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New Algerian law punishes violence against women

Star Tribune (02.02.2016) - <http://strib.mn/1LaJGSm> - A new Algerian law came into effect this week punishing violence against women and sexual harassment, in a victory for feminist groups that had fought for years for the legislation.

The law, effective from Monday, had been blocked by the Senate for eight months amid resistance from conservative Muslims who view it as interference in family affairs.

It's the fruit of a long struggle by feminist organizations in the North African country that have been fighting against a spike in attacks against women in recent years.

The article has the potential to be extremely robust in handing down heavy penalties for acts of domestic violence and also for harassment of women in the streets. It is aimed specifically at "the spouse."

If a domestic attack prevents the woman from working for over 15 days, the perpetrator faces two to five years in prison.

If a woman is mutilated, or the violence causes loss of eyesight or a limb, or any sort of permanent damage, the law says the attackers could face from 10 to 20 years' incarceration.

Officials say the 7,500 cases of violence against women reported in 2015 represent only 20 percent of the real number, since women prefer to stay silent rather than bring shame to their family.

Increase of women in Parliament is step towards gender equity

UN News Centre (16.05.2012) - The head of the United Nations entity mandated to promote gender equality today welcomed the increase in women's representation in Algeria's new parliament as a result of elections held last week, and stressed that it represented a step towards democratic reform and gender equality.

"UN Women commends Algeria for reaching and surpassing the target of 30 per cent women in parliament as recommended in the Beijing Platform for Action and general recommendations of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women," said the Executive Director of the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), Michele Bachelet.

The Beijing Platform for Action was the outcome of the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women, and represents a wide-ranging blueprint for promoting and protecting the rights of women and girls. It identified the need to take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making.

According to media reports, Algeria's main ruling party, the National Liberation Front, won almost half of the seats in the 462-seat legislative body, with the National Democratic Rally reportedly finishing second.

According to UN Women, the percentage of members of the parliament in Algeria who are women now stands at 31 per cent, up from 8 per cent during the previous period from 2007 through 2011.

The North African country now joins 30 other nations that reached or surpassed this target by the end of last year, with seven countries surpassing 40 per cent and two – Rwanda and Andorra – exceeding 50 per cent of women in parliament.

“This increase followed the adoption in January of a quota law stipulating 30 per cent women’s participation, and is a welcome step in Algeria’s progress towards democratic reform and gender equality,” Ms. Bachelet said.

Ms. Bachelet reiterated UN Women’s support to countries to increase women’s political participation as recommended in a General Assembly resolution adopted by Member States in December.
