

MENA Women News Brief

April 27-May 9, 2017

Bahrain

April 30: Proposal allowing Bahraini mothers to give children citizenship rejected

"A committee in the lower chamber of Bahrain's bicameral parliament has rejected a proposal to allow Bahraini women married with foreigners to pass on their citizenship to their children. The proposal submitted in mid-April wanted to amend Paragraph 'a' of Article Four of the 1963 law which specified the father should be a Bahraini national in order to pass on the citizenship and change the wording from father to 'either of the child's parents.'" ([Gulf News](#))

Egypt

May 5: Despite new limitations, Egyptian women are still active

"In March, the Egyptian regime celebrated Mother's Day, honoring a number of 'role models par excellence,' including actresses, academics, athletes, professionals, and mothers of army and police martyrs. However, the celebration conspicuously failed to include any independent feminist figure or vocal women's rights advocates. As a single event, this might seem like a simple oversight. But situated within the current landscape of women's rights in Egypt, the message is clear. The ideal mother and woman is utterly apolitical in her pursuit of success and rights." ([Washington Post](#))

May 6: ISIS defends killing women and children as terror group loses territory and troops

"ISIS has launched an 'extremely defensive' propaganda effort to defend its slaughter of women and children as it struggles to retain territory, troops and attention. The latest edition of the terrorist group's Rumiyah magazine celebrated bombings that killed at least 45 people marking Palm Sunday at Coptic churches in Egypt." ([Independent](#))

May 7: New driving school in Egypt hopes to turn the tide for female drivers

"Twenty million people compete for space on the crowded roads of Cairo, Egypt -- and while getting a driver's license there is easy, many drivers have no formal training. But there soon could be change coming down the road. Eman Rawy tried getting driving lessons from her husband. But that didn't quite work out. That lack of instruction gives women drivers a bad reputation in Egypt. [...] Direxiona, her all-female driving school which was founded last year, promises a more welcoming place to learn." ([CBS News](#))

Iran

April 27: Former member of Iranian women's football team 'banned from sport' after being photographed without veil

"A former member of Iran's women's football team claims she has been banned from the sport after being photographed with her hair uncovered abroad. Shiva Amini shared photos on Instagram showing her playing friendly matches in Switzerland and Italy, competing in shorts and without Iran's compulsory hijab veil." ([Independent](#))

April 28: Meet the Iranian tycoon smashing gender stereotypes

"Fatemeh Daneshvar, now counts seven major businesses to her name, having spent years pursuing a successful career in the male-dominated mining industry. She serves on Tehran's city council and the Iranian chamber of commerce, and has authored dozens of reports on the social problems plaguing

Iran, from addiction to child labour. She donates one-fourth of her income to her own charity, Mehrafarin, which supports women and children whose fathers have abandoned them." ([Al Jazeera](#))

Iraq

April 30: Dozens of Yazidis enslaved by IS in Iraq now free

"Thirty-six members of the Yazidi religious minority are free after nearly three years in the hands of so-called Islamic State (IS), the UN says. They have been taken to UN centres in Dohuk in Kurdish northern Iraq. It is unclear whether they escaped in Iraq or were freed, as the UN declined to give more information to avoid jeopardising future releases." ([BBC](#))

May 2: Iraqi women take up arms to protect village from ISIL

"Women living in Haji Ali, a village in northern Iraq located 60 kilometres (37,2 miles) south from Mosul, have taken up arms to protect the area from self-proclaimed Islamic State militants, as seen in footage filmed on Monday, May 1. Since the IS controlled-villages are only two kilometres (1.24 miles) away, women have learnt how to use weapons and have started guarding their families' houses at night." ([Al-Masdar News](#))

May 3: Iraq's War On Women Inside And Outside The Home

"As Iraqi forces continue to battle the so called Islamic State for control of Mosul, the danger and threats to the lives of Iraqi civilians is increasing from airstrikes, snipers and door to door fighting. Women's rights campaigners say girls and women in Mosul and Iraq's conflict areas are at risk by virtue of the fact they are girls and women." ([Huffington Post UK](#))

Israel/Palestinian Territories

May 8: This Israeli Woman Is On A Hunger Strike To Get A Divorce

"A 53-year-old Israeli Jewish woman is on a hunger strike outside Israel's parliament building because the state has forbidden her from divorcing her husband. Jewish law requires both husband and wife to agree to a divorce, but Zvia Gordestky's husband won't give one to her. [...] In order to provide relief to the so-called 'chained women' like Gordetsky, Israeli lawmakers proposed a bill that would let the state annul marriages of women whose husbands have refused to divorce them for more than a year." ([Forward](#))

Jordan

May 1: Jordan moves to repeal law allowing rapists to escape punishment by marrying victim

"Last week, [Jordan]'s cabinet voted to scrap the law, known as Article 308. Now, that decision must be approved by Parliament. 'This article of the law not only helps perpetrators walk free, it rewards them by allowing them to marry their victims,' Jordanian Women's Union member Nadia Shamrukh told AFP. 'By applying this law, another crime is committed. How can this 14-year-old girl, who is a minor anyway, marry her rapist? Can you imagine this?'" ([Washington Post](#))

May 6: Activists campaign for release of women jailed for small debts

"Activists on Friday, May 5, started a campaign in Amman to release Jordanian women who have been imprisoned for failing to repay debts. The campaign started when the founders heard the story of a woman jailed for failing to repay JD355, campaign co-founder Hamzeh Hussami explained." ([The Jordan Times](#))

Lebanon

May 4: Women's quota a 'national right': Ogasapian

“Lebanon's Minister of State for Women's Affairs Jean Ogasapian Thursday, May 4, said that a women's quota for Parliament is a ‘national right.’ Ogasapian made these remarks at a meeting with civil society and women's groups aimed at promoting political participation of Lebanese women.” ([The Daily Star](#))

Libya

May 1: Libya granted women new constitutional rights - then took them away again

“Libyan women’s rights campaigners have angrily taken to Twitter after the committee responsible for their country’s new constitution backtracked on a major issue. While a previous draft of Libya’s long-awaited constitution had allowed women to pass on their nationality to their children, the latest version has removed that provision, sparking outrage online.” ([Al Bawaba](#))

Morocco

May 1: How do Women’s Rights fare in Today’s Age of Turmoil?

“Women’s demands in North Africa are increasingly diversified and polyvocal as new actors and agents are gaining visibility in the public sphere of authority. This diversification is, in turn, being nourished by new values (such as dignity) and new approaches (such as the use of social media and transnational networking). Women’s issues and women’s rights are at the Center of these dynamics; just as they have been before.” ([Morocco World News](#))

May 7: In a Fight for Land, a Women’s Movement Shakes Morocco

“The Sulaliyyates, as the women are known, began their protests 10 years ago and have since assembled a powerful grass-roots organization fighting not only for the tribal lands but for equal ownership rights in a country where women, by law, inherit less than men.” ([New York Times](#))

May 7: Moroccan cleric defies taboo on women’s inheritance

“A former radical preacher is the unlikely instigator of a debate on a topic long seen as off-limits in Muslim-majority Morocco: women's inheritance rights. The country's Islamic family laws allocate female heirs half the amount men receive on the death of a relative. Abdelwahab Rafiki, a former hardline cleric who served time in jail following extremist bombings in Casablanca, says it is time that changed.” ([The Jordan Times](#))

May 8: Universal Periodic Review Calls on Morocco To Review Its Violence Against Women Laws

“The Human Rights Council is no longer tolerating Morocco’s idling when it comes to violence against women. During the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Morocco at its 27th session in Geneva this week, the Human Rights Council of the United Nations (UN) presented a list of recommendations regarding women issues to the Moroccan government, reminding the Kingdom that it still has a long way to go in terms of women’s rights.” ([Morocco World News](#))

Oman

April 30: More Omani women than men are initiating divorce

“Farhat Al Haddabi wanted to further her education and gain more qualifications in the United Kingdom, but her husband disapproved. So she divorced him. [...] Statistics from the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs show that Omani women initiate more than half of the divorces in a country where tradition and cultural values are fast changing. Omani women initiated an average of 58 per cent of all divorces in the country in the last five years.” ([The National](#))

Saudi Arabia

May 2: Saudi Arabia, Germany agree to set up \$200m fund for women empowerment

“German Chancellor Angela Merkel invited King Salman to attend the G20 summit in Germany after holding wide-ranging consultations on the agenda of the summit in Jeddah on Sunday, April 30. Chancellor Merkel also renewed invitation to Crown Prince Mohammed bin Naif, deputy premier and minister of interior, to visit Germany.” ([Arab News](#))

May 9: Rights Group Urges Saudi King To End Men's 'Guardianship' Over Women

“Saudi Arabia's King Salman recently ordered a review of his country's rules on male guardianship, which keep women from making many basic decisions on their own. And now Human Rights Watch is urging the king to abolish the system that enforces a condition of legal dependence for women. ‘We have seen Saudi Arabia's baby steps on women's rights reform obstructed or nullified as a result of the male guardianship system,’ said Sarah Leah Whitson, Human Rights Watch's Middle East director.” ([NPR](#))

Syria

April 27: Three Syrian Sisters, No Men and a World of New Gender Mores

“The Ibrahim sisters share a two-bedroom apartment and an unspoken understanding of the need to stick together. Unlike most of the roughly 95,000 refugee women who poured into Germany in 2015, these three came without husbands, fathers or brothers. [...] In the 17 months since they arrived in Weimar, the sisters have attended language classes and navigated their new city side by side. They and other refugee women spoke about an extra layer of challenges in adapting to German social customs, including how to organize playdates for their children and have platonic friendships with men, something unusual in the conservative Muslim society they came from.” ([The New York Times](#))

April 28: Muslim women in Syria are not cut out of inheritances

“Priyanka Kumar’s otherwise excellent April 16 Book World review, ‘Grandmother’s life in Syria: Moments of beauty and fear,’ of Alia Malek’s new book, ‘The Home That Was Our Country,’ may have given readers the wrong impression about inheritance laws for women in Syria. Of one figure in the memoir, it was noted that ‘because she is a woman, she does not inherit anything from her wealthy father.’ However, Muslim women in Syria are allotted half the share of any inheritance that male heirs receive.” ([The Washington Post](#))

April 30: 'Hundreds of us will die in Raqqa': the women fighting ISIS

“She had heard the stories about how Islamic State fighters could glide like ghosts into Kurdish militia bases during the dead of night, but nothing prepared her for the bedlam when it happened. It was 3.40am on 12 February when ISIS attackers scrambled over the perimeter defences of the base north of Raqqa. Kimberley Taylor was convinced it would be overrun. Grabbing her Kalashnikov, she began firing at the shapes. Beyond the corner of the nearest building cowered an enemy fighter. Suddenly he rushed towards her. As their eyes met, he yanked the cord on his suicide belt.” ([The Guardian](#))

Tunisia

May 8: 'They're not seen as human beings': life for unmarried mothers in Tunisia

“Tunisia is often hailed as a progressive Arab country, where, according to US human rights watchdog Freedom House, ‘women enjoy more social freedoms and legal rights than in most other countries in the region.’ A series of gender reforms under then president Habib Bourguiba between the 1950s and the 70s abolished polygamy, gave women the right to vote, divorce and have abortions, and elevated

the status of women in Tunisian society. For all, it seems, apart from unmarried mothers.” ([The Guardian](#))

Turkey

April 27: Women Are Dying in Turkey

“On a quiet November evening in 2014, Eda Okutgen left her apartment in the coastal Turkish city of Izmir and ran for her life. She didn’t get far. Her ex-husband, Ugur Buynak, had already stabbed her in the leg with a kitchen knife. And as he chased her down a flight of stairs, the successful 38-year-old businesswoman and mother screamed for help. She screamed in vain – neighbors locked their doors as Buynak fatally plunged the knife into his ex-wife.” ([Foreign Affairs](#))

April 27: Turkish soap operas' portrayal of women stirs controversy

“Turkish soap operas have hundreds of millions of viewers across the world, even on Netflix. In Turkey, they’re the main pastime for families in the evening. From China to Peru, these soaps are drawing viewers. Magnificent Century, about renowned Ottoman King Sultan Suleyman and his harem, airs in 86 countries. In the U.S., viewers can see it with English subtitles on Netflix. But controversy over how women are portrayed surrounds these soaps. For Pinar and many women in Muslim countries, the female characters feel empowered, and they inspire them.” ([USA Today](#))

May 8: High-profile resignation rocks Turkey’s secular opposition CHP

“In the wake of Turkey’s historic April 16 referendum, the main opposition Republican People’s Party (CHP) is facing a shakeup. The CHP’s rising star, US-educated economist Selin Sayek Boke, resigned from her positions as deputy chair and party spokesperson May 6. Boke’s resignation announcement, shared on Twitter, read, ‘On April 16, at least 50 percent of Turkey’s voters opposed the one-man regime but their will was usurped through non-legal means,’ referring to fraud allegations in the referendum.” ([Al-Monitor](#))

Yemen

April 27: Abortion in war time: How women break taboos in Yemen

“Elham ensures that her children prevent anyone from entering the room at her family home. Then, when the door is closed, she begins to speak quietly and nervously about why she had an abortion earlier this year. At the age of 39, Elham – not her real name – already has five children, the youngest of whom is 18 months old. Her family, like millions of other Yemenis, have been left destitute by the two-year war, as many public sector employees go unpaid, including her husband, who has not received any salary for seven months.” ([Middle East Eye](#))

May 9: Yemen’s Houthis recruit women to fight

“Houthi militias have opened training camps for women, after thousands of their fighters fled, the Saudi News Agency (SPA) reported [on May 8]. According to SPA, Yemeni women are being recruited without their families’ knowledge. The women are then being exploited in combat in several areas across the country.” ([Middle East Monitor](#))

Regional

April 27: Arab Women in the Legislative Process

“On May 4, Algeria will hold its second legislative election since the introduction of women’s quota system in 2012. Many are set to see whether female legislators will be able to play a more pivotal role in the political realm. Over the past decade, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region has

witnessed a consistent, though slow, increase in the presence of women in legislative bodies.” ([The Cairo Review of Global Affairs](#))

May 4: The sorry state of Arab men

“A new survey by the UN and Promundo, an advocacy group, examines Arab men’s views on male-female relations. (One of the authors, Shereen El Feki, used to write for The Economist.) It finds that around 90 percent of men in Egypt believe that they should have the final say on household decisions, and that women should do most of the chores.” ([The Economist](#))

May 7: I AM, an exhibition by Arab women artists

“An inspiring visual art exhibition narrating the timeless and thought-provoking contribution of female Arab artists opened at Amman’s National Gallery of Fine Arts in the old and winding streets of Jabal Weibdeh district. I AM, a peace-building exhibition, which includes works from 31 acclaimed female artists from Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Yemen, Bahrain, Lebanon, Egypt, Tunisia, Iraq, Morocco, the United Arab Emirates and the Palestinian territories, showcases the women’s vision for a peaceful and harmonious future.” ([Middle East Online](#))

By Selin Aksoy, Middle East Program

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