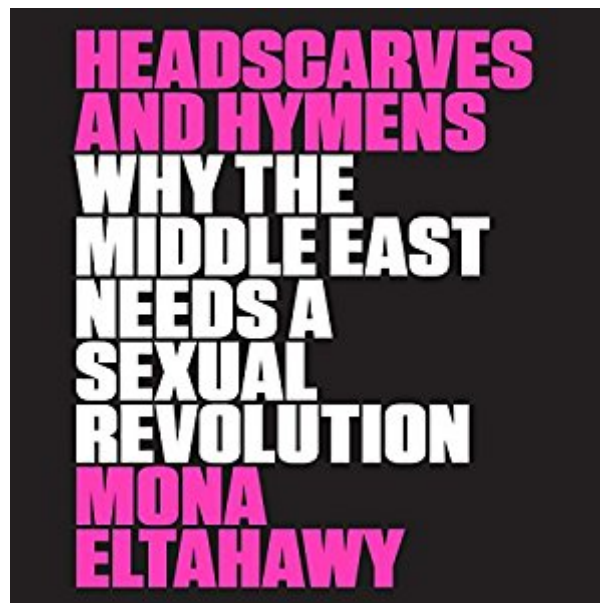




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# Headscarves And Hymens: Why The Middle East Needs A Sexual Revolution



## Synopsis

When the Egyptian journalist Mona Eltahawy published an article in Foreign Policy in 2012 titled "Why Do They Hate Us?," it provoked a firestorm of controversy. The response it generated, with more than 4000 posts on the website, broke all records for the magazine, prompted dozens of follow-up interviews on radio and television, and made it clear that misogyny in the Arab world is an explosive issue, one that engages and often enrages the public. In *Headscarves and Hymens*, Eltahawy takes her argument further. Drawing on her years as a campaigner and commentator on women's issues in the Middle East, she explains that since the Arab Spring began, women in the Arab world have had two revolutions to undertake: one fought with men against oppressive regimes, and another fought against an entire political and economic system that treats women as second-class citizens in countries from Yemen and Saudi Arabia to Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya. Eltahawy has traveled across the Middle East and North Africa, meeting with women and listening to their stories. Her audiobook is a plea for outrage and action on their behalf, confronting the "toxic mix of culture and religion that few seem willing or able to disentangle lest they blaspheme or offend." A manifesto motivated by hope and fury in equal measure, *Headscarves and Hymens* is as illuminating as it is incendiary.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

You can't read this book without being outraged about the treatment of women in the Middle East. Mona has lived in Egypt and Saudi Arabia, and she has worked as a journalist in most of the

countries in the region. She draws from a wealth of personal and professional experience. By reporting on the rampant institutionalized misogyny there, she is breaking many taboos against shaming the governments and the religious authorities, against exposing die-hard traditions that demean and cripple young girls and women, and against revealing the behind-the-doors double standards that exist for men and women in the home. The Arab Spring brought government upheavals in many parts of the region, but recognizing the equality of women and their rights has lagged far behind the political changes. Mona names the culprits and the victims, and pulls no punches. She writes, "We are in denial if we do not honestly reckon with the role of religion in maintaining the patriarch's rule at home, including how the men of religion help him to uphold his rule." Mona wants women to speak out about their situations. "As risky as it is to speak publicly about street sexual harassment and assault, though, speaking out against sex abuse, speaking out against the crimes that go on in the home, is riskier. Home is where the hurt is, and home is where we must start to heal." Hopefully, Mona's outspoken frankness will encourage other women to follow her lead. She concludes, "Women -- our rage, our tenacity, our daring and audacity -- will free our countries." This book is hard to put down, as it dashes from one outrage to another. Along the way, readers are left with countless imponderables -- why is a male baby's urine clean, but not that of a female baby? Why can't women drive in Saudi Arabia which produces so much oil? Where is the justice in suspending the prison sentence for a rapist if he marries his victim? Why is the Aisha's child marriage to Muhammad the model instead of that of Khadija who was 15 years older than Muhammad?

Inspiring as well as shocking. As a US citizen currently living in Egypt this answered many questions and raised even more. I feel I have even more reason to encourage the young women I work with to question, challenge, be bold, and create change.

This is a clear, unapologetic analysis of all the laws and attitudes that silence, hold back, or pose a lethal threat to women in the Middle East. The author is an Egyptian Muslim who has endured some of the practices, and she makes a very strong case for why they should be changed, for the good of the women, the region, and the world. Another good read on this, *The Land of Invisible Women*, the story of a Muslim Pakistani who goes to Saudi Arabia to practice medicine, is one woman's tale of life under an order that represses women. Eltahawy's book is a sweeping indictment of the entire region, with interesting (and harrowing) accounts of her experiences in Egypt and Saudi Arabia, where she endured repression growing up and as an adult.

THIS IS ONE OF THE BEST BOOKS ON SEXISM IN THE MIDDLE EAST THAT YOU COULD BUY. Please get this if you want an accurate description of a an unfortunate (all women) woman's life in the Middle East.

Great

A close look at how the belief systems of the Middle East affect its culture and the lives of women born into that culture. While I did not think that the recommendations of the author to bring about significant changes in that culture were optimal, something needs to happen to free half a billion people living in the 7th Century Dark Ages of the Middle East. The book makes plain the deficits of the entire culture and how it is destroying the lives of its people. It's easy to blame Islam alone, but the author shows clearly that this is not "just" an Islamic problem but a much wider one that brings in the subcultures of the Christians and the Jews that also live there... or at least used to.

This book gave an otherwise hidden insight to the horrors that the women of Islam endure for their men and their religion. This is a must read by Everyone it's not a women's only reading book this book will open your eyes to the day to day hatred these misogynous men have for women. The writer has given at times horrific stories that some women have endured and writes in a way you feel their pain. As a male reading this I had to put it down some times as it really effected me thinking how these poor women live and what can be done to help them break this treatment.

Read this book. Mona is a vocal, fierce and confident author on the subject matter: women in the Middle East. I read the book in one day and couldn't put it down. As an Arab American woman who lived in the Middle East for part of my life, I can attest to Mona's authentic narrative. This should be an essential read for anyone interested in foreign politics. It's also an important read for those of us raised in the repressive culture. It's time that we confront our issues: culture of mysogny intertwined with culture and religion which is holding back women from being free. As Mona so finely states it's time for a double revolution which starts at home! Talk about sex and desire. Liberate yourselves from the chain of patriarchy and live life! Not to mention the issue of FGM, child marriages, marital rape, rape victims being forced to marry their rapist, sexual harassment and the issue of controlling women's bodies.

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