianism and a demand for a better life for all in the society (Sika & Khodary 2012, 97). During the Arab Spring, it took place mainly in urban areas such as Cairo's Tahrir Square, in Egypt (Blakemore, 2019).

A brief history of women's political organisations in Tunisia

Tunisia's history with women's rights has a long history. Tunisia was the first "Arab" state to eradicate polygamy in 1956, since the 1990s there has been a growth in women's rights and participation in the political sphere, and after the Arab Spring it was the first "Arab" nation that had very progressive family laws (Shah, 2013: 6 & Moghadam, 2005 & Connor, 2017).

An organisation of women is not necessarily a feminist organisation. Women's rights organisation is led by women and is an organisation that works to bring awareness to gender inequality (Womankind, 2015). Women's right's organisation tries to advance gender equality by working with communities both nationally and regionally (Womankind, 2015). Organisation of women is more informal, where a group of people come together to pursue a common goal (Martin, 1990: 185). Feminist organisations on the other hand are pro-woman and political entities (Martin, 1990: 184). "Feminist organizations are profit making as well as not-for-profit, hierarchical as well as collectivist, national as well as local, illegal as well as legal, dependent as well as autonomous" (Martin, 1990: 185).

Feminist movements started in the 1920s in Tunisia (Arfaoui, 2007: 53). During this time women were mainly active in the home domain and men in the public domain (Arfaoui, 2007: 53). Women did not have access to education except a select privileged few and even then, it was done by private tutors (Arfaoui, 2007: 53). During the nationalist movement for independence

many women took the opportunity to be heard in the public domain, but they could, however, not enter the public domain without the support of one of their male relatives (Arfaoui, 2007: 53). Bchira Ben Mrad was one of the first feminists who was encouraged by her father to join the movement for independence as well as for women's rights (Arfaoui, 2007: 53). Tunisian feminists took guidance from the Egyptian Women's Movement as well as the changes in Turkey where women had more freedom (Arfaoui, 2007: 53-54). In 1923, under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal, the Turkish Republic wanted to rid itself of the old traditions of the Ottoman Empire (Atay, 2017). During this time "state feminism" was introduced to advance the social life of women (Atay, 2017). The 1926 Turkish Civil Code put an end to polygamy and gave women the right to divorce and have equal property rights (Atay, 2017). In 1930, Turkish women were given full political rights where they had the right to vote and be elected locally (they were able to be elected and to elect on a national level in 1934) (Atay, 2017).

It is important to note that Tunisian's custom of maintaining women's rights and opportunities come from the time of the Bourguiba presidency (Alvi, 2015). Habiba Bourguiba was part of the fight for Tunisia's independence from France and in turn became the first president of the Tunisian republic (Masciavè, 2019). He was seen as being more progressive because of his Western approach to things (Masciavè, 2019). During Habiba Bourguiba's rule, women's rights and freedom were supported (Masciavè, 2019).

Tunisia under the late President Habib Bourguiba generally stayed Western leaning which (some contend), added to the most developed women's rights and social strategies in the district (Alvi, 2015: 302). According to Eric Pace (2000: 13), a writer for The New York Times, Habib Bourguiba was a strong leader who was pro-Western and who helped develop women's rights in Tunisia.

Bourguiba believed that old-fashioned clothing encouraged old-fashioned modes of thinking and acting; those who chose to wear [the veil] were, at least subconsciously, expressing their rejection of the modern world. In speech after speech during the first years after independence, he condemned the veil as an 'odious rag' that demeaned women, had no practical value, and was not

obligatory in order to conform to Islamic standards of modesty...[he] made similar arguments concerning traditional male garments (Perkins, 2004: 137).

Turkey banned women working in places such as civil service or government jobs, universities, and schools from wearing a headscarf (Smith, 2013). Similarly, in Tunisia, if one wore a headscarf it was considered a rejection of the modern world and the new ways of living (Alvi, 2015: 302). After independence, Bourguiba condemned the headscarf and said it demeaned women (Alvi, 2015: 302). He stated that women did not have to conform to Islamic models, he made similar remarks about men's clothing (Alvi, 2015: 303). Banning certain things is not freedom it is a command and can have negative effects as what is good for some people might not be what is best for others.

During his presidency Habib Bourguiba challenged Tunisia's family law, which managed women's lives (Arfaoui, 2007: 55). In 1957, Bourguiba's Neo-Dustur Party passed the Code of Personal Status, where women had the right to divorce their husbands, polygamy was no longer legal, and women were no longer required to marry against their will (Nadworny & Villasana, 2017). Habib Bourguiba fought for women's rights and freedom, but he did so while still wanting to keep Tunisia's traditions alive, therefore he gave women the opportunity to choose rather than forcing them into the change (Arfaoui, 2007: 55). Freedom in this sense would be having "the power or right to act, speak, or think as one wants without hindrance or restraint, and the absence of a despotic government" (Gammon, 2012). "Tradition was the name given to those cultural features which, in situations of change, were to be continued to be handed on, thought about, preserved and not lost" (Graburn, 2006: 6).

Following these definitions of freedom and tradition, one can conclude that by giving people freedom and upholding tradition, you are giving people an option of having their own opinion about how they should live their lives. In my opinion if we go according to the definition of what freedom is then, people should not be forced to change but should be given the freedom to choose how they live their lives without fear of punishment if traditions are broken or changed. Women should have the freedom to choose how they will uphold tradition, for example, they should be able to choose whether they want to wear a headscarf or forgo it.

Two women's groups, the Tunisian Women's Association for Research and Development (AFTURD) and Tunisian Association of Women Democrats (ATFD) were established soon after Zine El Abidine Ben Ali came into power in 1989 (Arfaoui, 2007: 57).

The AFTURD was established in 1989 and has been working to create awareness on equality and empowering women while also promoting the daily issues women face (AFTURD, 2017). AFTURD works to promote women empowerment. They want to develop the political participation of women in politics; they aim to support women's role within the public sphere; and they contest violence against women (AFTURD, 2017).

ATFD was also established in 1989. ATFD is an independent activist women's organisation (UN Women, 2015). The organisation aims to eradicate all forms of discrimination and violence against women (UN Women, 2015). They bring attention to women's rights and women's participation within the political sphere (UN Women, 2015). Although the organisation is autonomous, they have teamed up and worked with other Tunisian and international organisations in order to bring greater awareness to violence against women, in particular domestic violence (UN Women, 2015). The ATFD also works to improve women's legal status by sponsoring educational campaigns (UN Women, 2015).

Even after the Arab Spring, AFTURD and ATFD are still considered to be "heavyweights" among the many NGO's who advocate for women's rights (Norbakk, 2016). According to Norbakk (2016), both organisations went/are going through restructuring and reorganisation to suit the new political context following the Arab Spring.

Women's groups during the Arab Spring

The uprisings allowed women to involve themselves and to utilise their abilities which greatly contributed to change (Von Rohr, 2011). The women's organisations who participated in the uprisings all came from different social classes. The main focus at that time was for social change so when the uprisings were occurring, men protested alongside women, and this showed a sense of equality where there were no gender differences.

The involvement of women's organisation in the uprisings will add to the progression of women's rights, to giving a voice to those who are too afraid to speak, and for law changes in

terms of a more equal society (Ibnouf, 2013). The strategies used for this progression needs to be practical so that women can be effectively empowered.

During the Arab Spring many women were at the forefront of the protests, refusing to back down in the call for social equality, achieving social justice, political rights, better opportunities, and civil rights. Yet, tragically, the Arab Spring for women was a “spring without flowers”.

As previously stated in the thesis, the Arab Spring was not about gender equality. On the contrary, it was about the overthrowal of an authoritarian regime (Rice, Marsh, Finn, etc., 2011). Women were afraid that all their efforts to help overthrow the authoritarian regime would all be for nothing if there was no reward for women when a new president and parliament is elected (Rice, Marsh, Finn, etc., 2011). Although women played leading roles in the overthrowal of the nation’s dictatorships, they still ran the risk of having their participation looked over when it comes to the transitional period and decision-making (FIDH, 2012:3-4).



CHAPTER 5: CONTESTING WOMEN'S RIGHTS AFTER THE ARAB SPRING

After the fall of Ben Ali and Hosni Mubarak, the political and social sphere have failed to protect or even include equal rights for women (Shah, 2013: 5).

After the events of the Arab Spring and the resignation of Hosni Mubarak, many Egyptian women's movements such as the NCW and the Egyptian Center for Women's Rights (ECWR) voiced their concern about whether women would be represented in parliament (Rice, Marsh, Finn, etc., 2011). When the new Egyptian constitution was passed there was a severe lack of gender equality (Rice, Marsh, Finn, etc., 2011). Rebecca Chiao, the founder of Harassmap, a women's rights group, stated that a propaganda campaign against women and gender equality was started (Rice, Marsh, Finn, etc., 2011). Rebecca Chiao stated that: "There's a propaganda campaign against us, saying now is not the time for women's rights. I'm concerned about that," she continues by saying that: "If you ask someone if they want gender equality, that's a loaded term here. Do you mean all women should be like men? Most would say no. If you mean women have choice and equal protection under the law, most would say yes." (Mail & Guardian, 2011). Fighting for gender equality does not mean that all women should be like men, but it gives women the opportunity to be treated fairly and to have the same protection as men under the law (Rice, Marsh, Finn, etc., 2011).

Tunisia has made important strides in gender equality but even after the Arab Spring one can see the inequality in the workplace as well as when it comes to inheritance laws (Rice, Marsh, Finn, etc., 2011). Men still earned higher salaries than women and sons are still favoured over daughters when it comes to inheritance. After the Arab Spring, women's organisations fought to have 50/50 equality in the elections (Rice, Marsh, Finn, etc., 2011). In response to this many parties tried to make it seem that there are not enough competent women to make it a 50/50 election (Rice, Marsh, Finn, etc., 2011). A sociologist and university professor, Khadija Cherif, is a member of the influential Association of Women Democrats and sat on the commission, that drew up the political rules for the 2011 elections. (Rice, Marsh, Finn, etc., 2011). The 20 percent of women on the commission is far from the 50 percent those women were demanding.

The above-mentioned point on women's organisations wanting 50/50 representation in elections, brings me to the point of equal political citizenship. There has been a fight for equal political

citizenship, and the demands women's groups (before, during and after the Arab Spring) want for the right to equality, are often framed in the liberal sense of what citizenship should be. The notion of what liberal citizenship should be is important, as liberal citizenship in practice is in no way perfect in any country. I might not be arguing for liberalism, but during the Arab Spring, and after, many women's groups claim of equality were based on the notion of what liberalism is meant to be.

The concept of citizenship, like everything in this world, has changed overtime, taking up new meanings or adding new knowledge to it. There are different versions of how people, or theorists, define citizenship. Aristotle, for instance, separates the private and public realm from one another (Kartal, 2001-2002: 102). According to Filiz Kartal (2001-2002: 102), the Aristotelian notion of citizenship is defined by the idea that human beings are active, moral, and political beings but only a small group of males should have access to it.

Although many women were at the forefront of the Arab Spring protests, many of women's rights and issues were ignored by the transitional government (Karman, 2016). According to Karman (2016) the reason that there is so little women and youth participating in the transitional government is the fact that it is an incomplete social movement (Karman, 2016). After the Arab Spring demonstrations, many women have participated in and support the democratic transitions (Karman, 2016). They also took part in the elections (Karman, 2016).

After the Arab Spring the fight for women's rights is still ongoing in Egypt and Tunisia. Many women still struggle with gender equality and the safety of women, in terms of, sexual harassment and inheritance laws. The remainder of chapter 5 will look at gender equality and the safety of the women, post-Arab Spring. It will look at the continued fight for women's rights and the ongoing campaigns by women's groups to fight for these rights.

Egypt: Contesting women's rights after the Arab Spring

Although women's movements in Egypt have successfully managed to bring issues as part of the national agenda, such as sexual harassment, female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), child marriage, maternal custody, women's economic and labour rights, education for girls and

inheritance laws. There is, however, still an ongoing struggle in terms gender equality, violence against women and women's rights in Egypt.

Violence against women

The Egyptian Center for Women's Rights (ECWR) launched a "Be Aware of Your Rights" Campaign to combat violence against women (Nohafarag, 2017). Every year between 25th November and 10th December the "16 Days of Activism for Combating Violence Against Women" are held (Nohafarag, 2017). November 25, 2019, saw the beginning of the next wave of "16 Days of Activism for Combating Violence Against Women", with several activities being organised and held in Alexandria and Cairo (UN Women, 2019). A series of press conferences were held spread awareness about the causes and consequences of gendered violence (UN Women, 2019).

As part of this campaign, the ECWR, decided to launch the campaign "Be Aware of Your Rights" (Nohafarag, 2017). The aim of this campaign is to raise awareness of the serious consequences of Violence Against Women (VAW), the different shapes as well as the economic cost (Nohafarag, 2017). Another aim of the campaign is to encourage women to come forward whenever they are a victim to violence and would like justice (Nohafarag, 2017).

During the campaign, young female leaders and coordinators, from the Women's Voices Project, carried out the activities planned (UN Women, 2019). These activities were in the form of seminars, where women could raise their awareness of the risks involved in violence against them (UN Women, 2019). They also spoke about the importance of speaking up when faced with violence (UN Women, 2019).

The ECWR participated in conferences prepared by the National Council of Women (NCW) which was titled "Egyptian Women's and Sustainable Development" (Nohafarag, 2017). "ECWR also participates in a discussion on the draft law of the Personal Status Code; in cooperation with Al-Ahram Center for Political & Strategic Studies along with number of political parties and Egyptian NGOs" (Nohafarag, 2017).

The ECWR conducted many activities such as writing and publishing a paper on the "16 Days of Activism for Combating Violence Against Women" campaign (Nohafarag, 2017). This was done

so that people could be aware of the gender-based violence in Egypt and to highlight the different forms of harassment that women must face and fight against (Nohafarag, 2017). ECWR also published more papers that drew on topics such as what violence means and the different forms it can come in, they wrote about marriage and divorce, and they wrote about amendments that need to be put in place for the Personal Status Law to protect the future interest of the children (Nohafarag, 2017).

Sexual Harassment, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) & New Legislation

Sexual harassment in Egypt is one of the most common things women face daily (UNFPA Egypt, 2018). Research done by UN Women, shows that over 99.3% of Egyptian women and even young girls will face sexual harassment in their lifetime (UNFPA Egypt, 2018). A similar report indicated that an average of 82.6% of female respondents did not feel protected or secure in the roads (UNFPA Egypt, 2018). A law was passed on 4 June 2014 which criminalizes sexual harassment in Egypt (UNFPA Egypt, 2018). The new law stated that verbal, physical, social, and online harassment will result in jail time for about half a year to five years, or a fine of LE 50,000 (UNFPA Egypt, 2018).

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is also a form of gendered violence that is prominent in Egypt. Since 2008, UNFPA, together with UNICEF, drives the biggest worldwide program to speed up the rejection of FGM (UNFPA Egypt, 2018). The program as of now centres around 17 African nations and furthermore underpins territorial and worldwide activities (UNFPA Egypt, 2018). In 2014, the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Program established a second stage, growing its work to 17 nations (UNFPA Egypt, 2018). UNFPA works together with UN Women, UNDP, UNODC, UN Habitat and different offices in the Joint program of "Safe Cities for Women and girls" (UNFPA Egypt, 2018). Also, UNFPA joined forces with UN Women and UNDP in the improvement of the GBV National Strategy advancement (UNFPA Egypt, 2018).

More than 80 percent of women in Egypt are subjected to domestic violence and genital mutilation (Langer, 2019). According to the UN Women Global Database on Violence Against Women, domestic violence and FGM IN Egypt was at 26% (2015) and 87% (2017), respectively (UN Women, 2016). In 2015 a survey was conducted by the UNFPA, the NCW and the CENTRAL Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS), namely the Economic

Cost of Gender-Based Violence Survey (UNFPA Egypt, 2020). According to the Survey 7.8 million women were subjected to different forms of violence against them by strangers, and people they know, including family members (UNFPA Egypt, 2020).

In 2013, after the fall of Mohamed Morsi, the former president of Egypt, people took to the streets of Tahrir Square to celebrate (Kingsley, 2013). During the protests to remove Mohamed Morsi from presidency, it was recorded that there were around 169 cases of sexual mob crimes against women (Kingsley, 2013).

Soraya Bahgat is the co-founder of Tahrir Bodyguard, a group that rescues women from assault. In her speech at the Oslo Freedom Forum entitled “The Voice of Women is a Revolution”, in May 2013, she talked about how Tahrir Bodyguard was formed and how the movement started out as her wanting to end the fear that Egyptian women, as well as herself, had. She created the account to protect women, and anyone could join and help in the fight against violence against women. In a speech given by Soraya Bahgat, a women’s right activist and founder of Tahrir Bodyguard, at the Oslo Freedom Forum entitled “The Voice of Women is a Revolution” she states:

I created a Twitter account and what started out as a one-women show on Twitter grew into a group of men and women wearing helmets and vests and a uniform to be recognized patrolling Tahrir Square and protecting women. The movement has now grown into an executive team of about ten people, and let me tell you, 60 percent of that executive team are women...After groups like Tahrir Bodyguard and Operation Anti-Sexual Harassment decided to go to Tahrir Square and take an active part in preventing this (individual/mob harassment) from happening, the sexual assaults have considerably been less...This is not just about our right to be equals, to walk safely, to protest safely. This is not just about sexual harassment. This is about humanity. We are putting up a fight. We’re going down, we’re not afraid...When they try to silence the voice of women, Egyptian women were even more defiant. They went to Tahrir Square and started chanting that our voice is a revolution (Oslo Freedom Forum, 2013).

Tahrir Bodyguard was founded in 2012. Tahrir Bodyguard also joined forces with different rights groups, political movements, and anti-social harassment campaigns (Mikhail, 2012). The goal of Tahrir Bodyguard's is to protect women and get them out of the dangerous situations as fast as possible (Mikhail, 2012). In 2013 the movement had 200 volunteers who took to the streets to patrol the high-risk areas during mass demonstrations (Hume, 2013). In January 2013, there were sexual assault on women reports of over 25 cases, 10 of which Tahrir Bodyguard volunteers intervened and rescued the victims (Hume, 2013). The movement also organised free self-defence classes for women in 2013 (Hume, 2013).

Global Fund for Women

The Egyptian government's attempts to stop women human rights defenders and restrict the critical work of Nazra to end sexual violence and advance gender equality in Egypt will not go unnoticed," said Zahra Vieneuve, Program Officer for the Middle East and North Africa at the Global Fund for Women. "Let's show Egyptian authorities that the more they try to silence women human rights defenders, the more strongly we will resist the erosion of space for women's human rights work. (Global Fund for Women, 2017).

Global Fund for Women supports women's rights defenders all around the world. They are a publicly supported grant-making foundation that helps to advance human rights by helping to fund women-led organisations worldwide (Zimmerman & DeRoo VanderBerg. 2017). Their international network of women and men allows them to financially support women's fight for peace, equality, and social justice. The way that the Global Fund for Women raises funds is through different sources such as donations or investments (Zimmerman & DeRoo VanderBerg. 2017). They use these funds to create grants for women-led organisations that help women by promoting economic security, health, safety, education and leadership opportunities of women and girls (Zimmerman & DeRoo VanderBerg. 2017).

One of the organisations that the Global Fund for Women supports is The Nazra for Feminist Studies. Nazra for Feminist Studies was founded in Cairo in December 2007 and is led by Global Fund for Women's Board member, Mozn Hassan (Global Fund for Women, 2017). This women's rights organisation uses its platform to strengthen the Egyptian feminist movement and

tries to push gender and feminism awareness into the political and social spheres (Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition, 2020). Campaigns led by Nazra for Feminist Studies include defending women's human rights, fighting sexual, supporting women who want to enter the political sphere, and making sure that women of different ideologies are safe in all public spaces (Nazra for Feminist Studies, 2015).

Campaign for Ending Violence Against Women

Policemen took part in a mass sexual assault case that happened in 2005, which led to many campaigns being launched in Egypt to fight against sexual harassment (Arab Barometer, 2020). In 2006, the Egyptian Center for Women's Rights (ECWR) issued their first campaign named "Safe streets for all", the aim of the campaign was to make the streets of Egypt safe for women, and so that they would not have to be afraid of being subjected to sexual harassment (Komsan, 2009: 6). This campaign only had a success when authorities in power admitted that sexual harassment is indeed a problem (Komsan, 2009: 6).

In 2008, a campaign called "Respect yourself; Egypt still has real men" was launched by a journalist who witnessed an act of harassment against a woman in her thirties (Arab Barometer, 2020 & Tzoreff, 2014: 101). A woman in her thirties was harassed by a group of men in the middle of the street in Cairo, and onlookers did nothing to help her or to stop the assault from happening (Daily News Egypt, 2008). No one helped until a taxi driver stopped, took off his belt and used his belt to whip the harassers who had left the women half naked (Daily News Egypt, 2008 & Tzoreff, 2014: 101). The campaign was therefore started in the hopes that men in the country will renounce sexual harassment and stand with the women of the country (Daily News Egypt, 2008).

The Global 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence Campaign was launched in 1991 (Reda, 2017).

The 16 Days Campaign is an organizing strategy for individuals and groups around the world to call for the elimination of all forms of gender-based violence against women and to:

raise awareness about gender-based violence against women as a human rights issue at the local, national, regional and international levels; strengthen local work

around gender-based violence against women; establish a clear link between local and international work to end gender-based violence against women; provide a forum in which organizers can develop and share new and effective strategies; demonstrate the solidarity of women around the world organizing against gender-based violence against women; and create tools to pressure governments to implement commitments to eliminate gender-based violence against women (Global 16 Days Campaign, 2020).

The campaign began on November 25, the International Day of the Elimination of Violence Against Women, and finished on December 10, the Human Rights Day (Reda, 2017). The National Council for Women (NCW) joined the 16 Days of Activism against the Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Campaign and in 2018 and wanted to bring awareness to violence against women (State Information Service, 2018). They also wanted to encourage people to act against all forms of violence throughout the year, and not only during the 16 Days campaign (State Information Service, 2018).

In 2019 the National Council for Women (NCW) in Egypt began its 16 Days of activism campaign (Osama, 2019). The campaign focused on female genital mutilation (FGM) for 2019 (Osama, 2019). The NCW took the opportunity to bring awareness to the psychological and physical scarring that is brought upon by FGM (Osama, 2019).

Inheritance laws

Women have been deprived of their rightful share of inheritance for a long time. According to Gender and Land Rights Database (2020), women heirs in Egypt only inherits half of what a male heir inherits. In an article written by Nisaa FM they included testimonies of women who were deprived or wronged in terms of inheritance (Nisaa FM, 2017). “Mona Soliman, a woman in her 50s, tells her story, “I was deprived of my father’s inheritance, which my brothers claimed as their own. They said they wanted to prevent my husband’s family from taking the land.” ... “Five years on, no ruling has been issued to give me back my right.” (Nisaa FM, 2017).

In November of 2017 the Egyptian Centre for Women's Rights (ECWR) welcomed the endorsement of the House of Representatives on the corrections of the Inheritance Law Article No. 77 of 1943 (Nohafarag, 2017).

The corrections stipulate that:

the penalty of imprisonment for a period of not less than six months and a fine of not less than twenty thousand pounds, and not exceeding one hundred thousand pounds, or one of these two penalties each deliberately refrained from handing over one of the heirs his legitimate share of inheritance. Punishment by imprisonment for a period not less than three months and a fine not less than 10 thousand LE and not exceeding 50 thousand LE or one of these two punishments applies in each withholding a document confirming the share of the heir, or refrained from handing over the bond if requested by any of the legitimate heirs. (Nohafarag, 2017).

As previously mentioned in the minithesis, the ECWR is non-government organisation that support women and help them realise their full rights. Like many other women's organisation, the ECWR works to eliminate discrimination against women by using legislative methods (Devex, 2020).

The Chairwoman of ECWR, Nehad Abol Komsan, said that the amendments made to the Inheritance Law Article No. 77 of 1943, was a good step towards women gaining access to their rightful share of inheritance (Nohafarag, 2017). In this manner, they are disregarding the Sharia Law that guarantees rights when they are expected (Nohafarag, 2017). This change to the Inheritance Law is in accordance with Article no. 11 of Egypt's Constitution, which states: "The state shall be committed to protecting women against all forms of violence..." (Nohafarag, 2017). By denying women their right to equal inheritance is a form of violence against women which goes against Article no. 11 of Egypt's Constitution, especially since many households in Egypt are headed by women (Nohafarag, 2017). The ECWR requested that any laws that shows signs of discrimination against women be modified, in order to bring more equality (Nohafarag, 2017).

January 1, 2018 was a very significant day in Egypt as President Abdel Fatah al-Sisi amended the Inheritance Law 77/1943 to ensure that there will be strict punishment for individuals who exclude family members, especially women, from receiving their inheritance (Egypt today staff, 2018). December 5, 2017, the Egyptian Parliament decided to accept and approve of the amendments that was submitted by the government to Inheritance Law 77/1943 (Egypt today staff, 2018). This new law was approved by parliament after several drafts was submitted by the Cabinet, The NCW and civil associations (Mohamed, 2018). According to Article 49 of the new law, anyone who withholds or denies an heir from rightfully claiming their share of inheritance, will be subjected to no less than six months in prison and will be fined between EGP 20,000-100,000 (Mohamed, 2018). If, by chance, the same individual tries to violate the law again, they will be sentenced to no less than a year of jail time (Egypt today staff, 2018). Under the new law, women would be able to protect their share of the inheritance (Egypt today staff, 2018). As it has only been a few years since the law was amended, it was the first law to protect women and their right to inheritance (Egypt today staff, 2018).

An Executive Committee member of the NCW, Rania Yehia, talked about the amendments made to the new law and stated that “This amendment is consistent with Article 11 of Egypt’s Constitution which stresses the State’s responsibility of protecting women against all forms of violence,” (Mohamed, 2018). Rania Yehia, believes that the new amendment that allow women to receive equal inheritance, would be representing women in Egypt as well as women’s empowerment (Mohamed, 2018). Part of what the NCW wants to achieve is putting an end to all forms of violence against women. This new law is a step closer for women who seek 50/50 equality. The new law has also allowed women to act and file formal lawsuits against male family members in which they demand their legal inheritance (Mohamed, 2018). Although this amendment has given women more rights in terms of inheritance, the Egyptian law still follows an interpretation of Sharia, which states that a woman is only allowed to inherit half of what a man inherits (Mohamed, 2018).

On the other hand, Advocacy coordinator at the Centre for Egyptian Women’s Legal Assistance (CEWLA), Nada Nashaat, stated “The government should provide clear mechanisms that unfairly treated women can rely on. The legislation would then become a real tool rather than a

judicial text to obtain rights. Many women have spent years in court hallways in vain,” (Mohamed, 2018). Thus, stating that the new law is not sensible because the CEWLA, which was founded in 1995, still has high numbers of women seeking legal assistance for their inheritance (Mohamed, 2018 & SOAS, 2020). The aim of CEWLA is to bring awareness to the law and human rights issues, and to campaign for equality for all women by using legal equity and amending any discriminatory laws (SOAS, 2020).

There are different interpretations when it comes to Islamic inheritance laws (Mohamed, 2018). According to the 1946 Egyptian Law of Bequest women are only entitled to one third of the inheritance and non-Muslim women are not able to inherit anything from Muslims (Gender and Land Rights Database, 2020). An example of unequal Islamic inheritance laws can be seen in a case where a Coptic Christian woman in Egypt fought for her legal share of inheritance (BBC News. 2019). Forty-year-old, Huda Nasrallah, a Christian human rights lawyer, brought her case forward to the Egyptian court to “test the legality of the statute” (BBC News. 2019). Huda’s father passed away in late 2018, since then she went to court and demanded an equal share to the inheritance left by her father for her and her two brothers (Elhennawy, 2019). During her journey, two courts denied her request based on the Islamic inheritance laws which states that male heirs must receive double that of female heirs (Elhennawy, 2019). Huda was inspired by a 2016 ruling where a Cairo court ruled in favour of a Coptic Christian women who challenged Islamic inheritance laws, so when the time came for her brother and her to file the request for their inheritance, Huda built her case around the Coptic Christian laws of equal inheritance for all heirs (Elhennawy, 2019 & BBC News, 2019). In November 2019, BBC News reported that Huda has won her battle for equal inheritance and will be receiving equal inheritance along with her two brothers (BBC News. 2019).

Ongoing challenges and strengths after 2011 in Egypt

Everything has strengths and weakness as well as certain opportunities. Women still face many challenges when it comes to violence against women and other human right’s issues. Strengths that Egyptian feminism sees is the long tradition of feminism since the times of Hoda Sharawi; they also have continuous exposure in the public world, using technology as a means to highlight the difficulties that women face in terms of right’s and opportunities (Alvi, 2015: 311). There is

new transparency when it comes to holding someone accountable for crimes against women (Alvi, 2015: 311). People also have better means to demand that violence against women are accounted for, and there is an ability to demand laws and regulations do not abuse women's rights (Alvi, 2015: 311).

In 2017 Nadia Abdo was appointed as the first woman governorate of Beheira (El Baradei, 2018, 66). 2018, in Egypt, saw six women ministers namely: "the Ministries of Social Solidarity, Tourism, Culture, Investment and International Cooperation, Migration and Egyptian Expatriates, and finally, Planning, Monitoring and Administrative Reform" (El Baradei, 2018, 66). Since 2011, Egypt has gone through a few changes in terms of presidents, prime ministers, and parliament (El Baradei, 2018, 66). During the elections after the uprising women did not automatically vote for female candidates and according to El Baradei this can be due to Egyptian women having little confidence in their abilities to lead as well as having this idea that women are not competent enough to be good parliamentarians (El Baradei, 2018, 67). Although women were participating more in parliament, they are still not as well represented as they should be (El Baradei, 2018, 67). Ongoing challenges of Egyptian feminism include the fact that publicity through media and data innovation will keep the issues alive, but it does not actually give them power to change anything (Alvi, 2015: 311). With the constant rise of women empowerment, there has also been a rise in sexual violence against women and even harassment (Alvi, 2015: 311).

Sexual harassment remains a serious problem in Egypt. Out of 11 Arab countries, Egypt ranks first in terms of sexual harassment where 44% of the population have experienced sexual harassment (Arab Barometer, 2020). There have also been reports of 63 percent of women who have been harassed in some form, of these women 90 percent was under the age of 30 and 88 percent were over 30 (Arab Barometer, 2020). Cairo has been ranked as one of the most dangerous cities for women in terms of experiencing sexual violence, according to the Thomson Reuters survey (Kanso, 2017).

Furthermore, women's rights groups are continuously targeted within Egypt. An Egyptian court froze the assets of three women's rights activists' groups, one of which includes 'Nazra for Feminist Studies', claiming that they were obtaining their foreign funds illegally and that in

doing so they were trying to “destabilise Egypt” (WPR, 2017). Global Fund for Women, continues to call on Egyptian authorities to end all investigations which target movements and organisations such as Nazra for Feminist Studies; also including a call to end all forms of harassment against women’s rights and human rights defenders in Egypt (Global Fund for Women, 2017). It was revealed in March 2018 that the Nazra for Feminist Studies office in Egypt will be closing due to the “freezing of the assets of the organisation and its founder and executive director Mozn Hassan” (Euromed Rights, 2018). Although the office has been closed this does not mean that Nazra will stop operating, on the contrary, Nazra volunteers will continue to do its activities (Euromed Rights, 2018).

In a speech given by Soraya Bahgat, a women’s right activist and founder of Tahrir Bodyguard, at the Oslo Freedom Forum entitled “The Voice of Women is a Revolution” she states:

Since the revolution, 17 women were forced by military to undergo humiliating and intrusive virginity tests. Many female activists were beaten up, detained, tortured, sexually assaulted, just for being activists, just for being in Tahrir...Even after the transition from a military regime to a democratically elected president, a lot of Egyptian female activists are detained without warrant, subjected to sexual abuse and assault while in detention. Again, over the past two years, the reality of mob sexual assaults in Tahrir is a sad reality for Egyptian women. The government in the past two years has failed to protect them. Tahrir remains unlit and women are subjects to the most brutal kinds of sexual assault by hundreds of men. They call them ‘the circle of death’, the ‘circle of hell’. It starts with a few people and grows into a full mob...It is power on behalf of a government to choose not to act when it sees such atrocities, but the citizens of Egypt, the men and women of Egypt, are challenging that power by choosing to act. In the wake of all these sexual assaults in Tahrir, many civil society groups, many private citizens formed individual groups to go down, patrol the square, protect women, and rescue them from sexual assault (Oslo Freedom Forum, 2013).

This speech was given in 2013 and women still face the threat of violence against them. One such case from January 2020 refers to a video showing a woman being sexually assaulted by a mob of men (Zaveri & Levenson, 2020).

Tunisia: Contesting women's rights after the Arab Spring

After the Arab Spring of 2010, the Islamist Ennahda party came into power for a brief time (Alvi, 2015: 302). This caused many women to fear that there might be a set back in the women's rights achieved over the decades (Alvi, 2015: 302). Islamist Ennahda's religious consultant and head Rachid Al-Ghannouchi attempted to calm fears of women losing their rights (Alvi, 2015: 302). He has said openly that, in his view, the essence of Islam is freedom (Alvi, 2015: 302).

Women in Tunisia have been fighting for the right to pass their family name on to their children as well as trying to gain equal inheritance rights with men (Kanso, 2018). "The issue of the right of children to add the title of their mother has been discussed ... All discriminatory laws in the family space and public space are included in the commission's tasks." (Kanso, 2018).

The proposal came after the ban on Muslim women marrying non-Muslim men was lifted and the law which protected rapists from going to prison by marrying their victims was abolished (Kanso, 2018). "Tunisia's religion-based personal status laws - which govern marriage, child custody, divorce and inheritance - are among the most progressive in the region, according to activists." (Kanso, 2018). However, men are still seen as being the "breadwinner" and head of the household and the women of the household do not receive even half of what the men do when it comes to inheritance (Kanso, 2018).

Violence against women

Like a significant part of the world, Tunisia is tormented with violence against women. The issue of violence against women has been raised by feminist organisations since the beginning of the 1990s (Khamis, 2017). In 1996, the Tunisian Association of Democratic Women (ATFD) started a hotline centre where women were able to leave complaints about any form of violence against them (Khamis, 2017). After two decades, of activism by Tunisian feminist organisations, the Tunisian government finally declared that violence against women is legal offense (Khamis, 2017).

The Tunisian government also put in effort to get rid of violence against women within the country (Khamis, 2017). In 2013 the Tunisian government adopted the National Action Plan for the Elimination of Violence against Women (NAPEVW) (Khamis, 2017). The aim of the National Action Plan is to end violence against women through information sharing, free hotline services and finding better ways to help domestic violence survivors (Gender concerns international, 2020). What makes Tunisia different from other countries in the Middles East and North Africa, is the fact that the government is taking measures to help eradicate violence against women and other forms of gender inequality (Fenton-Harvey, 2017). Tunisian women, however, still face gender inequality and discrimination within the public and private spaces (Fenton-Harvey, 2017). Around 53 percent of Tunisian women suffer from some form of violence against them, most commonly domestic violence (Fenton-Harvey, 2017 & Bailey, 2018).

On July 26, 2017, a new national law was passed in the Tunisia parliament where violence against women were to be eradicated (Khamis, 2017 & IDLO, 2017). The legislation was passed with 146 votes out of 217 and no abstention (UN Women, 2017). The law is put in place to help prevent violence against women and to support women who have survived violence against them (UN Women, 2017). The law stipulates that there will be tougher penalties for violence against women (Fenton-Harvey, 2017). The law also criminalised sexual harassment and gave a lot more protection to survivors of abuse and rape (Fenton-Harvey, 2017). The new law also allowed easier access to medical and psychological support (Fenton-Harvey, 2017). The law also states that training will be given to educators and medical staff to help prevent, recognise and treat violence against women (Fenton-Harvey, 2017). According to the IDLO (2017) article “Ending violence against women in Tunisia through shelters”: “The law is ground-breaking not only for its shift in framing the status of women as survivors rather than victims, but also because it focuses on prevention and contains broad-sweeping provisions covering the many types of gender-based violence ranging from psychological abuse to economic discrimination”.

The new law has a broad definition of what falls under the “violence against women” umbrella (UN Women, 2017). The forms of violence included in the law is not only physical violence against women but also includes economic, political, sexual, and psychological violence against women (UN Women, 2017). The amendment made to Article 227 of the penal code also stated

that a sexual offender would no longer be able to marry their underage victims to get out of punishment (UN Women, 2017). Naziha Labidi (Minister of Women, Family and Childhood), reported that, as a Tunisian woman, she was incredibly proud of the new law that was adopted as it is the “climax of the steps that began through the adoption of the Code of Personal Status in 1956,” (UN Women, 2017).

Representatives of UN Women stated:

Since 2014, UN Women has contributed to the review and finalization of the law on ending violence against women and provided recommendations, together with other international and UN partners, such as the Council of Europe and the European Union, UNDP, OHCHR, UNFPA and UNODC. UN Women also supported the development of advocacy tools, including a guidance for parliamentarians on the international standards to combat violence against women and an article-by-article analysis of the draft law which was then submitted by the UN System to the Assembly of People's Representatives (Tunisian parliament) (UN Women, 2017).

The late president of Tunisia, Beji Caid Essebsi, wanted to make a significant change in Tunisia which “advances” the country just like Habib Bourguiba did when he implemented the “Code of Personal Status” (Khamis, 2017). He wanted Tunisia to strengthen gender equality within the nation (Khamis, 2017). He supported laws which promoted equal inheritance laws and the law permitting women to marry non-Muslim men without converting (Khamis, 2017).

Although Tunisia has taken legal steps to eradicate violence against women, it takes more than just laws to end violence, it would take a change in attitudes and the way society accepts and approaches these new laws of prevention. A women’s rights researcher working at Human Rights Watch (HRW), Rothna Begum believes that funding is an important issue to investigate when it comes to implementing the violence against women law and the initiatives that come with it that will bring change (Fenton-Harvey, 2017). The Human Rights Watch (HRW) was established in 1978 (HRW, 2020). The aim of the HRW is to investigate and report on the abuse happening all around the world (HRW, 2020). The HRW includes around 450 people from over 70 nationalities (HRW, 2020). The members of the HRW include lawyers, journalists, and other

individuals who work to protect those who are vulnerable and at risk (HRW, 2020). The HRW takes their information and reports to governments, armed groups, and businesses so that they can put pressure on them to change or implement their policies and law into practice (HRW, 2020). The HRW does not accept funding from government and receives their funding through donations which they thoroughly review to make sure that it is in line with their mission, policies, and values (HRW, 2020).

Campaign for Ending Violence Against Women

In September 2012, a 27-year-old woman, Meriem Ben Mohamed, was pulled over along with her boyfriend and was raped by two policemen in their police car (Arfaoui & Moghadam, 2016: 644 & BBC News, 2014). The policemen denied everything saying that they had found Meriem and her boyfriend in an ‘indecent position’, but when the couple was going to be prosecuted on the grounds of indecency, it triggered protests and a campaign in support of Meriem, the victim (BBC News, 2014).

The two policemen ended up being convicted of raping Meriem and was sentenced to seven years imprisonment (Arfaoui & Moghadam, 2016: 644). In September 2014, both Meriem and the police officers appealed the ruling, which sparks more protests (Arfaoui & Moghadam, 2016: 644). Petitions begun to rise on Facebook and people protested on the street with posters in French and Arabic with statements including ‘crime d’état, viol d’état’, and ‘En Tunisie le viol est justifiable quand la police est coupable’ (Arfaoui & Moghadam, 2016: 644). That same month the ATFD arranged national workshops and launched an Action Plan 2015–17 on Violence against Women (Arfaoui & Moghadam, 2016: 644). During this workshop representatives of ATFD reported on the work of the different branches namely branches from Tunis, Ben Arous, Sfax, Bizerte, Sousse, and Kairouan (Arfaoui & Moghadam, 2016: 644). By November 2014, the Tunis court finally changed the ruling for the police officers from seven years imprisonment to 15 years (Arfaoui & Moghadam, 2016: 644). According to the ATFD, this was a satisfactory ruling, which they announce in a press conference (Arfaoui & Moghadam, 2016: 644). After this campaign the ATFD still decided to take part in the “16 Days of Activism for Combating Violence Against Women” campaign to protest rape, physical and verbal forms of violence against women (Arfaoui & Moghadam, 2016: 644). They took to the streets and online

platforms with the slogan ‘Behind every abused woman, there is a law’ (Arfaoui & Moghadam, 2016: 644).

As part of the “16 Days of Activism for Combating Violence Against Women” a campaign was launched in 2014 for violence against women, by the Tunisian Minister of Women, Family and Children (Middle East Monitor (MEMO), 2017). Like Egypt’s “Be Aware of Your Rights”, the Tunisian campaign aimed to raise awareness and create a supportive public opinion about violence against women (Middle East Monitor (MEMO), 2017). “The minister has also announced the launching of a new campaign to raise awareness of the Basic Law on the Elimination of Violence Against Women and its definition in public places” (Middle East Monitor (MEMO), 2017).

By the end of the “16 Days of Activism for Combating Violence Against Women” campaign, International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), ATFD, and Association Beity, wanted to celebrate by having a regional seminar on ‘Best Practices for Combating Violence against Women’ (Arfaoui & Moghadam, 2016: 646). The FIDH is international human rights NGO that was established in 1922 (FIDH, 2020). What they do is defend the civil, economic, social, political, and cultural rights, of those who need it, as outlined by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (FIDH, 2020). Association Beity sets out to defend women’s dignity, freedom, equality, and social justice (Euromed Women’s Foundation, 2015).

As previously mentioned, campaigns to end violence against women have been led by women’s associations since 2014 and in 2017 the new national law was passed that criminalised all forms of violence against women such as political, physical, economical, and emotional. Association of Beity also established shelters for victims of violence (Youssef & Mighri, 2019). They also work closely with local and state authorities by running campaigns such as training and awareness to eradicate violence against women (Youssef & Mighri, 2019).

The “Me Too” movement was originally established in the year 2006 (Maryville University, 2020). The movement was founded by American social activist Tarana Burke who used the “me too” phrase on Myspace social network to bring awareness to sexual harassment especially towards sexual harassment towards women of colour (Maryville University, 2020). The movement went viral in 2017 when numerous high-profile actresses spoke of their experiences

with sexual harassment in the film industry (Maryville University, 2020). They made posts about their stories and used the #MeToo on all their social media platforms (Maryville University, 2020). The movement showed others that sexual harassment is very common around the world and allowed survivors of sexual harassment and assault know that they were not alone (Maryville University, 2020). The “Me Too” movement let survivors of sexual assault tell their story to the world without fearing what might happen to them if they did (Maryville University, 2020). It became a safe space for the survivors to share (Maryville University, 2020).

The #EnaZeda movement, which is the Tunisian variation of the #MeToo movement, rose in popularity in 2019 when a high school student posted about her sexual harassment experience with a new member of parliament, not knowing who he was at the time of the incident (Houerbi, 2020). The movement saw thousands of Tunisian women participating and sharing their experiences online with the #EnaZeda (Houerbi, 2020).

Inheritance laws

Tunisia has a long history of progressive reforms in terms of empowering women such as the Personal Status Code of 1957 and the constitution of 2014 which brought democracy to Tunisia (Tanner, 2020). Although women have been empowered, there is one area where deep discrimination remains, namely women’s inheritance rights (Tanner, 2020). In Tunisia inheritance distribution is based on the Islamic Sharia law, which states that the male heirs are required to receive double that of a female heir (Tanner, 2020).

Tunisia is a North African Muslim nation, where women have more rights than any other Arab country. One of these rights is allowing Muslim women to marry non-Muslim men (Laessing, Tolba & Argoubi, 2018). Even with this, many took to the streets of parliament to protest and demand a law for equal inheritance rights. To combat the inequality of inheritance, the late President of Tunisia, Beji Caid Essebsi, stated that an equal inheritance law was long overdue, and that he would present a bill to parliament giving women and men equal inheritance rights (Aljazeera, 2018). This new law would give men and women equal inheritance rights, however Essebsi also stated that if families wish to continue inheritance distribution according to the Islamic law, then they are welcome to do so (Aljazeera, 2018). This is not as good as it seems,

because if the family chooses to abide by the old laws, then women would have no right to equal inheritance, and would still not benefit.

In August 2018, Tunisia's President, Beji Caid Essebsi, proposed that women should receive equal inheritance rights regardless of thousands protesting to keep the Islamic law as is (Laessing, Tolba & Argoubi, 2018). Even with people protesting to keep the old laws, in his speech, President Beji Caid Essebsi said that he proposes that equal inheritance becomes law (Laessing, Tolba & Argoubi, 2018).

November 25, 2018, saw the Tunisian Cabinet approved the bill set forward by the late president Essebsi (Library of Congress, 2018). The bill states that female heirs are to receive equal inheritance shares along with the male heirs (Library of Congress, 2018). Tunisia is the first Arab country who has adopted this kind of bill which gives women equal inheritance rights (Library of Congress, 2018). It was confirmed that the reason the president's cabinet approved the bill was due to Article 2 of Tunisia's Constitution, which states "that Tunisia is a civil country based on three elements: citizenship, the will of the people, and the supremacy of the law" (Library of Congress, 2018). He continued by conveying that it is the obligation of the government to uphold all citizens rights and to protect women's rights (Library of Congress, 2018).

Although the bill was approved by Cabinet, it was rejected by the Ennahda movement, which has majority seats in parliament, because the new bill goes against the Quran that says that men should inherit double that of women (Middle East Monitor, 2018). Even though there was opposition towards the approved bill, the president stood by it saying that the people of Tunisia have a right to choose whether to follow the Islamic code (Middle East Monitor, 2018).

Ongoing challenges and strengths after 2011 in Tunisia

Women's groups in Tunisia have strong feminist traditions (Alvi, 2015). The second half of 2017, saw a few changes in Tunisia. The "landmark" law was passed in July of 2017 which is a law to help put an end to violence against women and to protect their basic human rights (Khalife, 2018). The law also stated that women do not have to marry their rapists (Khalife, 2018). Women were also allowed to marry non-Muslim's without having to convert as of

September 2017 and so far, Tunisia has the highest number of women in their parliament (Khalife, 2018).

Shortcomings of Tunisian feminism include publicity through media and data innovation will help keep the issues alive, but the exposure is not controlled, and the publicity does not equate to having power (Alvi, 2015: 307). Obstacles that can occur is that Islamists can solidify their positions and figure out how to pass laws that put limitations on women's rights (Alvi, 2015: 307). In a lot of Western Media, nations who have more "progressive" ways – such as Tunisia - are rarely seen in the media whereas more repressive regimes are seen in great numbers (Mekay, 2018). In 2011 women joined the Tunisian revolution and played quite a significant role through activism (Alvi, 2015: 307).

Within the ten years after the Arab Spring, Tunisia is still struggling. Women, more than men, are struggling with unemployment (Labidi, 2019). Two groups were established to help students establish networks and encourage discussions. These two groups are 'Association of women mathematicians' and 'Women engineers' founded by Saïma Khenissy and Nadia Souissi, respectively (Labidi, 2019).

However, "The naming of a government minister from a religious minority (a first in Tunisia and, in this case, a Jew), and the election of a woman as mayor of Tunis (a first for Tunisia's capital city), suggest the possibility of new forms of economic and political structures in the country" (Labidi, 2019).

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

Women played a prominent role during the Arab Spring and demanded equal rights and better opportunities to grow outside of the household, they were not given the opportunity after the fall of their regime. The Arab Spring demonstrated the significance of a more comprehensive way to deal with transitional procedures. The uprisings allowed women to involve themselves and to utilise their abilities and to therefore, greatly contribute to change. For instance, the accomplishment of the Arab uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen and Libya amid 2011 could not have been done without the input of women. After reviewing the history of women's groups and campaign over the years within Tunisia and Egypt, there has been many changes. Some women's rights have progressed while others have made only a little progress.

The minithesis has looked at how women have played prominent roles in uprisings and social movements. It looked at the steps women took to fight for equal rights in terms of violence against women, inheritance laws and having a voice in parliament. Different feminist groups and social movements were investigated to see how they have outlined their demands and what they were able to achieve before, during and after the Arab Spring.

Women continuously fought for equal rights throughout the centuries. Their main fight was for equal rights and an end to violence against women. To this day, women still frequently campaign and fight for equality. It can be seen after the Arab Spring, in Egypt, that gender inequality is still a big issue as well as the continuous violations against women's rights. After 2011, there has been a rise in new women's rights and feminist groups which has been calling for more rights and especially for an end to violence against women. It is the responsibility of state to protect all citizens. The fear of sexual harassment, rape, and sexual violence in the public spaces, limits women in participating in the political sphere, the workplace or even demonstrations. It will take continuous persistence from women's groups and acceptance from civil society for change in women's equal rights to become a success.

When women's groups spread awareness on the rights of women it enables women to become more involved in empowering themselves, and the more educated women become the greater the opportunities they must participate within the public sphere. It must be acknowledged that Egyptian women have made progress by participating more within the political sphere but in

terms of acceptance of gender equality by the public, Egypt still has a long way to go. Egypt has made some strides for women's empowerment but continues to struggle with combating violence against women as well as equal inheritance laws. However, corrections were made to the Inheritance Law 77/1943, which protects women's share of inheritance and punishes those who try to keep family member, specifically women, from receiving their inheritance. Closing the gender gap, therefore, is not an easy thing to do. It will take continuous persistence from women's groups and acceptance from civil society in order for government to legislate gender equality through laws and affirmative action.

On the other hand, Tunisia's progress to achieve women empowerment and gender equality since the 1990s has shown that politics, power, struggles and contestation can be used in order to challenge social and gender power. Women's rights activism within Tunisia is very prominent and has contributed to the first legislation in favour of women, namely the Code of Personal Status of 1956/1957. The law deals with women's rights and family legislation. Furthermore, in 2014, Tunisia's new constitution declared equality between women and men. The gap between what people desire and what actually exists is something that the whole world suffers from and Tunisian women's right groups is working extremely hard to achieve equality. Regarding the law on equal inheritance a bill which was passed, in 2018, which declares that women are entitled to receive equal inheritance rights which goes against the Islamic Sharia law, which states that the male heirs are required to receive double that of a female heir. It will also be best to have families decide whether to implement equality of inheritance or not. Women's groups in Tunisia have been able to capitalise on the Arab Spring's democratic gains and has been able to advance women's legal rights.

In conclusion if women want to make sure the new democracy works and that both men and women gain from it, then they would have to make sure that they investigate the political, analytical and strategic aspects of the uprisings. The point is not for women to surpass men but for them to have equal rights with men. The Arab Spring opened new doors for women. Their involvement in the uprisings will add to the progression of women's rights, to giving a voice to those who are too afraid to speak, helping improve their concerns for their gender through

initiating legislation, as well as pushing for law changes for a more equal society. The strategies used for this progression needs to be practical so that women can be effectively empowered.



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