

WLRN transcript, WORLD NEWS for Edition 56: Women & Animals

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Emiliann LORENZEN: In the US, migrant women who alleged abuse by a Georgia gynecologist have been deported. Dr. Mahendra Amin has been accused of performing procedures on women that were medically unnecessary and without their consent. According to The Associated Press, Amin allegedly “performed operations that caused or worsened [the women’s] pain without explaining what he was doing or giving them an alternative ... but there hasn’t been evidence to support the initial claim that he performed a large number of hysterectomies.” U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement has deported six women, and at least seven women have been told that they could soon be deported. According to a law professor who is working with several of the women, “ICE is destroying the evidence needed for this investigation.” ICE denies this allegation.

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In Mexico, police opened fire on femicide protestors on November 9th. After the dismembered body of 20-year-old Bianca “Alexis” Lorenzana was found, protestors took to the streets and tried to force their way into Cancun city hall. Alexis’ mother had originally asked for a peaceful protest, but partway through the protest she said, “Burn it all because Alexis would have done that for you.” Some protestors broke windows and sprayed graffiti. Police opened fire as they approached city hall, causing the crowd to disperse. Approximately 10 women are murdered in Mexico each day, which has given rise to an outspoken feminist movement.

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In Norway, hate speech has been outlawed against transgender people on November 24th, which expands its penal code that has protected gay men and lesbians since 1981. According to the penal code, “People found guilty of hate speech face a fine or up to a year in jail for private remarks, and a maximum of three years in jail for public comments.” People charged with violent crimes can be given harsher sentences if a judge decides their actions were motivated by someone’s sexual orientation or gender identity. The law’s opponents argue that it could criminalize free speech if anyone

criticizes LGBTQ+ politics. But an assistant professor of law from the University of Oslo said that “the bar for prosecution is high, requiring direct incitement against people or language that dehumanizes them.”

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In Idaho, Lindsay Hecox, a male student athlete at Boise State University, along with the ACLU, are trying to overturn Idaho’s Fairness in Women’s Sport Act. The Act was passed on March 20, 2020, and the lawsuit was filed in April of 2020. The state of Idaho, represented by Governor Brad Little, is joined by two female athletes from Idaho State, Madison Kenyon and Mary Kate Marshall, as Appellants in defense of the law. The Women’s Liberation Front and the Women’s Human Rights Campaign USA have each filed an Amicus Brief with the US Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit in the case of Hecox v. Little. The Women’s Human Rights Campaign USA has also released an amended version of the Equality Act called the “Equality for All Act.” For more information about what these women’s rights groups are doing go to www.womensliberationfront.org and www.womensdeclaration.com

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In Saudi Arabia, Loujain al-Hathloul and 12 other activists were arrested in May 2018 for “conspiring with foreign organizations hostile to the kingdom.” Loujain gained prominence in the campaign for Saudi women to win the right to drive. Her family says that she has been tortured these past two years. On November 25th, her case was transferred to the Specialized Criminal Court, which was set up in 2008 to try terrorism cases, but “has been used to prosecute peaceful dissidents and it is notorious for violations of fair trial standards.” Loujain’s sister urges people to keep her story in the public eye because “the only thing that works now with Loujain’s case and the other activists’ case is outside pressure.”

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The Supreme Court of Kyrgyzstan has ruled that a police crackdown on a feminist group in Bishkek on International Women’s Day in March was illegal. Kyrgyzstan is located west of China, and Bishkek is its capital. On March 8th, feminist activists planned to hold a March of Women’s Solidarity, but they were attacked by unknown individuals. The police violently dispersed the crowd and arrested 11 activists, who were fined for “holding an unsanctioned public event.” The women’s lawyers plan to file an appeal with the Supreme Court against the fines that were imposed.

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In Sudan, authorities announced that they will end child marriage and enforce the country's ban on female genital mutilation. Police officers must inform local communities that FGM is illegal following new laws passed in July that make it punishable by up to three years in jail. According to the UN, 87% of Sudanese women have undergone FGM, and girls are typically cut between the ages of 5 and 14. The council of ministers also announced that they will adopt all articles of the African charter on the rights and welfare of the child, which began in 1999.

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Sweden has seen a 65% decrease in the number of referrals to gender clinics since the Fall of 2019. The scientific community in Sweden has pushed back against the government since it proposed a law in 2018 to reduce the minimum age for sex reassignment surgery from 18 to 15. Upon the Swedish Nation Council on Medical Ethics' recommendation, the Swedish government has tasked three government agencies to "strengthen the knowledge base for the assessment and treatment of gender dysphoria among children and adolescents." Experts have also called for more balanced media coverage of this issue, including a 3-part documentary called "Trans Train," which includes interviews with detransitioners and the revelation that the medical transition of minors is not evidence-based.

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In the UK, a political support fund for women has launched called the Activate Collective. Actress Emma Thompson donated £50,000 to kickstart the first round. She said that "women, particularly women of color, disabled women and women on low income, need financial backing to overcome multiple barriers to entering politics." Sophie Walker co-founded the fund, and she was the former leader of the Women's Equality party. She said, "One of the things I discovered as a total novice politician, was the extent to which the amount of money you have makes a difference to the extent to which your voice can be heard. I feel very strongly that there is a massive dearth of women's voices in politics, and that we particularly need to support women from minoritized communities."

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Nigerian women are standing up to sex trafficking in Italy. Osas Egnon opened a shelter for victims of trafficking in Sicily called Women of Benin City. Most of the women come from Nigeria's Edo state, and its capital is Benin City. The traffickers take the women to countries like Italy and force them into prostitution. The women must

pay the traffickers up to \$35,000 until they are free, leaving many of them in debt bondage. The traffickers prey on the women's spiritual beliefs, forcing them to swear to juju oaths, where they promise never to report their abusers to the police, to obey their "mamas" or madams, and to fully pay their debts. The women believe that if they break their oath, then their family will be harmed. This manipulation is one of the biggest obstacles to freeing these women. The shelter allows the women to stay for a year, giving them access to education, training, and time to recover from their trauma. I recommend the film "Joy" on Netflix, which illustrates this issue.

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Nigerian novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie won the Women's Prize for Fiction in 2007 for her novel *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Her book has recently been voted the best book to have won the Women's Prize for Fiction in its 25-year history. She is a feminist, and in an interview with the Guardian, she denounced cancel culture and censorship. She also spoke favorably of JK Rowling's "perfectly reasonable" essay on sex and gender. She said, "JK Rowling is a woman who is progressive, who clearly stands for and believes in diversity."

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Nobel and Pulitzer Prize-winning author Toni Morrison will be one of six women inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame in Seneca Falls, New York. The virtual induction ceremony is scheduled for December 10th at 7:30pm and it is free and open to the public. Mary Church Terrell, Aretha Franklin, Barbara Hillary, Barbara Rose Johns Powell, and Henrietta Lacks will also be inducted during the ceremony. Register for the event at <https://www.eventinterface.com/NWHFVirtualInduction2020/>

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November 25th was the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, and it starts the 16 Days of Activism, which runs until Human Rights Day on December 10th. The World Health Organization states that "violence against women – particularly intimate partner violence and sexual violence – is a major public health problem and a violation of women's human rights ... Violence against women and girls is one of the most widespread, persistent, and devastating human rights violations in our world today. Whether at home, on the streets or during the war, violence against women and girls is a human rights violation of pandemic proportions that takes place in private and public spaces." The UN put together ten ways you can end violence against women, even during a pandemic, including funding women's organizations,

starting conversations, and knowing the data and demanding more of it. The full list can be found at www.unwomen.org.

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On December 1st, the High Court in England ruled that “puberty blockers and cross-sex hormones are experimental treatments which cannot be given to children in most cases without application to the court.” The judgement concluded that children 15 and younger would not be competent enough to give consent and to understand the long-term risks and consequences of such treatment. Clinicians would also be allowed to involve the court when there is any doubt that a 16 or 17 year old would be positively served in the long-term by puberty blockers and hormones. Thank you Kiera Bell for being brave enough to bring this case to court, and congratulations on the positive verdict.

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That concludes WLRN’s world news segment for Thursday, December 3rd, 2020. I’m Emiliann Lorenzen. Share your news stories and tips with us by emailing wlrnewscontact@gmail.com and letting us know what’s going on!