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Criminalizing Domestic Violence in Qatar: A Case Study of Student Activism

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ABSTRACT

Globally, gender based violence effects one out of every three women. Recently, the alarming rise in reported cases of domestic violence in Qatar has led to a national call to find an effective way to deal with the issue. This paper documents the efforts of a group of Qatar University students to do just that: draft legislation to criminalize domestic violence. The research project involves eight Qatar University male and female undergraduate students from five different countries (Bahrain, Pakistan, Egypt, Nigeria and Qatar), and three faculty members from different countries (Palestine, Egypt and Saudi Arabia).

In order to determine the status of current societal and legal protection provided to victims of domestic violence, interviews were conducted with law enforcement authorities, judges, religious scholars/leaders, medical professionals and victims of domestic violence themselves. After analyzing the interviews, along with the official documentation provided by institutions (such as hospitals, police departments, and shelters) systematic weaknesses and legal loopholes were identified. A benchmarking of legislation in the Arab and Muslim world was then conducted in order to come up with a conceptual framework for a comprehensive protection system for female victims of domestic violence in Qatar.

Keywords: domestic violence legislation, criminalizing violence, legislation domestic violence

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