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Statement submitted by Center for Egyptian Women’s Legal Assistance, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

The effect of discriminatory laws on economic empowerment of Egyptian women

Egyptian Personal Status Law has gone through several attempts of reform starting from 1920 till 2005. In 1920, Personal Status Law #25 was issued which was concerned with alimonies; it was reformed later in 1929 and 1985. The issuance of the law and reforms came from protective of women and patriarchal visions. The reforms included granting women the right of divorce with losing all of her financial rights. Despite all these laws and attempts of reform, the discriminatory texts and applications, and customs and habits against Egyptian women prevent women from accessing joint marital finances, economic independency, or inheritance.

The absence of state of law contributes to the suffering of women when it comes to accessing justice or economic empowerment. As the juristic and police institutions are both governed by patriarchal system, the procedures women have to follow are very complicated to access their financial rights. Despite the law granting women certain rights, implementing and translating the legal texts into actions can be very limiting to women by either designated very small amount of money to women as marital alimonies, or not enforcing the legal verdicts in the first place.

In regards to alimonies that are taken from the Fund Family, we find the Bank Nasser, the bank which is responsible of alimonies, does not deal with private businesses' owners or free professions, but only deals with employees and specific businesses' owners, even if the wife is holding the legal form that is considered a main requirement to implement the alimony verdicts. The maximum amount given to women is 500 Egyptian Pounds regardless of the number of the family and only for a year.

It is to be noted the quarter of the Egyptian population lives under the poverty line and the percentage of unemployed women in 2010, 22.6%, increased in 2011 to 22.7%, grew in 2012 to 24%, to reach 24.2 % in 2015 according to statistics issued by the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics.

Moreover, Women farmers, domestic workers and the like remain excluded from legal protection, and thus deprived of any social protection (health and social insurance). According to the statistics of the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics in 2012, the number of women in rural areas who are involved in unpaid family work has increased to 62.6%. The percentage of paid work for women living in urban areas is of 14.9%, while it does not exceed 4.1% in rural areas.

In 2015, a presidential decree was issued of adding fees on the marriage and divorce incidents and official documents including the birth certificates, family official registrar, which is adding burdens on the citizens who suffer financial burdens, in the time the state should decrease the prices and enhance the live hood. It is to be noted that the breadwinners of over 32% of Egyptian families are women.

As long as the laws regulating family relations and labour are discriminatory against women, then women will never be able to achieve economic empowerment or financial independence. The State should abide by the constitution and international conventions to eradicate all forms of discrimination against women in order to achieve gender equality and economic empowerment.
