**Nasser Alandas**

**Presentation Notes (April 24th):**

Saudi Arabia is a religious country that structures its laws and policies on Islam. So, what are the views of Islam on abortion and why is abortion illegal (to an extent) in Saudi Arabia? In general, Muslim authorities view abortion from a moral perspective claiming that once the formation of the soul occurs within the fetus, abortion is forbidden. Saudi Arabia states that abortion can occur any time prior to the full development of the fetus and that is estimated to about 120 days (4 months) since the day of conception. This is due to the belief that once a fetus reached the full development phase (120 days), it is considered a grown living organism and abortion would then be considered murder. Even prior to the 120 days period, seeking abortion must be justified with a valid reason, usually considered a serious health problem with the carrying mother. The entire decision of whether an abortion can take place lays solely on the medical staff in the gynecology department. In addition, despite the legal framework, women still report being judged by the medical personnel and society for obtaining abortion.

Moreover, and from a cultural point of view, abortion is generally looked down upon within Islamic societies except when the fetus puts the mother at risk, physically or mentally. However, the main issue lays with younger females seeking abortion. Many females that seek abortion are those who engage in premarital sex and want a discreet way to terminate their pregnancy. However, Islam prohibits individuals who engage in sexual acts prior to marriage causing these young girls to seek help from the streets. This can cause more issues as the majority of the pills sold on the street are untrustworthy and could cause more serious health issues. Unsafe abortion has been proven to cause grave injuries, including infections, hemorrhaging, and infertility. This hurts women, their families and whole communities, but it does very little to reduce abortion rates. The number of abortions and maternal mortality due to unsafe abortion in Saudi Arabia for the period 1995-2000 were, 699,405 abortions and 927 deaths related to unsafe abortion.

Q1- Since Saudi Arabia is highly strict on abortion and its laws, what could be done to help younger females seek abortion without the need of buying illegal pills?

Q2- Do you think a society like Saudi Arabia can benefit from a private institution like Planned Parenthood in which its women can seek sexual health consulting and/or treatment while keeping their identity secret from the public?

**Links:**

https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1016/S0968-8080%2806%2929279-6

<https://stepfeed.com/man-arrested-for-selling-abortion-pills-in-saudi-arabia-triggering-debate-4258>

**Additional Link:** https://www.reproductiverights.org/sites/crr.civicactions.net/files/documents/pub\_fac\_abortionlaws2009\_WEB.pdf