



Seeking Legitimacy

Aili Mari Tripp explains why autocratic leaders in Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria have embraced more extensive legal reforms of women's rights than their Middle Eastern counterparts. The study challenges existing accounts that rely primarily on religiosity to explain the adoption of women's rights in Muslim-majority countries.

Based on extensive fieldwork in Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia and an original database of gender-based reforms in the Middle East and North Africa, this accessible study analyzes how women's rights are used both instrumentally and symbolically to advance the political goals of authoritarian regimes as leverage in attempts to sideline religious extremists. It shows how Islamist political parties in the Maghreb have been forced to dramatically change their positions on women's rights to ensure political survival. In an original contribution to the study of women's rights in the Middle East and North Africa, Tripp reveals how women's rights movements have capitalized on moments of political turmoil to defend and advance their cause.

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Why Arab Autocracies Adopt
Women's Rights

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*To my fabulous, energetic, and artistic sisters
Eva Swantz and Lea Swantz*

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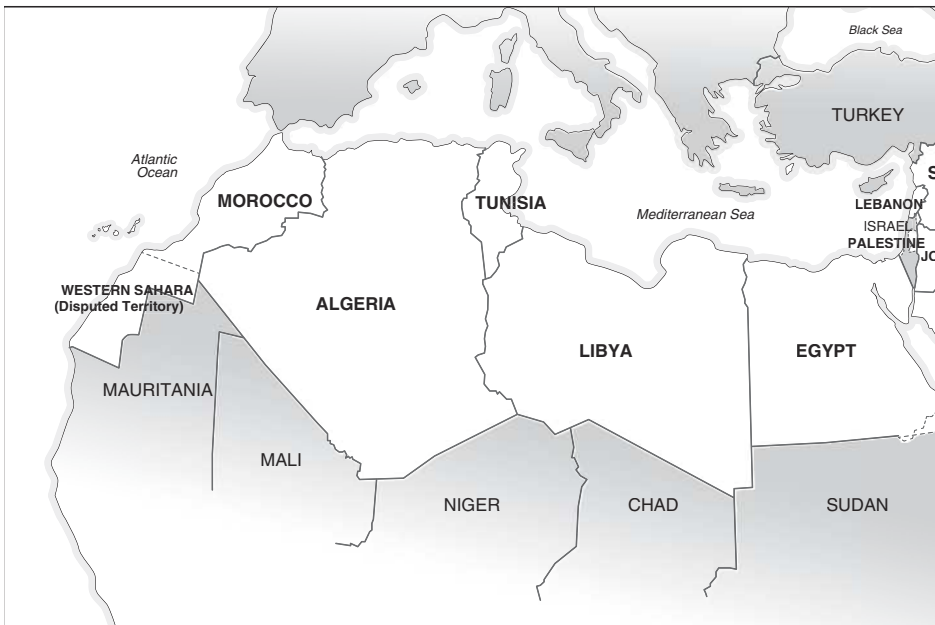
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Map 0.1 Map of Arab Middle East and Maghreb
Credit: Eva Swantz

Acknowledgments

My first interaction with Moroccan women activists was in 1989 when I met Fatima Mernissi in Helsinki, Finland, at the United Nations University World Institute for Development Economics Research (WIDER), where I was conducting research. There she had organized a meeting of anti-fundamentalist activists from Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia, and several of us at WIDER met with her and other conference participants who were to form the Collectif Maghreb-Égalité 95 in 1992. The group became a network that inspired many of the gender reforms described in this book. I remember being totally in awe of this tall brilliant woman in a long red dress, so poised and confident, with such depth of knowledge and insight. Later I read her books, including *Beyond the Veil* (1975) and *Islam and Democracy* (1992), and felt drawn to Morocco and the sense that there was something special about the country and its people. I wanted to know more. I embarked on a twenty-five-year detour and went on to research and write about women's movements in East and West Africa, but I always knew I would somehow find my way to the Maghreb (Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia), having focused my graduate studies on the Middle East and North Africa. My instincts were right. Little did I know how much my scholarship and life would be affected by this encounter with Mernissi.

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Thank you from the bottom of my heart to all who were part of my fantastic Maghrebien adventure! Until we meet again, ! شكرا جزيلا

Abbreviations

AAMU	Association of Algerian Muslim Ulema
ADFM	Association démocratique des femmes du Maroc (Moroccan Women's Democratic Association)
AFEPEC	Association féministe pour l'épanouissement de la personne et l'exercice de la citoyenneté (Association for the Development of the Person and the Exercise of Citizenship)
AFTURD	Association des femmes tunisiennes pour la recherche sur le développement
APC	Assemblée populaire communale
APN	Assemblée populaire nationale (Algerian People's National Assembly)
ATFD	Association tunisienne des femmes démocrates
AU	African Union
AWI	al-'Adl wal-Ihsane
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CEWLA	Center for Egyptian Women's Legal Assistance
CIDDEF	Centre d'information et de documentation sur les droits de l'enfant et de la femme
FARD	Femmes algériennes revendiquant leurs droits
FGM	female genital mutilation
FIDH	Fédération internationale des droits de l'homme
FIS	The Front for Islamic Salvation
FLDDF	Fédération de la ligue démocratique des droits des femmes
FLN	Front de libération nationale (National Liberation Front)
IAF	Islamic Action Front
ICRAM	Initiative concertée pour le renforcement des acquis des marocaines (Government Plan for Equality)
LTDH	Ligue tunisienne de défense des droits de l'homme
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MPDC	Mouvement populaire démocratique et constitutionnel

MSP	Movement of Society for Peace
MTI	Islamic Tendency Movement
NCW	National Council of Women
ODA	Overseas Development Assistance
PANIFD	Plan d'action national pour l'intégration de la femme au développement (Action Plan for the Integration of Women in Development)
PJD	Party of Justice and Development
PPS	Parti du progrès et du socialisme (Party of Progress and Socialism)
PSC	Personal Status Code
SCAF	Supreme Council of the Armed Forces
SIGI	Social Institutions and Gender Index
UAF	Union de l'action féminine
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNFT	Union nationale de femmes tunisiennes (National Women's Union of Tunisia)
USFP	Union socialiste des forces populaires (Socialist Union of Popular Forces)
WLUML	Women Living under Muslim Laws