

# **MENA Women's News Brief**

**April 21, 2015 – May 5, 2015**

## **Egypt**

### **April 26: Egyptians confront cyber sexual harassment**

“Thanks to the widespread use of mobile devices and social media, sexual harassment is no longer confined to a direct physical encounter between the harasser and the victim. Through a phenomenon called ‘cyber sexual harassment,’ the harasser can now reach potential victims in their homes. Egyptian women facing cyber sexual harassment are now organizing against the phenomenon.” ([Al-Monitor](#))

### **April 28: Veil or no veil, Egyptian women are often stigmatised, or worse**

“‘Getting groped or touched by sexual harassers would happen on average once a month,’ recalls Sara, the daughter of an Egyptian mother and a Moroccan father who was born and raised in Kuwait. ‘Verbal harassment, that’s all the time. Not a day would go by without hearing comments whether from people flirting with me, hurling sexual insults at me, criticizing or even cursing me for the way I dress.’” ([Al-Ahram](#))

### **April 30: Sexual harassment survivor in Egypt wins case against popular tabloid**

“An Egyptian woman has won a landmark court case against one of the country’s most popular tabloid newspapers after it published details of sexual harassment she experienced. The Anti-Harassment Movement launched a case against daily al-Yaum al-Sabie after it published the full name, ID number, age and address of the woman, who was a minor when she was assaulted during an anti-harassment march in the capital last year.” ([Middle East Eye](#))

## **Iran**

### **April 24: Shirin Neshat in Washington and Baku**

“No sooner am I through the door of Shirin Neshat’s New York studio than we are talking politics. She is excited about the fragile diplomatic agreement reached in Geneva at the beginning of this month. ‘It may be my naive reading but I think it’s a very positive thing,’ she says. ‘President Rouhani is a smart but cautious person — and the chief negotiator, Mohammad Javad Zarif, has become a hero embraced by the people.’” ([Financial Times](#))

### **April 26: Iran to launch women’s social studies center**

“A center named ‘scientific association for women’s social studies’ is going to be launched, Ashraf Boroujerdi, deputy director of the Humanities and Cultural Studies Research Center for cultural affairs, told Mehr news agency on Saturday, April 25.” ([Tehran Times](#))

### **April 28: Interview: Iranian Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Shirin Ebadi on Nuclear Deal, Islamic State, Women’s Rights (Video and Transcript)**

“In an extended interview, Democracy Now will speak with 2003 Nobel Peace Prize winner Shirin Ebadi, about the threat posed by the self-proclaimed Islamic State, and the significance of the framework deal agreed to by Iran and world powers including the United States and Israel to curb its nuclear program for at least a decade.” ([Democracy Now](#))

### **April 29: Iran Hard-Liners' Newest Obsession: Cohabitation (Op-Ed by Haleh Esfandiari)**

“The commission that oversees the Iranian press has banned the women’s magazine Zanan-e Emrouz (Today’s Women) over an article on unmarried young men and women living together. Cohabitation, or ‘white marriage,’ as it is known in Iran, is a growing practice in the Islamic Republic. In big cities it is not unusual for young unmarried couples to live together.” ([Wall Street Journal](#))

### **Iraq**

#### **May 4: In Iraqi malls, Syrian women work jobs spurned by locals**

“Two years after fleeing from her home in Damascus, 22-year-old Rahaf Abdullah is working at a gleaming mall in Iraq’s Kurdish region, selling sweets to local women who largely refuse to take such jobs. In Iraq’s conservative and relatively well-off Kurdish region the idea of women working is frowned upon. That has created opportunities for some of the tens of thousands of Syrian refugees and displaced Iraqis who have sought refuge here.” ([AP via the Lebanon Daily Star](#))

### **Israel**

#### **May 3: Women likely to be left out of Security Cabinet**

“As coalition negotiations wind down, it appears unlikely that any women will be appointed to senior ministerial positions or be members of the Israel’s Security Cabinet, despite the government’s adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 to involve more women in matters of peace and security.” ([Jerusalem Post](#))

### **Lebanon**

#### **April 22: UN visits Lebanon to address sexual violence against women in conflict**

The UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict Zainab Hawa Bangura held a series of meetings with Lebanese officials Wednesday, April 22 over issues facing women in conflict-ridden areas in the Middle East. After her meeting with Lebanese Foreign Minister Gebran Bassil, Bangura said that she was touring the Middle East in order to form an understanding of the challenges faced by women in areas affected by conflict. Her meeting with the foreign minister involved a ‘frank discussion’ on the conflict in Syria and the problems that affect women in the region, she said.” ([AlBawaba](#))

#### **April 27: Lebanese men sport heels to stomp on abuse**

“Lebanese men strolled through Marina Dbayyeh in red high heels Sunday, April 26 as part of the ‘Walk a Mile in Her Shoes’ campaign, an international march in women’s shoes to raise awareness about violence against women. The event on Sunday, April 26, which marked the first such march in the Middle East, was organized to raise funds for women’s rights organization Kafa (Enough Violence and Exploitation).” ([Lebanon Daily Star](#))

### **Morocco**

#### **May 5: Abortion in Morocco: will the king approve a progressive law?**

“Morocco is now considering legalising abortion, polarising debate between conservatives and liberals, who fear a partial law that will only allow abortions in certain circumstances. At the moment, abortion is only legal in Morocco when the woman’s life, or her physical or mental health are threatened. Rape and incest, fetal impairment, social and economic reasons, or the woman’s personal choice are still not considered valid reasons.” ([The Guardian](#))

### **Palestinian Territories**

### **May 3: Palestinian women sew to survive**

“Um Yasmine Abu Oueily has embroidered hundreds of pieces using the ‘rural embroidery’ method. This method distinguishes Palestinian embroidery, whose patterns and forms usually depict a Canaanite star. The economic situation has been very bad, she said, following the closure of the crossings. No visitors or tourists are coming to buy embroidered pieces anymore, and institutions are no longer able to market their products outside Gaza.” ([Al-Monitor](#))

## **Saudi Arabia**

### **April 23: The Saudi War in Yemen -- and Against Women**

“One Saudi rights activist told the AP that before the military action began, a group of academics and other women were planning to launch a campaign this month challenging Saudi Arabia's male guardianship laws. The push for reform has been suspended indefinitely. Women say they're afraid of being branded traitors in a time of war if they advocate for change during the conflict.” ([Huffington Post](#))

### **April 30: Saudi Minister's Removal Spurs Fears Among Women**

“Saudi King Salman's removal of deputy education minister Norah al-Faiz from her position as part of a broader shuffle on Wednesday, April 29 for reasons neither the royal court nor her ministry explained, has triggered fresh concern among women that the perceived advances they made under the previous monarch, King Abdullah, will stall under his successor.” ([Wall Street Journal](#))

## **Syria**

### **April 22: Active online, foreign women become Islamic State widows**

“At least 15 young Western women who joined Islamic State and married jihadi fighters are now widows after the militant group suffered losses in clashes in Syria and Iraq, according to researchers who closely monitor Islamist radicals online.” ([Reuters](#))

### **May 1: ISIS female recruiter revealed to be Seattle student**

“A prominent female Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) online recruiter has been revealed by a UK television news program as a student who lived in the United States, and had recently been in Seattle. On Twitter, she was known as @\_UmmWaqqas, and is pictured covered completely in black. She is known for her links to women who travel to Syria and Iraq to marry ISIS fighters.” ([Al Arabiya](#))

## **UAE**

### **April 28: Maternity leave in UAE among lowest in world**

“When it comes to supporting working mothers, companies in the UAE are still lagging behind those in other countries. The duration of statutory paid maternity leave for employees in the country's private sector lasts for 45 calendar days or about six weeks, while the other markets grant up to 24 or even more than 40 weeks of vacation, according to Mercer's 2014 Worldwide Benefits and Employment Guidelines.” ([Gulf News](#))

### **April 30: Career Fair UAE: Emirati women 'prefer government jobs'**


“Female UAE nationals prefer fewer working hours in the public sector jobs, whereas their counterparts are more interested in facing challenging roles. This was the general opinion of job seekers at the 3-day Career Fair held at the Dubai World Trade center exclusive for UAE nationals. Speaking to Khaleej Times, Iman, an Emirati woman who works at a private bank, said ‘Public sector jobs offer more relaxed

working hours. If I can get free as early as 2:30 pm, I can be on time to pick up my children from school.” ([Khaleej Times](#))

By **Julia Craig Romano**



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