

Reforms and Social Changes | Women | Struggle for women's rights

"Women's suffrage is the correlate of the economic emancipation of women from the household and of their economic independence from family owing to their professional work." Resolution of the International Socialist Women's Conference, Germany, 1907

In 19th-century Europe, a long struggle was fought, primarily by women, to make men and women equal before the law. "Feminist" demands primarily concerned education, the right to vote and the right to ownership, so that women could live independently of a male guardian and have the same rights as men. Winning the right to access certain professions and to vote was difficult and took time. For example, women in France could become doctors from 1875, and vote from 1944. At the dawn of the 20th century, women in the Arab and Ottoman world, previously largely excluded from public life, began to attend modern schools and to participate in politics. Some women began to make a name for themselves, especially in Egypt, notably Zaynab Fawaz (1846–1914), Malek Hifni Nassif (1886–1918) and Afifa Karam (1883–1924). The struggle for women's rights took on a new dimension with the fight against European colonialism in the Arab and Ottoman world, for example in Lebanon and throughout North Africa.



Working Number: TR2 164

Name: The Artist Girl and Her Studio

Holding Museum: Sabanc# University, Sak#p Sabanc# Museum

Date: 19th century

Materials: Oil on canvas

Curator Justification: It was difficult for women to access certain artistic professions both in Europe and in the Arab and Ottoman world. In the late 19th century, women slowly began to come into their own in the world of painters, sculptors and writers.



Working Number: FR 082

Name: School of North African girls directed by Mme Luce. Studying.

Holding Museum: National Library of France

Date: 1856–1857

Materials: -

Curator Justification: The French government hesitated over ruling on education for young Muslim girls, which was a delicate subject. Consequently, the first related initiative was a private one, and the teaching provided was essentially professional in nature.



Working Number: FR 091

Name: Mlle. Lauta, first [French] woman to get a degree in philosophy

Holding Museum: National Library of France

Date: 1914

Materials: -

Curator Justification: In Europe, giving young girls the rights to the same education as boys was a long fight, which lasted throughout the 19th century.



Working Number: FR 092

Name: General meeting on women's suffrage

Holding Museum: National Library of France

Date: 1908

Materials: -

Curator In Europe, women's access to political life ignited impassioned

Justification: debates throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries. The right to vote was one of the major battles in the fight for male/female equality.



Working Number: FR 175

Name: The Syrian independence movement; a crowd protesting in the streets of Damascus

Holding Museum: National Library of France

Date: 1920

Materials: -

Curator

Justification: In the Arab and Ottoman world, the struggle for independence enabled women to participate in political rallies from which they had previously been excluded.



Working Number: IT1 042

Name: A petition to collect signatures in support of an appeal to the Italian parliament to grant women the right to vote, drawn up by Anna Maria Mozzoni

Holding Museum:

Date: State Library of Modern and Contemporary History

Materials: 1877

Curator -

Justification: In Europe, women's access to political life ignited impassioned debates throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries. The right to vote was one of the major battles in the fight for male/female equality.



Working Number: IT1 029

Name: Celebrations for the 50 years of the Female Workers Friendly Society of Pavia (Italy), and inauguration of a new standard

Holding Museum: State Archives of Cremona

Date: 1914

Materials: -

Curator

Justification: In Europe in the 19th and early 20th centuries, women gradually began to emerge from the domestic environment to obtain the same social rights as men.



Working Number: IT1 030

Name: Flag of the Female Workers Friendly Society (Società di mutuo soccorso femminile) of Cremona, bearing the motto “All for one and one for all”

Holding Museum: State Archives of Cremona

Date: Unknown (probably end of the 19th–beginning of the 20th century)

Materials: Embroidered silk

Curator
Justification: In Europe in the 19th and early 20th centuries, women gradually began to emerge from the domestic environment to obtain the same social rights as men.



Working Number: UK 144

Name: Photograph

Holding Museum: Victoria and Albert Museum

Date: 1898

Materials: Platinum print

Curator
Justification: Women were also demanding access to the same leisure and sports activities as men in 19th century Europe. Women quickly began using bicycles, first as a leisure activity for the wealthier classes, then as a means of transport for more modest people.



Working Number: UK 145

Name: Votes for Women

Holding Museum: Victoria and Albert Museum

Date: 1910 (designed and printed)

Materials: Paper, lithographic ink; colour lithograph on paper, planographic printing

Curator
Justification: In Europe, women's access to political life ignited impassioned debates throughout the 19th century and in the early 20th century. The right to vote was one of the major battles in the fight for male/female equality.



Working Number: UK 146

Name: The Suffragette 1d Weekly

Holding Museum: Victoria and Albert Museum

Date: c.1914 (issued)

Materials: Colour lithograph print

Curator
Justification: In Europe, women's access to political life ignited impassioned debates throughout the 19th century and in the early 20th century. The right to vote was one of the major battles in the fight for male/female equality.



Working Number: ET1 017

Name: Women in the Revolution of 1919

Holding Museum: Bibliotheca Alexandrina

Date: March 1919

Materials: -

Curator Justification: In the Arab and Ottoman world, the struggle for independence enabled women to participate in political rallies from which they had previously been excluded.



Working Number: ET1 018

Name: An Egyptian woman giving a public speech during the events of the 1919 Revolution

Holding Museum: Bibliotheca Alexandrina

Date: March 1919

Materials: -

Curator Justification: In the Arab and Ottoman world, the struggle for independence enabled women to participate in political rallies from which they had previously been excluded.



Working Number: LB 095

Name: Portrait of Labiba Geahchan

Holding Museum: 'Zahrat al-Ihsan School ('The Flower of Beneficence' School)

Date: Late 19th century – early 20th century

Materials: Black and white photograph

Curator Justification: In the 19th century the debate about women's role in society and their education developed in both Europe and the Arab and Ottoman world. This portrait of a founder of Zahrat al-Ihsan School, Beirut, reminds us of the increasingly public role prominent women throughout the Middle East played from the 19th century onwards. The charitable school provided education for disadvantaged girls.



Working Number: LB 096

Name: Portait of Emilie Sursuq

Holding Museum: Zahrat al-Ihsan School ('The Flower of Beneficence' School)

Date: Late 19th century – early 20th century

Materials: Black and white photograph

Curator Justification: In the 19th century the debate about women's role in society and their education developed in both Europe and the Arab and Ottoman world. This portrait of a founder of Zahral al-Ihsan School, Beirut, reminds us of the increasingly public role prominent women throughout the Middle East played from the 19th century onwards. The charitable school provided education for disadvantaged girls.



Working Number: TN 067

Name: L'École de la Rue du Pacha (classroom exit)

Holding Museum: Institut Supérieur d'Histoire Contemporaine de la Tunisie

Date: 1907

Materials: Paper

Curator Justification: Access to modern education was essential for women in the Arab and Ottoman world at the beginning of the 20th century. In countries such as Tunisia the struggle for independence enabled women to participate in political rallies from which they had previously been excluded.



Working Number: IT1 009

Name: The Italian woman poet and peace activist of Armenian descent Vittoria Aganoor Pompilj (1855–1910), and a signed copy of her poem 'Peace'

Holding Museum: State Archives of Perugia

Date: 3 September 1906

Materials: -

Curator

Justification: In the Arab and Ottoman world in the early 20th century, women began participating in political rallies from which they had previously been excluded.
