

MENA Women's News Brief

August 12-26, 2014

MEP Publication: "Barbarians: ISIS's Mortal Threat to Women"

The Middle East Program would like to share with you the 60th edition of our [Viewpoints](#) series, "[Barbarians: ISIS's Mortal Threat to Women](#)" by numerous contributors from the Middle East and the United States. For this issue of Viewpoints, MEP reached out to a number of its regular contributors and invited them to share with us their thoughts and concerns on the treatment of women and girls by ISIS.

August 21: Changing the world one tech girl at a time

"Twenty-three young women from Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, the Palestinian Territories, Tunisia, and Yemen, spent the past three weeks in New York and Washington, DC, visiting tech companies and meeting industry executives as part of TechGirls, a cultural exchange program sponsored by the US government." ([Sydney Morning Herald](#))

Egypt

August 16: National Council for Women asks Al-Azhar to change curricula

"Based on its role supporting women's issues, the Council said, the curricula should not contradict the constitution, international conventions and humanitarian norms." ([Daily News Egypt](#))

August 22: Egyptian cleric says men are allowed to spy on women in the shower

"Osama al-Qusi sparks outrage by saying a man can secretly watch a woman bathe if he is interested in marrying her." ([The Guardian](#))

Iran

August 12: Stigma Complicates Treatment of Iranian Women's Mental Illness

"Official statistics issued in 2013 by the Iranian government show that 26.5% of Iranian women and 20.8% of Iranian men are living with chronic mental conditions. When it comes to dealing with mental conditions in women, matters become complicated." ([Huffington Post](#))

August 13: Maryam Mirzakhani From Iran Becomes First Woman To Win Fields Medal, Math's Top Award

"Maryam Mirzakhani, an Iranian-born mathematician currently working as a professor at Stanford University, has been awarded the 2014 Fields Medal for her outstanding contributions to geometry and dynamical systems. Mirzakhani has become the first woman to win the prize, widely regarded as the equivalent of the Nobel Prize in the field of mathematics, since it was first awarded in 1936."

([International Business Times](#))

August 21: Simin Behbahani, Outspoken Iranian Poet, Dies at 87

"Simin Behbahani, a prizewinning poet known as 'the lioness of Iran' for using her verse as a means of courageous social protest, died on Tuesday in Tehran. She was 87." ([The Guardian](#))

(Op-Ed) August 22: Can Women in Iran be Equal?

“Two recent statements by Iranian leaders show the constant tension defining life in Iran. Elected in 2013, President Hassan Rouhani made campaign pledges of increased social freedoms. Not long ago he said, ‘Women should enjoy equal opportunities, security, and social rights.’ Yet, after one year in office, there has been zero movement for the women of Iran, because pulling in the opposite direction is Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who has claimed that gender equality is ‘one of the biggest mistakes of Western thought.’” ([Daily Beast](#))

Iraq

August 12: Meet the female peshmerga forces fighting ISIS

“Kurdish female peshmerga fighters are joining the battle against the Islamic State (IS) to thwart any possible attack against Kurdish areas.” ([Al-Monitor](#))

August 15: Who will condemn the sexual enslavement of Iraq’s minority women?

“Slavery and rape are being used as weapons of war by ISIS against Yazidi and Christian women, yet rights activists are silent.” ([The Guardian](#))

(Op-Ed) August 21: The Women of ISIS: Understanding and Combating Female Extremism

“Reports that women have formed their own brigade within the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) have confounded experts -- and worried them. For many, the idea of women as violent extremists seems paradoxical. After all, why should women want to join a political struggle that so blatantly oppresses them?” ([Foreign Affairs](#))

August 22: Iraq Minister: Hundreds of Yezidi, Shiite Women Held Captive by IS

“Iraq’s human rights minister said that hundreds of Yezidi and Shiite women were held captive by the Islamic State (IS/ISIS) armies, amid reports they are being sexually abused and sold as slaves.” ([Rudaw](#))

Jordan

August 12: Granting service-related privileges to children with non-Jordanian fathers ‘a matter of time’ — Kalaldeh

“Granting several services and privileges to children of Jordanian women married to foreigners to ease some of the restraints they face in their daily lives ‘is a matter of time’, Minister of Political and Parliamentary Affairs Khaled Kalaldeh said.” ([Jordan Times](#))

(Op-Ed) August 20: Microfinance in Jordan isn’t helping to empower women

“Foreign donors need to reconsider how their money is being used, as profits are taking precedence over sustainability.” ([The Guardian](#))

Saudi Arabia

August 12: New ban on marriage to foreigners stirs controversy

“In a recent report published by Makkah daily newspaper in Saudi Arabia, a new law bans Saudi men from marrying women from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Chad and Burma. Social media forums like Twitter and Facebook reacted with both humor and horror over the new ruling.” ([Saudi Gazette](#))

August 12: Work begins on women's industrial city

“Work on the first women's industrial city in the Kingdom is well under way. The city, poised to cost SR111 million according to data made available to Arab News, will span an area of 500,000 square meters and is located east of Al-Ahsa International Airport.” ([Arab News](#))

August 12: Manal Al-Dabbagh – A Saudi woman with many firsts

“Manal Al-Dabbagh has a number of firsts to her name. She is the first Saudi and Arab sports photographer to enter and take pictures in stadiums. She is also the first Saudi female lenswoman who has participated in a Football World Cup, while clicking her way to glory.” ([Saudi Gazette](#))

August 14: 39% of public employees in Saudi Arabia are women

“The number of state employees was 1,318,501 last month,” the report by the Ministry of Civil Service said. ‘Men constitute 61 per cent of the total employees while women make up the remaining 38.7 per cent,’ the statistics said, local news Sabq reported on Wednesday.” ([Zawya](#))

August 16: Easy Taxi popular with women

“With taxi booking application gradually becoming popular, women commuters feel comfortable to move around in the city. The application... helps passengers locate taxis in their immediate vicinity and access information about the distance of their journey.” ([Arab News](#))

August 20: KACST scientist wins US physics award

“Dr. Ibtisam Saeed Badhrees, a leading woman research scientist in experimental particle physics at the National Center for Nanotechnology, King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology (KACST) Riyadh, has been selected as the first non-American woman for ‘Women Physicist of the Month’ award for August 2014 given by the American Physical Society (APS).” ([Arab News](#))

August 20: Saudi charity to deliver marital training to 4,000 people

“The Al-Mawaddah Charitable Society for Social Reform in Jeddah has approved the implementation of training materials for young men and women looking to get married from Oct. 25.” ([Al Arabiya](#))

August 20: Saudi women's expat husbands, sons granted driving exemptions

“Expatriates married to Saudi women as well as their children are able to obtain general driving licenses... without needing an iqama (work permit) that lists the holder's profession as a driver. A recent government decision... also called for treating these husbands and their children in a similar manner to Saudi citizens in employment, education, and health care.” ([Saudi Gazette](#))

August 22: 730,000 illiterate women in KSA

“Women account for 60 percent of illiterate residents in the Kingdom, according to studies conducted by the Central Department of Statistics & Information. Almost 730,000 women cannot read or write, according to the study. More than 426,000 men, by contrast, are also illiterate.” ([Arab News](#))

Tunisia

August 13: New law pushes Tunisia to protect women

On August 13, 2014, Tunisia's Constituent Assembly considered “the anti-women violence draft-law, as announced by the secretary of state in charge of family and women's affairs, Neila Chaabane. She said

this law reflected the content of Article 46 of the constitution, which outlined that the state should take the necessary measures to eradicate violence against women.” ([Al-Monitor](#))

August 15: Full Gender Parity Yet to be Achieved in Electoral Lists

“As Tunisia awaits the legislative elections scheduled for October 26, several civil society organizations are pushing for integral parity in electoral lists.” ([Tunisia Live](#))

August 23: Police kill two women in tense region of Tunisia

“Police killed two young women in a tense region of Tunisia [Kasserine, in central-western Tunisia] early Saturday, mistaking them for members of an armed group, the interior ministry and a relative said.” ([Daily Star](#))

Turkey

August 19: How Erdogan won the women's vote

“Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan frequently angers feminist groups, but 55% of women voted for him.” ([Al-Monitor](#))

UAE

August 17: Women’s military college prepares for first batch of UAE national service recruits

“The region’s first military college for women, the Khawla bint Al Azwar Military School, is preparing to welcome female recruits for nine months of training under the national and reserve service law.” ([The National](#))

(Op-Ed) August 20: Fighting domestic violence requires pre-emptive, holistic approach

“A rising cost of living, changing cultural norms, and an increase in the number of women entering the workforce have all contributed to partner abuse in recent years, by renegotiating gender roles and aggravating tensions in the household. A study by the World Health Organisation last year found that over a third of ever-partnered women in the MENA region have experienced intimate partner physical or sexual violence.” ([Gulf News](#))

August 21: Marriage Fund to organize mass weddings

“This program is being held under the directives of Her Highness Shaikha Fatima Bint Mubarak, Chairwoman of the General Women’s Union and the Family Development Foundation. She pointed out that mass weddings are aimed to reduce the cost of weddings and lifting the suffering of the parents and young people as they encourage young people to marry early and contribute in building stable, cohesive families.” ([Gulf News](#))

Yemen


August 17: Education for Yemeni women still rare luxury

“Female Yemeni students face pressure to abandon their studies and assume ‘traditional’ roles in society.” ([Al-Monitor](#))

By Samaa Ahmed



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

Follow the Middle East Program on Twitter @WilsonCenterMEP  and Facebook 