



## ENCYCLOPEDIA OF WOMEN AND ISLAMIC CULTURES

### Feminist Activism in North Africa

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#### EWIC Staff: Datasheet

- ❖ Feminist activism in North Africa dates back to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, but the second wave of feminist activism emerged in the 1970's, when women and development study groups were formed.<sup>1</sup>
- ❖ In the post-colonial period women became increasingly in official women's organizations or charitable associations. New organizations were formed in the 1980s and 1990s, including Morocco's Association Démocratique des Femmes du Maroc (ADFM), Algeria's SOS Femmes en Détresse, Tunisia's Association Tunisienne des Femmes Démocrates, and women-led professional associations.<sup>1</sup>
- ❖ In the 1990s feminists from Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia formed the Collectif 95 Maghreb-Egalité to lobby for equal family laws and full citizenship for women.<sup>2</sup>
- ❖ In Tunisia, a "personal status code" adopted in 1956 introduced new women's rights, pioneering new possibilities for feminist activism. These included the right to vote and be elected to parliament, equal wages, to be granted divorce, and access to mixed gender education.<sup>3</sup> In 1980, a group of women intellectuals formed the Taher Haddad Club which became a center of discussion on women's rights and social issues.<sup>4</sup>
- ❖ The Tunisian state introduced amendments to the family law in 1993. These amendments included a mother's consent being required in addition to the father's for marriage of a minor and the right to participate in managing family affairs.<sup>1</sup>
- ❖ In May 2012, after the adoption of a gender quota for the new parliamentary election, women came to make up 31% of parliamentary seats in Tunisia, the highest in the region.<sup>1</sup>
- ❖ In Morocco, changes to the electoral code in 2002 introduced a "national list" that reserved thirty parliamentary seats for women. In 2004, the refined labor code introduced the concept of sexual harassment in the workplace. Changes to the national code in 2007 gave women and men equal rights to transmit nationality to their children as required by CEDAW's (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women) Article 9.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.northeastern.edu/cssh/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Moghadam-Feminist-Activism-in-North-Africa-final-May-2014-2.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Choueiri, Y. M. (2011). *A companion to the history of the Middle East*. Malden, Mass: Blackwell Pub.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/special-edition-women-2012/north-african-women-barricades>

<sup>4</sup> Talhami, G. H. (2013). *Historical dictionary of women in the Middle East and North Africa*. Lanham, Md: Scarecrow Press.