

RELEASE IN PART
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From: Anne-Marie Slaughter [redacted]
Sent: Monday, April 25, 2011 8:40 AM
To: H
Cc: Abedin, Huma; Sullivan, Jacob J; Mills, Cheryl D
Subject: thoughts and cites on role of women in ME

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With apologies for the delay ([redacted]), here are a couple of key points with some cites to back them up.

- 1) When women get involved in protests it means families get involved – it begins to permeate the entire society. This was true in Egypt (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-13056685>) – now women are protesting in Yemen (with their men protecting them) and Syria (<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/14/world/middleeast/14syria.html?smid=tw-nytimes&seid=auto>). For a discussion of women across different countries in Arab Spring see <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/apr/22/women-arab-spring?INTCMP=SRCH>. (I have excerpted some of this piece below). Think also of the role of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Argentina – marching and marching until they got answers about their disappeared sons. Women who have lost husbands, brothers, and sons are often the collective memory of a society.
- 2) Women are the majority users of the internet. <http://techcrunch.com/2011/03/20/why-women-rule-the-internet/> “Women are the routers and amplifiers of the social web.” These are protests fired by a ever denser web of social and political connections, providing resilience (no clear leaders, so it’s impossible to cut off the “head” of revolution,” and making it extremely difficult to block information of what is happening. That web is the best hope of changing these societies for the longer term, and women are essential.
- 3) What all of this should do for the observers the world over is reinforce the image of women as change agents, active players in shaping their society rather than as victims. They can march fully veiled; they can tweet and blog and post from inside compounds; they can lead through social networking just as well as through megaphones at the head of a crowd. And in turn, a U.S. foreign policy fully focused on educating and empowering women in the ways they want to be empowered is a progressive foreign policy that serves both our values and our interests.

From The Guardian.

From the earliest rumblings of discontent in Tunisia at the turn of the year, it was clear that old images of Arab women as deferential, subservient and generally indoors would have to be revised. From the highly-educated Tunisian female elite of doctors, barristers and university professors to the huge numbers of unemployed female graduates, women were key players in the uprising that launched the Arab spring.

In Cairo, they were instrumental not just in protests but in much of the nitty-gritty organisation that turned Tahrir Square from a moment into a movement. Women were involved in arranging food deliveries, blankets, the stage and medical help. In Yemen, it was a young woman, Tawakul Karman, who first led demonstrations on a university campus against the long rule of Ali Abdullah Saleh. Karman emerged as one of the leaders of a revolution still yet to run its course.

In Bahrain, women were among the first wave that descended on Pearl Square in the capital – some with their children – to demand change. And the Bahraini movement has latterly found a figurehead in Zainab al-

Khawaja, the woman who went on hunger strike in protest at the beating and arrest of her father, husband and brother-in-law. "Women have played a hugely influential role this time and put themselves in danger," said Nabeel Rajab, president of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights. "They treated the injured in the streets and nursed them in their homes when they were too afraid to go to hospital."

In Libya, women were at the vanguard too, when mothers, sisters and widows of men killed in a prison massacre in 1996 protested outside a courthouse in Benghazi after their lawyer was arrested