

When the technologies fail, it is love that forces Middle Eastern men to stay with their childless wives. And in those rare cases where Middle Eastern men—whom Inhorn anoints as “moral pioneers” (p. 280)—reject social and religious mores against adoption and donor insemination, they do so out of love. It appears even that the anthropological encounter is imbued with *hubb*, as Inhorn explains that, despite all this proof for the existence of loving Middle Eastern men, she “can only adequately express Middle Eastern men’s love of children by referring to [her] own family’s experiences” in the field, where men constantly doted over her two young children (pp. 295–96).

“Love,” of course, is a legitimate and important object of social scientific study. The problems with Inhorn’s reliance on it as a master concept to explain everything are that it is not entirely clear what she means by “love,” why she finds its presence in the Middle East so remarkable, and whether it means the same thing for the Middle Eastern men who are ostensibly defined by it. Furthermore, whatever love really means—for the anthropologist and for her subjects—Inhorn’s need to find it everywhere prevents her from asking a host of other questions that *The New Arab Man* might have explored. To what extent, for example, is the medicalization of male infertility—and its *normalization* as a manageable condition—a symptom of the consolidation of biopower in Middle Eastern societies? Are the “tragic” stories, endlessly recounted by Inhorn, of men who expend enormous resources in unsuccessful efforts to *become* fertile really—or only—about their “love” for their wives? And is the emergence of “infertile subjectivities” a straightforward story of “infertile men . . . speaking truth to . . . injustice” (p. 82) and *resisting* power/patriarchy, or is it a more complex story of the production and management of gendered bodies, subjectivities, and populations under changing regimes of power?

These are just a few of many important questions raised by *The New Arab Man*, a compassionate and well-documented study of a timely issue that has received too little attention, but the answers it provides may, in the end, tell us more about the anthropologist than her new Arab man.

ELENA FIDDIAN-QASMIYEH, *The Ideal Refugees: Gender, Islam, and the Sahrawi Politics of Survival*, Gender, Culture, and Politics in the Middle East (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2013). Pp. 329. \$39.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY KATJA ŽVAN ELLIOTT, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane, Ifrane, Morocco; e-mail: k.zvan-elliott@ai.ma
doi:[10.1017/S0020743814001640](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020743814001640)

© Cambridge University Press 2015. This is an Open Access article, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution licence (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>), which permits unrestricted re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited. 0020-7438/15

Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh’s *The Ideal Refugees* explores prevalent myths in the existing literature on Sahrawi refugees. Academics, nongovernmental organization (NGO) workers, as well as the Sahrawi political elite (Polisario and the representatives of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic [SADR]) tend to juxtapose the notion of a democratic, secular, and egalitarian Sahrawi society with that of an authoritarian, Shari‘a-based, and highly patriarchal Arab/Muslim Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Through extensive, multisited ethnography, the author debunks these myths in favor of a much more complex reality.

At the center of Fiddian-Qasmiyeh’s analysis is Polisario/SADR’s politics of survival and specifically its “repression” of gender, as the author aptly calls the silencing of the so-called nonideal Sahrawi refugees, whether girls, boys, women, or men. Polisario/SADR mobilizes such misrepresentations of reality—and indeed the script alternates depending on the identity and

values of the audience—to generate continuous support from international civil society groups and governments “in solidarity with” the Sahrawi. For example, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh carefully dissects the official gender spectacle staged for the Spanish NGOs, which are known as “Friends of the Sahrawi People.” The “ideal” Sahrawi refugee woman (SRW) is literally put on display at conferences, guided tours, and parades organized for international spectators visiting the camps for shorter periods of time. This particular script portrays SRW as active, free, and secular, living in the democratic, safe, and empowering context of the camps. Such a “positive” depiction is strategically positioned to contrast with the purported passive and oppressed Arab/Muslim woman living under the yoke of the Shari‘a. That the Polisario/SADR chose such a discourse is understandable given the international, and particularly Western (in this case Spanish), preoccupation with the situation of women in the Arab/Muslim MENA. With the rise of Islamophobia in the West since the 1990s, and particularly since 9/11, Polisario/SADR has pursued a gender policy of distancing itself from the “Shari‘a-infected” MENA while emphasizing commonalities with the Western way of life and its purported emphasis on democracy, secularism, and respect for women.

The trouble with this particular representation of Sahrawi gender, as the author successfully demonstrates, is that it homogenizes women through the creation of an “ideal” category while marginalizing those who do not fit into it, such as “nonideal” Sahrawi young and adult women. Furthermore, differences in age, class, gender, and wealth are, as is normally the case with international aid programs, completely ignored. The Sahrawi governing elites, but also Western solidarity networks, brush under the carpet issues such as poverty, gender-based violence within camps, and disenfranchisement of the younger male population.

Fiddian-Qasmiyeh’s research reveals a number of salient and all too often ignored issues. First, it shows that the relationship between Polisario/SADR and Western solidarity networks is not a relationship of equals, despite Polisario/SADR’s attempts to portray Sahrawi women as sisters of Spanish women and to posit Muslim women in the region as the “official Other” of both Sahrawi and Spanish women. Second, it demonstrates how the politics of perpetuating the Orientalized “Other” is part and parcel of the aid industry and essential for the formation of Global North-South solidarity. Third, the author discusses the hypocrisy of the Western desire to “help” the less fortunate only if certain conditions are met. Examples of this include Western NGOs’ self-censorship or silence in regard to various types of violence that the Sahrawi regime and/or Sahrawi men have perpetrated against women, as well as the Spanish furor triggered by the “abduction” of three Sahrawi girls by their own parents. Both sides turn a blind eye to problematic issues such as gender-based violence. In fact, Polisario/SADR is even willing to betray the needs of its own citizens to secure continuing international political support and fuel the struggle against Morocco. The book, therefore, is a critique of Polisario/SADR’s appropriation of gender for its own political ends; however, it can also be read as a critique of continuing Western attempts to manage and impose a specific (ill-informed) gender agenda and hierarchy of needs on MENA (Sahrawi) Muslims.

The Ideal Refugees exemplifies why gender continues to matter in international politics and in the image making of authoritarian regimes dependent upon financial and political aid. The book also exposes how regimes in the Global South mobilize gender for political ends, thereby manipulating women’s lived experiences, while simultaneously exposing and exploiting the naiveté of Western audiences. The author makes it clear throughout the book that aid programs set up in Sahrawi camps oftentimes fail to address real issues (e.g., gender-based violence); in fact, some of these programs may even be detrimental to the local population (e.g., by treating male youth disenfranchisement as delinquency). Many of the author’s conclusions have broad relevance, as other regimes in the region use similar methods toward a similar end: maintaining a positive image of themselves abroad as democratizing states to the detriment of their own populations, who, for the most part, are kept poor, marginalized, and disenfranchised.

Despite occasional repetition of facts and arguments that sometimes get in the way of the flow of an otherwise good narrative, this well-researched book, which draws on a wide range of primary material, is a must-read for academic, activist, and lay audiences concerned with women's rights in the Global South.

MARIA HOLT and HAIFAA JAWAD, *Women, Islam, and Resistance in the Arab World* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 2013). Pp. 211. \$55.00 cloth.

REVIEWED BY ELHUM HAGHIGHAT, Department of Political Science, Lehman College, City University of New York, New York; e-mail: elhum.haghighat@lehman.cuny.edu
doi:[10.1017/S0020743814001652](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020743814001652)

Maria Holt and Haifaa Jawad's *Women, Islam, and Resistance in the Arab World* explores the complexity of the lives of Muslim women living in conflict-ridden regions as well as occupied and refugee zones. The authors focus on Shi'i women in Lebanon, Iraqi women in exile in Jordan and Syria, and Palestinian women in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The authors give voice to women who are enduring trying circumstances and are difficult to reach and interview.

Holt and Jawad examine women's strategies for resisting violence from outside and patriarchal structures within their own communities; how women do their best to make sense of their fortunes and misfortunes; and the coping mechanisms they develop to deal with brutality and trauma on a daily basis. "The women in our case studies . . . tend to regard themselves, in some respects, as marginalized; however, rather than identifying marginality as 'a site of deprivation,' they . . . re-conceptualize it as 'the site of radical possibility, a space of resistance'" (p. 6). For many of these women, Islam is a source of "psychological empowerment" and "spiritual sustenance" (pp. 118, 180).

The authors' challenge the notion of Muslim women as perennial victims and provide them a platform from which to express their resistance. Through a discussion of the concepts of power and empowerment, the authors conclude that while men might be the formal holders of power in the contexts under study, women exercise agency and "negotiate violence and patriarchal structures in order to make sense of an otherwise fearful situation" (p. viii). In the midst of the havoc surrounding them, they find direct and indirect strategies to "counter the pressures of conflict" (p. viii), and "their stories raise questions about the meaning of resistance in conflict situations" (p. 2). The women voice a strong sense of pride in their "contribution to the struggle," with many indicating they have no choice but to be involved (p. 9). According to the authors, the women understand resistance to include not only fighting the "enemy" in the battleground, but also other forms of active involvement. Holt and Jawad point to the trauma of displacement experienced by many of these women and their families when they have to make difficult decisions about whether to support resistance groups in order to protect their families. As the authors describe, "[d]isplacement, especially outside the country, traumatized Iraqi women; for them, home was no longer safe because occupation forces were pursuing them; hence they supported the resistance to regain their lost spaces . . . women were kidnapped, raped, and killed by militias, including government militias . . . Women were also killed randomly during house raids or at checkpoints" (pp. 130–31). Many of these women were professionals in the medical and humanitarian sectors, such as doctors. Trafficking of women in the sex trade, kidnapping, rape, and disappearance were familiar themes in the interviews.

Many of the Iraqi women in exile opposed the 2003 U.S. invasion and "opted for resistance." As Holt and Jawad state, "most of the women were sympathetic toward, or part of, the resistance movement against the U.S. occupation and subsequent governments, which were established on the