

# Arab Women's Petition for Dignity and Equality

Monday 12 March 2012, by [Collective / Multiple signers](#), [Petition / Sign-on Letter](#) (Date first published: 8 March 2012).

**This petition will be handed to the President of the European Council at the occasion of European Union heads of states and governments Summit, Brussels May 25, 2012.**

We, Arab women engaged in the fight for democracy, dignity and equality, we, who have been at the forefront of the exceptional changes that the Arab world is undergoing, want to remind the international community that women have the same right as men to benefit from the wind of liberty and dignity that is sweeping through the region.

Women have always been involved in the fight for rights, which vary in importance from one country to another. These rights, however, remain below our aspirations, and as such place women in the region in some of the worst conditions in the world.

Violence, be it in the public or private sphere, continues to be widespread and very few measures are taken to put an end to this scourge.

Family Law, in most Arab countries, is nothing more than legislation that institutes exclusion and discrimination.

Other areas of law such as those that cover nationality, or comprise civil and criminal codes simply reinforce discrimination. Existing legislation violates the most fundamental rights and freedoms of girls and women by instituting practices such as polygamy and marriage for underage females and by creating inequalities in rights in areas such as marriage, divorce, the guardianship of children, and access to property ownership and inheritance.

There are laws that cover honour crimes that allow a male member of a family who kills a girl or woman family member to claim extenuating circumstances.

While the vast majority of Arab countries, with the exception of Sudan and Somalia, have ratified, with varying degrees of enthusiasm, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) which was adopted by the UN in 1979, this has had no real impact on the condition of women.

Today, the Arab world is building democracy with a view to consolidate the rule of law and human rights. We believe that equality cannot be achieved without democracy and that the full enjoyment of democracy is only possible when there is complete equality between men and women.

For these reasons, we remind States, political parties, and civil society in Arab countries to do the utmost so that the dignity of women and their equality with men are not, yet again, sacrificed in the name of purported priorities.

No democracy can be built to the detriment of half of society. Together we have built our present, and together we will build a better tomorrow.

We demand the following:

- the protection of existing rights, complete and effective equality and the writing of women's rights in constitutions;
- the adoption of legislative and administrative measures to eliminate violence against women;
- the ratification and application of CEDAW, without reservation and in keeping with the spirit of the convention and with all of its concrete consequences.
- the adoption of laws that protect women against social and economic inequalities, and discrimination, especially as relates to the family.
- the adoption of affirmative action measures aimed at ensuring access for women to decision-making positions as well as their participation in politics and civil society associations.
- the denouncement of those who raise their voices to discriminate against women on the basis of retrograde interpretations of religious precepts or who seek to ban women from full and effective participation in a life characterized by dignity and the respect of human rights.

The Eight Signatories of the Appeal :

**Souhayr Belhassen**, présidente de la Fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l'homme (FIDH), tunisienne ;

**Bohra Belhadj Hmida**, avocate, cofondatrice et ex-présidente de l'Association tunisienne des femmes démocrates, tunisienne ;

**Shahinaz Abdel Salam**, blogueuse et activiste, égyptienne ;

**Nawal El Saadawi**, médecin psychiatre, écrivain et féministe historique, égyptienne ;

**Tahani Rached**, réalisatrice, égyptienne ;

**Samar Yazbek**, écrivain, syrienne ;

**Azza Kamel Maghur**, avocate internationale et membre du Conseil Libyen des Droits de l'Homme, libyenne ;

**Wassyla Tamzali**, féministe et essayiste, algérienne.

*Supported by :*

Sylviane Agacinski, philosophe ; Keren Ann, chanteuse ; Elisabeth Badinter, philosophe ; Josiane Balasko, comédienne ; Juliette Binoche, comédienne ; Dominique Blanc, comédienne ; Louis Chedid, chanteur ; Umberto Eco, écrivain ; Marianne Faithfull, chanteuse ; René Frydman, obstétricien ; Juliette Gréco, chanteuse ; Claudie Haigneré, astronaute et femme politique ; Françoise Héritier, anthropologue ; Isabelle Huppert, comédienne ; Axel Kahn, généticien ; La Grande Sophie, chanteuse ; Talisma Nasreen, écrivain ; Olivia Ruiz, chanteuse ; Rayhana, auteure et comédienne ; Annette Wiewiorka, historienne ; Mazarine Pingeot, professeure de philosophie et écrivain ; Catherine Deneuve, comédienne ; Benjamin Biolay, chanteur-compositeur.

This petition can be signed online:

<http://www.mesopinions.com/L-appel-du-8-mars-pour-la-dignite-et-l-egalite-petition-petitions-a89238a98fc0692c7924831a31f907b8.html>

