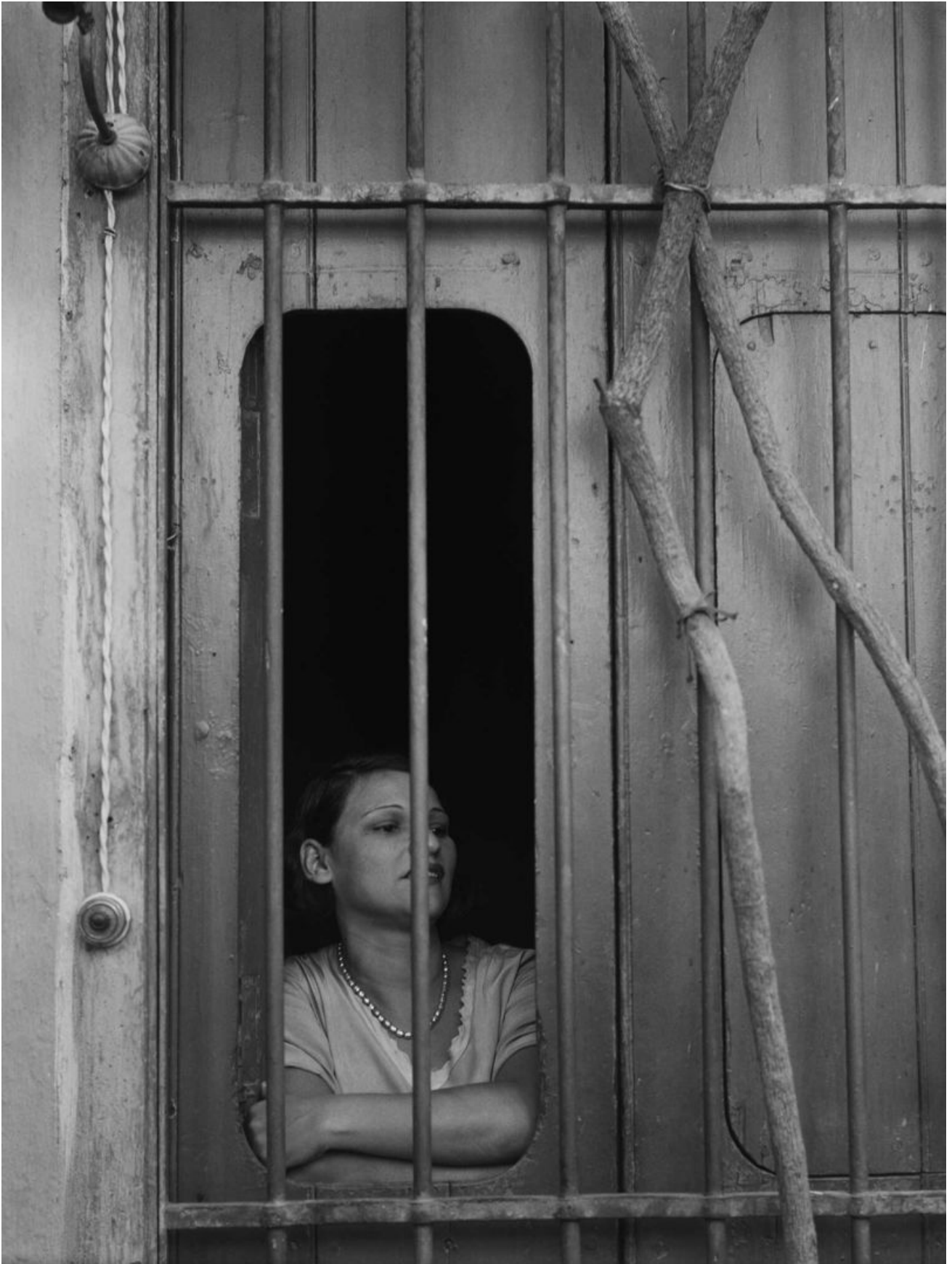


Back in the _____

by [Nikos Akritas](#) (May 2023)



Woman Behind Barred Window, Walker Evans, 1933

It's been a while since I contributed to *NER* but the last six

months have been extremely busy ones. I am, once again, in (a very wealthy part of) the Middle East and, needless to say, NER is blocked on the internet. Other things that are proscribed in this particular part of the world are books on myths and legends, anything with fairies in it and other such dangerous literature—woefully missing from the school's library.

Although there has been a thaw in relations with Israel (yes, you can now say the 'I' word), resulting in Israelis and those with an Israeli stamp in their passport being able to visit, strangely, the printed word is still banned. So books cannot contain this minacious word (great care is taken to redact it from anything in print) and atlases and globes must be defaced in order to avert a stain on the eyes. Any organization failing in steadfast vigilance faces stiff penalties and fines.

Russians are here in even greater numbers than ever before, filling the schools with children eager to learn (not the norm out here) and driving up property prices, as is the case in many countries around the world. The West may be facing economic difficulties but here there is a building boom and money is being washed as never before. Potential customers are offered cash bonuses to open bank accounts, the sun always shines and possibly the world's prettiest artificial beaches are being churned out, building a tourist industry on top of the oil and money laundering wealth already here.

The above two paragraphs contain at least five controversial topics, of which mentioning or attempting to discuss at least one could result in legal charges and, potentially, jail time—as would accessing the *NER* website, since it would involve getting around the government-imposed blocks.

Given I've gone this far, I may as well throw in the taboo subject of sex. Another relaxation has been the ban on unmarried couples living together, although this only extends

to expats. Western women clearly feel, and often express, a freedom from fear out here that just doesn't exist in the West. I am often told they feel completely free of any danger, even walking home alone at two o'clock in the morning. And I admit there is a refreshing perception of the absence of danger or crime here. But ...

Because there is always a but. Is it as safe as it seems? Is it as safe as is claimed? In a country where public displays of affection are banned, with constant reminders on signs in malls and on beaches, and local women are obliged to cover up (although even this may be slipping); where Christmas trees and decorations appear in many of the shops and schools during Yuletide season but where some locals object indignantly to the word Christmas and encourage their children to do so vociferously at the schools they attend, surely it cannot be as rosy as first appears.

I have no hard statistics, they just do not exist in such countries because certain crimes just do not occur, but I suspect and have anecdotal evidence for physical violence against women being a real problem that the naïve just do not contemplate. Why? Because it is never reported in the news, is never a point for discussion or a cause taken up by any group within the country. This, in turn, is because it is not reported in the first place. To do so would only criminalize the victim. I am referring to rape. Yes, in this part of the world with, supposedly, virtually zero crime, a booming economy and the gradual construction of paradise, rape is a problem not to be mentioned.

To claim being the victim of rape would, in most cases, invite the question of why a female was alone with a man. Clearly, to put herself in such a position suggests wanton morals. To admit to being raped would also be, in many cases, to admit to sex before marriage (that it was forced is not the point). Again, the focus is on the woman's 'crime.' So, accuse your attacker and stand the real chance of being traduced, jail

time and then probably being ejected from the country for your troubles—once you have endured all of the latter of course. If a princess can be silenced and go missing, what chance has a foreign woman of questionable morals (merely for being from a Western country) got?

I am of course aware that claiming a non-Western society is corrupt for any reason other than poverty is racist of me; that to criticize the blood-stained and criminally-tainted money being washed is to deny legitimacy to a booming economy; and to dare suggest cultural misogyny and its contribution to, as well as masking of, a potentially high number of rapes is culturally arrogant of me (for all cultures are equal, surely) and speculatively irresponsible. So, better to ignore all of this. It's not wrong, it's just different.

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Nikos Akritas has worked as a teacher in countries across the Middle East and Central Asia as well as in Britain. His book *Bloody Liberals: How Politically Correct Ideas About Race, Education and Religion are Killing Liberalism* is available on Amazon.

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