

THE COLLECTIVE FOR RESEARCH AND TRAINING ON  
DEVELOPMENT - ACTION

[WWW.CRTO.ORG](http://WWW.CRTO.ORG)

THE GENDER, CITIZENSHIP AND NATIONALITY  
PROGRAMME

**Arab Women's Right to Nationality  
Campaign**

*“...I met him at university... I used to consider him as a “foreigner”... this is why I was surprised when he proposed... I was convinced, at the time, that my husband would become Moroccan by his mere marriage with me. Had I been aware of the difficulty, or even the impossibility to acquire citizenship since we applied for it 14 years ago without obtaining it, I would have given the matter a second thought..., despite the profound harmony that existed between us...*

*The consequences were numerous ... my husband could not find a permanent job in his field of specialization in line with the high degree he obtained; rather, he had to content himself with episodic jobs. The biggest shock came with the birth of my daughter. I had thought she would be registered in the civil status register upon birth, but this was not the case... I was overcome by a feeling of distress: she was my daughter, but at the same time, she wasn't really... straight after the birth, my husband paid the relevant fee for obtaining the Moroccan nationality and we are still waiting... we have been waiting for 14 years.*

*I was recently told that my daughter who will turn 15 must obtain a residence permit and that I should prove, being her mother that she is my dependent... could you imagine that? My daughter who has only been in Morocco, who was born and who lives there, needs a residence permit!”*

Across the Machreq/ Maghreb region, **women are being denied their right to nationality**. In almost every country in the region (Egypt and Algeria excepted), Arab women (unlike men) who marry a foreigner can not extend their nationality to the husband or children. The inability to extend her nationality not only denies a woman her full rights as a national, but also denies her children their basic rights as human beings. This exclusion may exclude children from healthcare and education, prohibit them from marriage or travel; they might even be denied residence and get deported.

Women's right to nationality is upheld in international law, through the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and conventions including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1978) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), both adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. Many Arab countries, however, have not respected these international guarantees in their own domestic legislation. Because CEDAW and the Convention on the Rights of the Child have minimal enforcement mechanisms, Arab states must implement domestic laws to meaningfully protect the rights enumerated therein

Grassroots organizations in the Arab World have exerted immense efforts to pressure Arab state signatories of CEDAW to fulfill their promise of granting women the right to full citizenship. Consequently, some interesting changes regarding family and nationality laws have taken place. While the law amendments put forward in some countries signify important shifts in policy, they will continue to remain only symbolic steps until they materialize into real and functioning laws. Other countries have to follow!

**This Campaign is seeking to raise awareness and lobby for the true implementation of equal nationality rights in the region.**