



# MENA WOMEN NEWS BRIEF



APRIL 26<sup>TH</sup> – MAY 10<sup>TH</sup>, 2018

## AFGHANISTAN

### **May 1: Female Afghan Coders Design Games to Fight Opium and Inequality**

“One of the games designed by the all-female team has caught the eye of developers and gamers as it illustrates the scourge of opium cultivation and the challenges the Afghan security forces face as they try to stamp it out [...]. The 2D game “Fight Against Opium” is an animated interpretation of the missions that Afghan soldiers undertake to destroy opium fields, fight drug lords and help farmers switch to growing saffron”. ([Reuters](#))

### **May 10: Vulnerable Afghan Women Left at Risk by Government Proposals to Take Control of Women’s Shelters:**

“The activists’ fear of requiring shelters to seek funding from the government could put them under the control of conservative politicians who have publicly called for the closure of such shelters [...]. Conservative MPs have frequently criticised women's shelters as a threat to Afghan culture and some have claimed that they are a front for the sex trade [...]. ‘The majority of these politicians are afraid of the shelters because they themselves are involved in violence against women,’ said Fawzia Koofi, a prominent female MP and women's rights activists who once survived a Taliban assassination attempt.” ([The Telegraph](#))

## EGYPT

### **May 1: Egypt’s Disappearing Coptic Women and Girls**

“At least seven Coptic Christian women and girls disappeared in Egypt last month, in what is becoming a recurring phenomenon. All of the disappearances have been reported to the police. However, their families allege that they have often been met with inaction or indifference. Some have even claimed that members of the police force were involved in the disappearances.” ([World Watch Monitor](#))

## IRAN

### **May 1: Disguised Women sneak into Iranian Football Match**

Several Iranian women have caught people's attention by revealing the lengths they go to, to attend a football match. Donning beards and wigs, they disguised themselves as men so they could watch their team, Persepolis, play rivals Sepidrood at the Azadi stadium in Tehran last Friday. Images of the women at the stadium have been widely shared on both Persian and English social media. ([BBC](#))

### **May 7: Iran Jails 16 Women for Joining Daesh in Syria**

“Sixteen women who went to Syria to join Daesh have been jailed in Iran, a Tehran prosecutor said on Sunday. The women were also ordered to pay back any money they had received from the Sunni Muslim jihadist group [...].” ([Middle East Monitor](#))

## IRAQ

### **April 26: Iraqi Kurdish Activists Stamping Out Female Genital Mutilation**

“Today the work of non-government organizations, with efforts by the KRG, is gradually changing attitudes to the practice [...]. The KRG outlawed FGM in 2011, and launched an awareness campaign warning against the practice and the consequences of breaking the law. The efforts have borne fruit [...]. Only 10.7 per cent of girls surveyed in 2016 were subjected to the procedure, a drastic change from one generation to the next.” ([The National](#))



### **May 1: Women in Iraq's Refugee Camps Taught to Sew**

"Vulnerable women living in northern Iraq's refugee camps are being taught how to sew. Paula Horsfall, from Berkshire, has collected old sewing machines and transported them to Iraq, where skills the women learn keep them off the dangerous streets of the refugee camp and allow them to make money for their families and children." ([BBC](#))

### **May 3: Tough Road for Iraq's Female candidates in May 12 Elections**

"Nearly 2,600 female candidates are vying for a quarter – a quota allotted to women under the constitution [...]. For the first time, harassment and smear campaigns against women running for a seat in parliament moved online." ([New York Times](#))

### **May 5: Assyrians Gather in Iraq to Honor Mary, Empower Women**

"Qaraqosh, formerly known as the Christian capital of Iraqi Kurdistan, had a population of nearly 50,000 before ISIS attacked in 2014, prompting the majority of inhabitants to flee in a single night [...]. Some 20,000 people have returned since the city was liberated in 2016 [...]. 'The situation here in Qaraqosh is still difficult because the houses are still burned and destroyed [...].' 'We want to send a message that ISIS burned the stone but they cannot burn the soul and they cannot burn Christianity and our faith,' he added." ([AINA](#))

## **LEBANON**

### **May 8: Haddad Calls for Recount at Beirut Protests**

Hours ahead of the release of official election Results Monday, hundreds of demonstrators descended on the Interior Ministry in Beirut to voice their opposition to the electoral loss of an independent candidate in unclear circumstances. Not just expressing their support for an independent candidate Joumana Salloum Haddad, protestors criticized their Interior Minister Nouhad Machnouk, who heads the ministry in charge of implementing and overseeing the elections and who was successful in his own race for a seat in parliament. ([The Daily Star](#))

### **May 9: Lebanon Elects Six Women to Parliament**

"Lebanon's new Parliament will include six female lawmakers across the country, up from just four in the 2009-era Parliament, with several fresh faces. The landmark May 6 elections saw a record 86 women stand for Parliament, with every conventional party, except for Hezbollah, putting forward female candidates." ([The Daily Star](#))

## **MOROCCO**

### **April 26: Morocco Struggles to Curb Rise in Number of Girls Married Underage**

"Sixteen percent of teenage girls who marry in Morocco do so under the legal age of 18 compared to no more than 3 percent in Algeria and Tunisia who have the same minimum age for women, according to activists. Morocco had hoped to curb child marriages by raising the legal age to 18 from 16 in 2004, yet numbers since then have surged nearly 50 percent to 27,205 in 2016, justice ministry data shows." ([Reuters](#))

## **OMAN**

### **May 3: Omani Women Call Time on Workplace Discrimination**

"Women are calling time on workplace discrimination in Oman and demanding better treatment from men in senior positions. Women make up about a quarter of the total workforce in the Omani private sector, but just less than five per cent of them occupy management positions. This is despite a huge leap in their academic qualifications in the last decade [...]. Women say they are often overlooked for positions, with younger and less experienced men handed promotions before them." ([The National](#))

## PAKISTAN

### **May 5: Hazara Women End Hunger Strike against Targeted Killings after Pakistan Army Chief Agrees to Talks**

"A hunger strike of Hazara women led by Jalila Haidar, a prominent lawyer and human rights activist who comes from the Hazara minority of Pakistan, successfully pressured the country's army chief to speak with community leaders about the continued targeted killings of Hazaras. Hazaras have long been protesting for the right to live without fear of death. Perpetrators are rarely brought to justice, which has led many to believe state forces don't care or are complicit in the violence." ([Global Voices](#))

## SAUDI ARABIA

### **May 1: Lubnya Olayan Broke Saudi Arabi's Glass Ceiling. Now She Wants More Women to Work:**

"When we started hiring women ... you needed the male guardian's approval for the woman to work," she says. Now, she says, it's easier for women to get jobs in Saudi Arabia [...]. She'd like to see women grow to 30 percent of the company's Saudi personnel [...]. Lately, Olayan has gotten a boost in her efforts: The government is also encouraging women to enter the workforce, as part of a reform plan to diversify the economy and create jobs. That even includes allowing women to drive, starting in June, to make it easier to get to work" ([NPR](#))

### **May 5: Saudi Government to Allow Women to Drive Taxis**

"Saudi Arabia announced on Friday (May 4th) that it will allow women to drive taxis [...]. According to official media reports, the Director of the Saudi Traffic Department, Mohammed Al-Bassami, confirmed that all of the requirements needed for women to drive cars have been completed. He noted that the necessary operating licences for five driving schools for women have been issued and they are to open centres in six cities, including Riyadh." ([Middle East Monitor](#))

## TUNISIA

### **May 7: Tunisia election: First female Mayor Tipped for Tunis**

"Tunisia's Ennahda party proclaimed victory in historic municipal elections on Monday after exit polls suggested they had won the most votes in a result that, if confirmed, could also pave the way for the first female mayor of Tunis." ([Middle East Eye](#))

## TURKEY

### **April 26: Turkish Women Demand Safer, Cleaner Spaces in Mosques**

"In October 2017, a group of Muslim women launched a campaign on social media called Women in Mosques with the hashtag #kadinlarcamilerde. The group announced an invitation for weekly gatherings at a mosque in Istanbul to discuss women's access to prayer halls. These gatherings aim to correctly diagnose the problems women face at mosques and discuss possible solutions." ([Al-Monitor](#))

### **May 10: Euro Bank, Turkish Fund Agree to Expand Financing for Women-led Firms**

"Over the past three years, an initiative developed by the EBRD with the European Union and the Turkish government has helped 17,000 women in 79 out of 81 Turkish provinces to grow their businesses through a combination of finance, advisory services and coaching, added the statement". ([Hurriyet Daily News](#))

## YEMEN

### **May 3: Starving Yemen Mothers Skip Meals to Save their Children**

"In huts and displaced camps across Yemen, women often give up their food so their children can eat; they have a meal of bread and tea, then wait hungry until the next day. Around 2.9 million women and children are acutely malnourished; another 400,000 children are fighting for their lives [...]" ([KWIX](#))

## OPINION/ANALYSIS

### **April 29: FGM is a Barbaric Practice which Risks Vulnerable Lives**

“Female genital mutilation, or FGM, is still widely practiced throughout this region and in Africa and Asia. The charity UNICEF estimates 200 million women in 30 countries, including Yemen, Indonesia and the Kurdistan region of Iraq, underwent the procedure in 2016. In the Arab world, Egypt has one of the world’s highest rates of genital mutilation, with an estimated nine in 10 women undergoing an operation, despite the practice being outlawed in 2008.” ([The National](#))

### **April 30: Real Progress in Libya Depends on Women’s Empowerment**

“The openness and freedom that Libyans have been enjoying in the last seven years of transition has allowed many women's advocacy groups to campaign for greater participation and empowerment for women [...]. It is important to remember however, that these strict and extreme religious beliefs are not shared by the overwhelming Libyan population, who tend to be socially conservative and religious, but at the same time open-minded and moderate rejecting all forms of extremist tendencies.” ([The New Arab](#))

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~ ~ ~ By May Baaklini & Reda Baig ~ ~ ~