



MENA WOMEN NEWS BRIEF



JUNE 7TH – JUNE 22ND, 2018

AFGHANISTAN

June 13: Afghan Women's ID Cards Traded Ahead of Elections

"Residents of the southeastern Afghan province of Paktia are warning that a flourishing trade in women's ID cards has sprung up ahead of the October elections, fueling fears that corrupt candidates could exploit the stolen votes. Conservative traditions mean that most women in Paktia do not have ID cards, also known as tazkera, which are a prerequisite for registering to vote. After registration at one of the many centers that have been set up ahead of the elections, a small sticker is fixed to the card to show the holder is eligible to vote." ([Institute for War & Peace Reporting - Asia](#))

ALGERIA

June 13: Algerian Women Call on Authorities to Stop Protecting Sex Abusers

"Algerian women have demanded authorities stop protecting sex abusers, after a fitness blogger's harassment complaint to police fell on deaf ears. The latest online call for action against sexual harassers to come out of the Middle East and North Africa region has surfaced on Twitter, with women using an Arabic hashtag, translating to 'We will no longer protect sexual abusers after today', to voice their frustration." ([Al Bawaba](#))

EGYPT

June 11: How Much Freedom do Egypt's Female Preachers Really Have?

"The Egyptian Ministry of Religious Endowments set a new action plan May 13 for the holy month of Ramadan, which included, for the first time, allowing female preachers to provide religious lessons in major mosques. The female preachers will also be allowed to organize tours in some villages and visit a number of government departments to discuss the values of Islam with female employees. The Ministry of Endowments issued a decree Feb. 13, 2017, appointing 144 women as religious preachers in mosques. Another group of women were later appointed, bringing the total number of female preachers to about 300." ([Al Monitor](#))

June 14: For the First Time, 8 Female Ministers in Egypt's Cabinet

"For the first time in Egyptian history, the Cabinet has a total of eight female ministers. Mostafa Madbouly, the newly appointed prime minister, has appointed two new female ministers, in addition to the existing six in the outgoing Cabinet. The newly appointed female ministers are Hala Zayed for the Health Ministry succeeding Ahmed Emad el-Din, and Yasmine Fouad as minister of environment, succeeding Khaled Fahmy. They two newly appointed ministers, in addition to six female ministers who occupied seats in the outgoing Cabinet, represent nearly 25 percent of the Cabinet." ([Egypt Today](#))

June 17: Al-Sisi Pardons all Imprisoned Indebted Women

"President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi announced on Friday, which marked the first day of Eid Al-Fitr that he has directed the interior minister to release all imprisoned indebted women after paying their debts through the Tahya Misr Fund, assuring the importance of spending the feast time with their families. The president added on his official Facebook account that Egypt will always strive to uphold human dignity and to implement the necessary measures to preserve social protection and reduce phenomena negatively affecting social stability" ([Daily News Egypt](#))



June 19: Sexual Harassment Cases Dropped this Eid: National Council for Women

“The National Council for Women (NCW) reported a noticeable decline in cases of sexual harassment during the three days of Eid al-Fitr holiday this year, as they only received 17 complaints according to a press statement released by NCW on the MENA news agency. The head of the NCW’s control room Nagla al-Adly attributed the drop in sexual assault cases to the wide and heavy presence of police, especially the female police personnel, along with the deployment of quick intervention forces in public areas and street gatherings.” [\(Egypt Independent\)](#)

IRAN

June 13: Iran Re-arrests Prominent Human Rights Lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh on June 13

“Iranian security forces arrested prominent human rights lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh on Wednesday, her husband said in a Facebook post. ‘A few hours ago Nasrin was arrested at home and sent to the court at Evin [prison],’ Sotoudeh’s husband Reza Khandan wrote. ‘I once told investigators in the investigation room: ‘of all the things that a government must do for its country, you only know one, arresting people.’ Khandan did not say what charges Sotoudeh may face.” [\(Reuters\)](#)

June 20: Row over Rape of Dozens in Iranian City [Baluchestan] as Woman MP accuses ‘influential’ people

“Tens of Iranian women demonstrated in front of the offices of the governor of Iranshahr city in Baluchestan province southeast of Iran on Tuesday, denouncing reports of an incident involving rape of dozens of women. According to sources, as many as 41 women could have been raped in the city. Though details surrounding this report are still vague, some sources suggested that those responsible for these rapes are backed by ‘influential parties’ even though an Iranian female MP said that Iran’s general prosecutor has announced several arrests related to the case.” [\(Al Arabiya\)](#)

June 20: For the First Time since 1980, Iranian Women allowed to Watch World Cup in Same Stadium as Men

“Female soccer fans in Iran were taken through a roller coaster of emotions on Wednesday – and all before their team stepped onto the field to play against Spain. For 38 years, women have been banned from watching men’s sporting events in Iran. But on Tuesday, local news agencies in Iran reported that women would be allowed to watch a live broadcast of Iran’s World Cup match against Spain, taking place in Russia the next day, at Tehran’s Azadi Stadium...” [\(The Washington Post\)](#)

IRAQ

June 14: In Mosul, Women Desperate for News of the Disappeared

“Every Friday since Mosul was prised from Daesh group’s clutches last July, women gather in the Iraq city’s Al Minassa Square, desperate to learn the fate of husbands and sons. Dressed in black, with children in tow and brandishing photos, some fear their men have fallen victim to cruel double jeopardy. They had been imprisoned by or forced to work for Daesh, only for Iraqi forces to suspect them of collaborating voluntarily with the militants and lock them up. This is what some mothers and wives fear faced with official silence.” [\(The Daily Star\)](#)

June 16: In Iraq, Women Whose Husbands Joined ISIS Face Severe Punishment

“The Iraqi government has detained around 560 women whose husbands were members of ISIS. Largely coming from Turkey, Russia and Eastern Europe, the women – many of whom have children – are being tried as terrorists and face possible life in prison or the death penalty.” [\(PBS\)](#)

ISRAEL/PALESTINE

June 14: Gaza Women Fight for Fairer, Faster Divorces

“In May, the Women’s Health Center launched a campaign to address the slow proceedings of the courts, and finalization can drag out for 10 years. The campaign is part of an overall program to combat increasing gender-based violence against girls and displaced women in Gaza, in partnership with the United Nations Population Fund. ‘The problem of separated women is one of the thorniest and sensitive issues at the Islamic courts, and some women are left in this grey area for two to five years. This is a waste of their time and a means to pressure them to give up their rights,’ Manal Makat, the campaign’s coordinator, told Al-Monitor.” ([Al Monitor](#))

June 17: Israel Extends Detention of Female Palestinian Lawmaker

“Israel on Sunday said it has extended the detention of a female Palestinian lawmaker held without charge over the past year for an additional four months. Khalida Jarrar had been scheduled to be released on June 30. But the army said a military court had determined that the 55-year-old woman continued to pose a security threat. Her husband denounced the decision as ‘political.’ Jarrar is being held under Israel’s policy of ‘administrative detention,’ which allows it to hold people for months or even years at a time without pressing charges.” ([ABC News](#))

JORDAN

June 15: Women Rights Movement Hails Unprecedented Number of Women in Government

“The Jordanian National Commission for Women (JNCW) on Thursday commended the government for the inclusion of women in the new ministerial team headed by Prime Minister-designate Omar Razzaz, pointing out that ‘the new government has set a new record in the number of female ministers in the history of Jordan’. Razzaz’s team, sworn in on Thursday, includes seven women in the 29-strong Cabinet. ‘The men’s monopoly has been broken,’ the commission celebrated in a statement issued yesterday, noting that the participation of women in the government has exceeded 24 per cent for the first time in the Kingdom”. ([Jordan Times](#))

June 18: Recycling Rubbish into Revenue, the Scheme Bringing Hope to Women in Jordan

“Sameera Al Salam folds a discarded piece of newspaper into a long strip then loops it round her finger to form a tight circle, the first stage of making the upcycled handbags, trays and bowls the Syrian refugee hopes will help her earn a living. Al Salam, 55, was a hairdresser with a passion for “art and making things” before she fled her war-torn homeland for Irbid in northern Jordan with her family in 2012.” ([Reuters](#))

LEBANON

June 8: Hopes High for More Women in Next Cabinet

“Prime Minister-designate Saad Hariri has repeatedly expressed his wish to expand the participation of women in the upcoming Cabinet, and has brought up the matter with members of parliamentary blocs with whom he met during last month’s consultations on forming a new government. MP Paula Yacoubian, an advocate for women’s rights and the sole civil society candidate to gain a seat in parliament, said during consultations that Hariri expressed a desire for a government with 25 percent female representation.” ([The Daily Star](#))

June 8: Scores Naturalized in Lebanon Where Women Still Lack Rights

“A Lebanese presidential decree to naturalize hundreds of foreigners, including Iraqi Vice President Iyad Allawi and other regional elites, has ignited a row over who deserves citizenship in this tiny Mediterranean country, where one in four people is a refugee and women married to foreigners cannot pass on their citizenship to their children. News of the decree, which was signed in secret in mid-May but leaked to the public two weeks later, has fueled the perception that citizenship, like so many other liberties in this country, is a privilege reserved for the wealthy. Meanwhile, Lebanese women married to

foreigners don't have the right to pass on their nationality to their children. And more than a million Syrian and Palestinian refugees toil away in vital but back-breaking labor, without any legal protections against abuse, wage theft, arbitrary arrest and deportation." ([ABC News](#))

MOROCCO

June 7: Morocco's Educated Women Challenge Society's Norms about Their Sexuality and Marriage

"Here are more than eight million Moroccan women who lead a single life, Ouest-France reported earlier this week, explaining that the education level is the primary reason for the marked increase in the number of unmarried women. "I totally invest myself in my job, and I'm financially independent. I feel free now and I'd rather stay alone. Why would I need a man?" asked Aicha, a divorcee in her forties who reports to have found fulfillment and purpose in her professional achievements." ([Morocco World News](#))

PAKISTAN

June 10: Stab Victim Khadija Siddiqi: 'My Case is a Fight for All Pakistani Women'

"A student who was stabbed 23 times in daylight in one of Pakistan's busiest streets has accused the country's justice system of misogyny after her attacker, having been found guilty of attempted murder, was sensationally acquitted last week. Khadija Siddiqi was ambushed as she collected her six-year-old sister from school two years ago. She was repeatedly slashed across the throat and abdomen by fellow student Shah Hussain in an attack she said was motivated by revenge after she had spurned his advances. She escaped with her life only after her driver managed to drag Hussain off her." ([The Guardian](#))

SAUDI ARABIA

June 14: Saudi Women in Russia to Support Team, Reinforce New Image:

"In jeans, headscarves and veils, dozens of Saudi women draped in their country's green flag and sporting matching face paint streamed into Moscow's Luzhniki Stadium on Thursday to support their national team against Russia in the World Cup's opening match. More importantly, perhaps, they were projecting the image of a new Saudi Arabia in which they are slowly emerging from decades of harsh inequality as part of ambitious reforms undertaken by the country's young crown prince." ([AP News](#))

June 15: Saudi Women at World Cup Talk about New Found Soccer Freedoms at Home

"Saudi Arabia's soccer team may have been thrashed in its first World Cup match, but Saudi women attending the tournament said they still had lots to celebrate after a ban on them attending matches at home was lifted earlier this year. Yakir Zaki was one of many fans that had no illusions about her team's performance on Thursday when they suffered a 5-0 drubbing at the hands of host side Russia. 'They didn't play well. They were lost in the game. They didn't know what to do,' Zaki told Reuters near Red Square. But for her and other female Saudi football fans, the sport has come to symbolize far more than just winning." ([Reuters](#))

June 18: Uber Launches Portal for Saudi Women

"Uber has rolled out new registration portal for Saudi women. The portal, accessed through a separate 'Masaruky' landing page on its website, will serve as a one-stop shop for Saudi women interested in driving Uber once the driving ban is lifted in the kingdom. Uber's 'Masaruky' ('your path' in Arabic) initiative aims to increase women's participation in the workforce through access to affordable transportation, in addition to increasing women's access to flexible economic opportunities through Uber's technology, the company said in a statement." ([Arab News](#))

June 20: Saudi Arabia Arrests More Women’s Rights Activists: HRW

“Saudi Arabia detained two more women’s rights advocates earlier this month and imposed a travel ban on several others in an ongoing crackdown in the conservative Muslim kingdom, Human Rights Watch (HRW) said on Wednesday. The arrests, just weeks before the much-hyped lifting of a decades-old ban on women driving, have revived criticism of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman’s approach to ambitious reforms as part of his push to diversify the world’s top oil exporter’s economy. The powerful young heir apparent is trying to open up the kingdom by easing strict social rules, but reforms hailed as proof of a new progressive trend have been accompanied by a crackdown on dissent, souring that image.” [\(Reuters\)](#)

June 22: First Saudi female road traffic accident inspectors graduate ahead of lifting of driving ban

As Saudi women get set to drive starting Sunday for the first time since 1957, the first class of female traffic investigators graduated to take on the management and handling of road accidents. The General Directorate of Traffic and Najm Insurance Company said that the first batch of 40 female traffic accident investigators graduated following an intensive training programme. [\(The National\)](#)

SYRIA

June 19: Why Syrian Women Could be the Key to Successful Peace Talks

“Since the start of the Syrian war in 2011, Syrian women have been involved in all aspects of the conflict: from fighting, demonstrating and documenting war crimes to providing humanitarian relief and local politics. Syrian women, who make up more than 50 percent of the Syrian population, are also taking on a more active role in local negotiations to end the conflict that has killed more than half a million people and displaced millions more, including tens of thousands of females.” [\(Peacebuilding Deeply\)](#)

June 20: Syria War: Refugee Women Heading Households in Jordan

“While there is often a focus on the country’s refugee camps, many Syrians live in urban areas. Around a third of refugee households are headed by women, who are increasingly looking for work to support their families and cope with rising prices, growing debts and crippling poverty. With growing unemployment and a struggling economy, on top of barriers to women working that can hinder their efforts, they and their Jordanian counterparts face an uphill struggle to get by.” [\(BBC\)](#)

TUNISIA

June 17: Tunisia Organizations Push for Reforms Promoting Freedoms

“Tunisia’s civil coalition for individual and civil liberties on Saturday demanded authorities take serious measures for adopting major reforms in the area of gender equality and individual freedoms recently proposed by the Individual Freedoms and Equality Committee (COLIBE). On June 8, the committee proposed the abolition of the criminalization of homosexuality, the equality of women and men in inheritance and many other measures. Tunisian MPs announced this week drafting of a new bill to further promote gender equality in the country’s legal system.” [\(Ashark Al Awsat\)](#)

OPINION/ANALYSIS

June 13: Iran’s Most Prominent Human Rights Lawyer is in Jail. Again.

“On Wednesday, Iran’s leading human rights lawyer, Nasrin Sotoudeh, was arrested again. It was a reminder that President Hassan Rouhani is failing to deliver on many of the key reforms he promised when he was elected in 2013. Writing on his Facebook page, Sotoudeh’s husband, Reza Khandan, announced ‘a few hours ago Nasrin was arrested at home and sent to the court at Evin [Prison].’” [\(The Washington Post\)](#)



June 15: MENA Women in Sports are leveling the Playing Field

“Women in the Middle East and North Africa are hurdling over stereotypes in sports, and in their path, clearing the way so that young women can pick up the baton from where they left off. Inspire Middle East met up with four women from different countries in the region to see up close and personal how they are redefining what it means to be an Arab sportswoman.” ([Euronews](#))

June 20: Saud Women can Drive Starting Sunday. Why are Feminists there Still Labeled Traitors?

“On Sunday, Saudi Arabia will lift its decades-long ban on women driving. But just weeks ago, its public prosecutor announced that 17 individuals had been detained for undermining the kingdom’s security, a move that targeted prominent women’s rights advocates. State-linked media outlets have since carried out an aggressive campaign portraying the arrested activists as ‘traitors’ and ‘foreign embassy agents’ working to destabilize the kingdom.” ([The Washington Post](#))

June 20: Chief Executives Have a Duty to Make Gender Equality a Priority

“The Western societies are familiar with one particular image of women in the Middle East, that of a veiled woman who is illiterate and submissive. Any other image is difficult for Western minds to comprehend or accept until they visit the region and personally experience the ambitious female talent of women in the region who shatter glass ceilings every day. My work in this area formally began in 2008 when the World Economic Forum invited me to become a member of its Gender Parity Group.” ([Arab News](#))

Additional MENA Women’s News Briefs are available [here](#).

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~~~ By May Baaklini ~~~