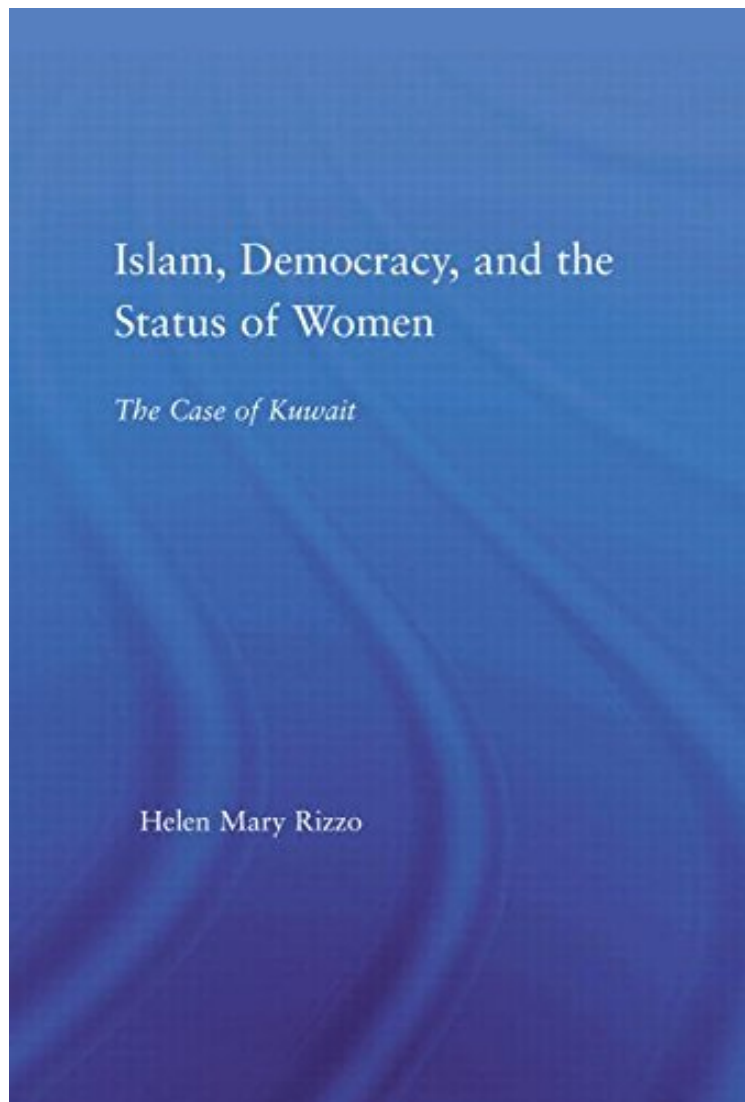


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Islam, Democracy and the Status of Women: The Case of Kuwait (Middle East Studies: History, Politics Law)

Helen M. Rizzo

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many advances made by Kuwaiti women since the end of the first Gulf War. Seen over the entire time frame, and compared to neighbouring countries, the changes have been massive. There is now a far greater democratisation of Kuwait. Reflected in part by rising educational rates for women, declining birth rates and more women being in the work force. She was able to interview several women's organisations. Some of these acted as informal citizens' groups that helped enable participation in the political process. And to challenge the dominant patriarchal structure. The book also summarises a good statistical analysis of the interviews and other data. The trends are very promising for the Middle East. With all the currently unremitting bad news from the region, it's nice to read this book.

This book examines the relationship between religion, democracy, and women's organizations in Kuwait. More specifically, it looks at whether these organizations are working toward achieving formal political rights for women. Helen Rizzo examines how interpretations of religion affected the goals and activities of the organizations in terms of women's empowerment and if the organizations were pushing the democratization process. Much of the recent literature on the relationship between Islam, democracy, and women's rights has been negative and pessimistic. Instead, this book examines the complicated relationship between these three things, arguing that some women in Kuwait are using Islam in their discourse to justify women's right to equality and public participation, thus countering the arguments that see Islam, democracy, and women's rights as inherently and culturally incompatible.

About the Author Helen Mary Rizzo has been Assistant Professor of Sociology at the American University in Cairo since September 2001. Her recent research interests are women's political rights in Kuwait and social change in Kuwait, with a focus on citizens' changing attitudes toward democracy, the West and the Middle East.