

MENA Women News Brief

April 26, 2016-May 10, 2016

Algeria

May 5: Algeria, Jordan collaborate to increase women in parliament

“Algerian Minister of National Solidarity, Family and Women’s Affairs, Mounia Meslem highlighted Wednesday, May 4, in Amman (Jordan), Algeria’s efforts in boosting women’s representation within the Parliament, which earned it the title of pioneer on the Arab scene.” ([Al Bawaba](#))

Bahrain

May 9: Bahrain Says It Will Release Prominent Female Activist

“Bahrain's Foreign Ministry said Monday, May 9 that a prominent female activist will be released after spending nearly two months in prison. The ministry said in a statement on its website that Zainab al-Khawaja is being released on humanitarian grounds because of her one year-old son, who was permitted to be with her in prison in a dedicated ward for new moms. It referred to her as a foreign national despite the fact that she has dual Danish-Bahraini citizenship.” ([ABC News](#))

Egypt

April 29: What Do Egyptian Women Aspire to Become? (Op-Ed by Aya Nader)

“In the political and cultural tumult of present-day Egypt, understanding how different groups in society work and respond is crucial. Women in Egypt are the heads of 12.9 percent of Egyptian households, and make a majority of household spending decisions, but are politically under-represented. In order to imagine how women of tomorrow in the country will look, Nielsen conducted research into the present factors that drive their decisions in life.” ([Egyptian Streets](#))

Iran

April 29: It’s not enough to speak up for refugee women. We have to listen to them too

Op-Ed by Saba Vasefi

“Often fleeing from places where women are considered less than men, refugee and asylum seeking women find themselves doubly marginalized in western nations – and often by those claiming to speak up for them.” ([The Guardian](#))

May 1: Iran elections: Rouhani notes record 6 percent women elected

“The president of Iran has congratulated voters on electing a record number of women to parliament since before the 1979 Islamic revolution. It was President Hassan Rouhani's first reaction to the results of Friday’s April 29 run-off election, in which moderates and reformists won a working majority. The 17 women elected make up 6 percent of the new cohort of 290 MPs.” ([BBC](#))

May 2: Female Journalist, Sentenced to Ten Years, Beaten in Iran Prison

“The mother of imprisoned newspaper columnist Afarin Chitsaz will make a judicial complaint to protest the beating of her daughter in prison. Maryam Azadpour, who recently broken her silence on Chitsaz’s case, described her daughter’s ordeal in an interview with the International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran.” ([International Campaign For Human Rights in Iran](#))

Iraq

April 27: Women aim to bring ISIS to justice with their stories of captivity, torture and daring escape (Op-Ed by Elizabeth Schaeffer Brown)

“In late August of 2015, I travelled to Kurdistan with a small group led by the former Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Luis Moreno Ocampo. Determined to help the Yazidis prosecute ISIS for genocide in the International Criminal Court, we gathered in a conference room in Dohuk, a small city 74 kilometers from ISIS-held Mosul, and we prepared to record testimony from women who had been held captive by ISIS and later escaped.” ([New York Times](#))

May 4: Iraq’s all-female combat unit seeks revenge on Islamic State

“When Islamic State swept into the northern Iraqi town of Sinjar in 2014, a few young Yazidi women took up arms against the militants attacking women and girls from their community. ‘They took eight of my neighbors and I saw they were killing the children,’ Yazidi female fighter Asema Dahir, age 21, told Reuters last month at a checkpoint near a front line north of Mosul.” ([Reuters](#))

May 7: Widowed by ISIS: Yazidi Women Find Strength in Motherhood

“In a barren camp in north Iraq a group of Yazidi women from Sinjar discuss the daunting task of being single female heads of household in a patriarchal society. As is the case for countless Iraqi widows, their husbands were violently killed by the Islamic state (ISIS) in 2014 when the militants took control of the Sinjar region, once home to Iraq’s largest Yazidi population. Over 5,000 Yazidi men were estimated to have been killed while thousands of women and children were abducted and sold among residents of ISIS’ so-called caliphate.” ([NBC News](#))

Israel

May 10: Israeli police say two Israeli women stabbed in Jerusalem

“Israeli police say two masked attackers have stabbed two Israeli women in Jerusalem, setting off a manhunt that led to the arrest of the assailants. Police spokesman Micky Rosenfeld says five women were walking along a Jerusalem promenade Tuesday, May 10 when they were attacked from behind.” ([The Daily Star](#))

Jordan

May 3: Women take to the streets of Jordan (Op-Ed: Camila Caraccio and Maria de la Guardia)

“The street has long served as a medium for collective voices to incite change in the Middle East, by hosting demonstrations, revolutions and even funerals. In Jordan, women are redefining the streets as a canvas for expression through art. If not challenging the stereotyped perceptions of women in Arab society.” ([Middle East Monitor](#))

Kuwait

May 3: Kuwait Human Trafficking Victim Speaks Out

“One of the 32 women and girls that were repatriated back to Harare from Kuwait in the Middle East over the weekend says she has received a warm welcome from her family and community and is now exploring ways of making a living.” ([VOA Zimbabwe](#))

May 5: Sheikha Al-Zain: today’s female youth disenfranchised with system

“Today’s female youth are ‘sick and disenfranchised with the system in place,’ Undersecretary of the Ministry of State for Youth Affairs Sheikha Al-Zain Al-Sabah said on Wednesday, May 4.” ([Kuwait News Agency](#))

Libya

May 3: Public-Private Partnerships for Jobs in Libya are Key for Youth and Women, Now More Than Ever

“Establishing a public-private partnership contracting system for entrepreneurship and job placement could provide the incentives needed to stimulate job creation in the private sector. Targeting semi-skilled youth, ex-combatants, and women is viewed to be of the utmost importance.” ([The World Bank](#))

Morocco

May 1: Union Leader Condemns Moroccan Govt. for ‘Reactionary Policy Towards Women’

“Noubir Amaoui, the General Secretary of the CDT labor union, openly condemned the government on Sunday, May 1 morning for ‘discrimination against Moroccan women at all levels.’ During his speech on Sunday, May 1 morning, on the occasion of the International Workers’ Day, in Casablanca, Amaoui criticized the government’s policies towards women ‘despite the efforts and sacrifices they have made alongside men in the development of the national economy.’”([Morocco World News](#))

May 2: Morocco’s Economic Council Calls for Decriminalization of Sex Outside Marriage

“On April 29 the Economic, Social and Environmental Council discussed a new report about the conditions facing Moroccan women, drafting controversial recommendations that are likely to stir up debate in Morocco. The council, presided by Nizar Baraka, former Minister of Economy, called for the decriminalization of sex outside marriage and raised the issue of equality in inheritance.” ([Morocco World News](#))

Palestinian Territories

May 5: Israeli tank shelling in Gaza kills Palestinian woman: Hospital

“A Palestinian woman was killed when Israeli tank shells hit her home east of Khan Yunis in the occupied Gaza Strip on Thursday, the southern city's Nasser hospital said. The hospital identified the woman as Zeina Al-Amour, 54.” ([Ahram Online](#))

Saudi Arabia

April 28: Saudi Arabia is ‘not ready’ for women drivers, says deputy crown prince

“Saudi Arabia is not yet ready to end the world's only ban on women driving cars. Despite moves towards rights for women under King Abdullah before his death, deputy crown prince Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud has said the Saudi community ‘is not convinced about women driving.’ The 30-year-old prince, who has amassed increasing powers since his father King Salman came to the throne, said the topic was not about Islam but about cultural norms.” ([Independent](#))

May 3: Saudi Arabia gives women the right to a copy of their marriage contract

“Saudi brides will now get a copy of their marriage contracts, a privilege that was previously exclusive to men in the ultra-conservative kingdom, the kingdom’s justice ministry has announced. According to a directorate issued by the justice minister, Walid al-Samaani, clerics who register marriage contracts will now have to hand a copy to the bride ‘to ensure her awareness of her rights and the terms of the contract.’” ([The Guardian](#))

May 4: Saudi minister ‘not satisfied’ with female employment rate

“Saudi Arabia's labor minister is dissatisfied with the level of female employment in the conservative kingdom but their not being allowed to drive is not to blame, he said Tuesday, May 3. Female Saudi unemployment rose last year to almost 34 percent while the overall jobless rate for Saudis fell to 11.” ([The Nation](#))

Syria

May 2: How Syrian women are gaining new confidence in Turkish refugee camp (Op-Ed by Brenda Stoter)

“Syrian women who take part in craft workshops in Islahiye refugee camp learn new skills, earn some extra money and above all find a place of support. When Maysa fled from Idlib to Turkey more than four years ago, she thought she would live in the refugee camp in Islahiye close to the Turkish-Syrian border only for a short period. But as the war raged on in Syria, the days turned into years.” ([Al-Monitor](#))

May 8: Syria’s women prisoners face suffering even after release

“Ever since the start of the Syrian revolution in mid-March 2011, the Syrian regime's security forces have spared no effort to arrest peaceful protesters who called for the downfall of the regime. Their waves of arrest were not limited to men; they also included hundreds of women and girls who opposed the Syrian regime. According to a joint report issued by the Syrian Network for Human rights (SNHR) and the Syrian Center for Statistics and Research, 2,850 women, 120 of whom are girls below 18 years of age, continue to be held by the Syrian security forces across the country.” ([Al-Monitor](#))

Turkey

May 2: Turkey trains 89 Afghan female police cadets

“A total of 89 Afghan female police cadets have started Monday, May 2 a two-month-long training program in Turkey. Speaking at the opening ceremony, Turkey’s deputy interior minister, Sebahattin Ozturk, said that a total of 2,627 Afghan policemen and women had followed a training program in Turkey since the two countries signed a cooperation agreement in 2011.” ([Andalou Agency](#))

May 2: Women’s employment in Turkey up 60 percent in 6 years

“The presence of women in the workforce has broken a record in Turkey at 4 million, a 60 percent increase over the past six years. Development Minister Cevdet Yılmaz said there is, “[n]o development without women,” and pointed to the importance of women's employment in the country.” ([Daily Sabah](#))

May 3: Turkey’s progress ‘depends on more women scientists’

“When 16-year-old science student Doruk Dorucu was asked why there were no girls in his classes or school projects, he couldn’t find an answer. But on Tuesday, May 3, Dorucu was among dozens of other students and academics calling for more women to take up the sciences. Speaking to Anadolu Agency during a conference on gender equality at Istanbul’s Bahcesehir University, Dorucu said young women were not taking part in the sciences because of a ‘lack of encouragement to do so.’” ([Andalou Agency](#))

May 4: Famous author exposes Turkey’s official dictionary for labeling menstruating women “dirty”

“The Turkish Language Institute (TDK), the official authority on the Turkish language, is facing accusations of sexism after the discovery that its definition of the word ‘kirli,’ which means ‘dirty’ in Turkish, included the phrase ‘a woman who is menstruating’ as a usage example.” ([New York Times](#))

United Arab Emirates

May 1: UAE women rising in positions of power and influence

“More and more UAE women are finding seats at the table. From government cabinets and multinational boardrooms to mentoring and funding associations and CEOs of their own startups, women in the UAE are influencing cultural and economical advancements for their country.”

[\(Khaleej Times\)](#)

Yemen

May 8: Yemeni women urge warring parties to reach peaceful solution

“A group of leading Yemeni figures held warring Yemeni parties accountable for not reaching a permanent peaceful solution yet; nonetheless, they encouraged them to set-aside their personal interest and have a sense of responsibility to bring back peace to the country.” ([Kuwait News Agency](#))

General

May 10: The changing face of women’s political participation in the Middle East **(Op-Ed by Vickie Langohr, Marc Lynch, and Lauren Baker)**

“The barriers to women’s political participation in the Middle East have long preoccupied scholars and analysts. The Arab uprisings of early 2011 disrupted virtually every dimension of Arab politics and societies, forcing a systematic reevaluation of many long-held political science theories and assumptions. The place of women in politics and the public sphere was no exception.” ([The Washington Post](#))

By Elena Scott-Kakures, Middle East Program

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

Follow the Middle East Program on Twitter @WilsonCenterMEP  and Facebook 

