

MENA Women News Brief

August 2, 2016-August 16, 2016

Bahrain

August 8: Bahrain Institute for Public Administration to help women develop workforce tools

“Bahrain Institute for Public Administration (BIPA) Director-General Raed Mohammed Bin Shams recently announced endeavors to help Bahraini women develop tools to grow into positions of leadership, a strategy that falls in line with the goals of the Reform Plan of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa of Bahrain.” ([Gulf News Journal](#))

August 15: Steeplechaser Gives Bahrain Its First Gold Medal

“The teenager Ruth Jebet won Bahrain’s first-ever Olympic gold medal on Monday, August 15, blowing away the competition in the women’s 3,000-meter steeplechase while narrowly missing out on the world record.” ([The New York Times](#))

Egypt

August 3: Egypt Rights Groups Denounce ‘Ineffective’ FGM Provision, Propose Amendments

“Local rights groups criticized on Tuesday, August 2 the legal provision on female genital mutilation (FGM) in its current format, proposing several amendments besides those put forth by the health ministry.” ([Egyptian Streets](#))

August 11: Egyptian Olympic medalist Sara Ahmed blazes trail for women

“Egyptian weightlifter Sara Ahmed said she had blazed a trail for women athletes after becoming the first female from her country to stand on the Olympic podium with weightlifting bronze at Rio Wednesday, August 10.” ([Al Arabiya](#))

August 13: Sisi urges women to use less water and electricity to ease economic crisis

“Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi said on Saturday, August 13 he would not shy from tough economic reforms he said previous rulers had avoided because they feared unrest, and urged Egyptian women in particular to cut back on their use of water and electricity.” ([Middle East Eye](#))

Iran

August 2: British-Iranian woman held in Iran appears in court for first time

“Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, the British-Iranian woman detained in Iran since April, appeared before a revolutionary court in Tehran for the first time since her arrest, her husband has said. The 37-year-old told her husband, Richard Ratcliffe, during a phone conversation on Monday, August 1 that she had attended her first court session.” ([The Guardian](#))

August 6: Iranian female athlete takes on challenges of the field and her culture

“It took years of dedication and perseverance, but Zahra Nematī—in a moment of pride for herself and her fellow countrymen and women—carried her country’s flag during Friday, August 5’s opening ceremonies at the 2016 Rio Olympics. Sporting a green head covering with white blouse and pants, the Iranian archer led the male-dominated team during the parade of nations.” ([The Washington Post](#))

August 8: Anti-Pollution Initiative Stymied by Ban on Women Riding Bicycles in Public

“Women’s rights activists and environmentalists joined forces in the city of Marivan, in Iran’s Kurdistan Province, after a local anti-pollution initiative encouraging people to ride bikes or walk instead of using their cars ran aground when security agents objected to women riding bicycles in public.” ([International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran](#))

August 9: Rio 2016: Iranian woman expresses her joy after watching volleyball for first time

“Iranian volleyball fan Sajedeh Norouzi could barely contain her delight at the Maracanazinho arena as she watched her homeland's men's team take on Argentina, a match she would have been banned from attending in Tehran.” ([Independent](#))

August 10: Amnesty: Women activists seen as ‘enemies of the state’ in Iran crackdown

“Iranian authorities have intensified their repression of women’s rights activists in the country during the first half of this year, an Amnesty International report has revealed. In a statement released on Wednesday, August 10, the rights watchdog said that the country is carrying out a series of harsh interrogations and increasingly likening any collective initiative relating to women’s rights to criminal activity.” ([Al Arabiya](#))

August 11: The detention of Homa Hoodfar is unjust and un-Islamic. Iran should release her (Op-Ed by Tariq Ramadan)

“As a Muslim scholar, I am deeply troubled by the unlawful and unjust detention of Professor Homa Hoodfar, an Iranian-Canadian scholar who was detained in March while visiting friends and family in Iran. Members of the Revolutionary Guard raided her home, confiscated her personal belongings and passports, summoned her for interrogations, and finally imprisoned her in Tehran’s Evin prison without access to her family or a lawyer.” ([The Guardian](#))

August 13: Olympic security asks female Iranian fan to drop sign

“Olympic security personnel questioned a female Iranian volleyball fan Saturday when she showed up for a match holding a large sign that read ‘Let Iranian Women Enter Their Stadiums’ and wearing a white T-shirt with those same words.” ([USA Today](#))

Iraq

August 6: Yazidi survivor Nadia Murad: We want a Muslim stand against ISIS

“Nadia Murad, an Iraqi Yazidi woman who escaped a gruesome ordeal after she was kidnapped by ISIS to be a sex slave like thousands of other women from her minority ethnic group, tells Al Arabiya News Channel in an interview aired Friday, August 5 that her people ‘want a stronger stand from Muslims against’ the militant group.” ([Al Arabiya](#))

August 7: Planning for Iraq’s refugees and their future (Op-Ed by Seth J. Frantzman)

“The Iraqi women who had just fled from an area controlled by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, also known as ISIS) were still fearful of the group. Sheltering behind an earthen berm and a Kurdish *peshmerga*-controlled checkpoint not far from where the Iraqi army is fighting ISIL in Qayyara, the women didn’t want their full faces shown, lest ISIL harm their relatives.” ([Al Jazeera](#))

August 8: Emerging from slavery, Yazidi women struggle to recover

“ISIL sells Yazidi women and girls on slave markets, treating them as property. Many women are subjected to repeated rape. Some are forced to perform domestic labor. Brutality is commonplace. A

United Nations human rights panel has determined that the ongoing campaign of violence against the Yazidis amounts to genocide.” ([United Nations Population Fund](#))

Israel

August 11: Battle over women praying at Jerusalem’s Western Wall continues as compromise stalls

“Clutching smuggled Torah scrolls, dozens of feminist activists approached the Western Wall, wrapping themselves in colorful prayer shawls and chanting passages from the Jewish Bible. Their display of piety was met by ultra-religious hecklers who denounced them as heretics and prostitutes. ‘You can’t change the Torah!’ one shouted. ‘Get out of here!’ Another ripped up a prayer book used by the feminist group, Women of the Wall.” ([Los Angeles Times](#))

Palestinian Territories

August 4: ‘I Had to Be the Voice of Women’: The First Female Hijacker Shares Her Story

“On August 29, 1969, 25-year-old Leila Khaled made her way into the cockpit of TWA Flight 870 and commandeered the plane on behalf of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. After that, she became known equally as an icon and a terrorist.” ([VICE](#))

August 6: Over forty Palestinian women including 12 minors are being held in HaSharon prison

“Several dozen Palestinian women, including 12 minors, are currently being held in Israel's HaSharon prison, according to a statement released Thursday, August 4 by the Palestinian Committee of Prisoners' Affairs.” ([Al Bawaba](#))

Saudi Arabia

August 2: Saudi appoints first female commercial judge

“The Administrative Appeals Court in Saudi Arabia’s Eastern province has reportedly appointed the first female arbitrator in a commercial case. Arab News reports that Shaimaa Sadeq Al-Jibran’s appointment came despite the objections of one of the parties in the case because she is a woman.” ([Gulf Business](#))

August 3: How Saudi women have boosted the kingdom’s sporting spirit (Op-Ed by Lina K. Almaeena)

“As we rejoice in the news that Princess Rima bint Bandar bin Sultan al-Saud has become the first Saudi woman to have been appointed the president’s undersecretary for the women’s section at the General Authority for Sports, it is important to discuss the history of Saudi women's involvement in sports.” ([Al Arabiya](#))

August 4: Saudi Arabia: Women Are “Changing the Game”

“Women in Saudi Arabia have made some progress in participating in sports for health, competition, and professional opportunities but serious barriers remain. On the eve of the Rio Olympics, the Saudi government, including the new women’s section of the Saudi sports authority, should remove the remaining barriers to sports in schools, businesses, federations, and team sports.” ([Human Rights Watch](#))

August 8: Saudi gets its first female pilot

“Despite a ban on women driving in Saudi Arabia, Hanadi Zakaria Al-Hindi has become the first woman in the kingdom to become an air pilot. Hanadi, who received her pilot’s license in 2014, said women have the same ability to work in all professions as men.” ([Middle East Monitor](#))

August 10: Guardians of the Gender Gap (Op-Ed by Hala Aldosari)

“For a Saudi woman, personal choice is a luxury. Her decisions must conform to her male guardian’s. Only women with agreeable guardians can control their lives. The rest must live with whatever limitations their guardians dictate.” ([Foreign Affairs](#))

August 12: Saudi says stops three women, seven children from joining Syria war

“Saudi Arabia said on Friday, August 12 it had prevented three Saudi women and seven children from traveling through Lebanon to join the conflict in neighboring Syria, the Saudi state news agency SPA reported.” ([Reuters](#))

Syria

August 2: Watch Syria women burn a niqab after their city was liberated from ISIS control

“As the Syrian city of Manbij has celebrated its liberation from ISIS control this week following the offensive by the U.S.-back Syrian Democratic Forces, civilian women have been burning the niqab veils they were forced to wear under the Islamic State’s rule.” ([The New York Times](#))

August 4: Meet the woman who founded the first all-female unit of the Free Syrian Army

“In the most dangerous part of the Middle East and in a culture ruled by men, one Syrian woman not only joined the Free Syrian Army, but went on to form the first all-female battalion, fighting against president Bashar Al Assad’s forces on the outskirts of the capital, Damascus.” ([The National](#))

August 10: Refugee swimmer Yusra Mardini makes history in Olympic pool

“When Yusra Mardini dove into the Olympic pool, she made history. It wasn’t her time on the scoreboard—it was simply that she was there. Last August, four years into the Syrian civil war, the 18-year-old fled her home. Like many other refugees, she and her sister ended up on small boat bound for the island of Lesbos off the coast of Greece. The boat began to sink, and Yusra jumped in the water.” ([CBS News](#))

Tunisia

August 4: Tunisia calls for action to eliminate violence against women

“The Minister of Women, Family and Childhood in Tunisia’s caretaker government called for ‘comprehensive mobilization’ for activating the law on the elimination of violence against women.” ([Middle East Monitor](#))

August 7: Terms of Abuse (Op-Ed by Asma Ghribi)

“Tunisia has long enjoyed a reputation as one of the best places for women in the Middle East and North Africa, starting even before the 2011 revolution. Observers widely regard Tunisian women as the most liberated in the Arab world. Yet violence against women — and domestic violence in particular — seems to be as prevalent as ever.” ([Foreign Policy](#))

August 9: The Woman Pushing Women Into Tunisia’s Politics

“When the Tunisian revolution of 2011 opened a path toward democracy, the activist Ikram Ben Said saw an opportunity to include women’s voices in the country’s emerging political landscape. At 30, Ben Said was already a vocal advocate for social causes. She was a senior program manager with a peacekeeping organization called Search for Common Ground, and volunteered with several nonprofits that worked with single mothers and abandoned children.” ([The Atlantic](#))

August 11: Can new Tunisian bill help counter violence against women? (Op-Ed by Ahmed Nadhif)

“The Tunisian draft law on the elimination of all forms of violence against women has tightened sanctions against abusers, but it remains to be seen whether this law will be passed in parliament with or without amendments.” ([Al Monitor](#))

August 11: Tunisian fencer dedicates historic medal to Arab women

“Ines Boubakri won Africa’s first women’s Olympic fencing medal on Wednesday, August 10 dedicating her bronze to ‘the Tunisian woman, the Arab woman ... who has her place in society.’ Boubakri defeated Russia’s Aida Shanaeva in the individual foil third-place match.” ([Gulf News](#))

Turkey

August 15: Chemical castration of sex offenders in Turkey condemned by women’s groups

“Women’s rights groups, lawyers, and doctors have condemned Turkey’s decision to introduce a mandatory chemical castration program for convicted sex offenders, arguing the treatment does not address the underlying reasons for widespread violence against women, and that bodily punishment will instead lead to increased abuse.” ([The Guardian](#))

United Arab Emirates

August 3: Aisha Al Balushi raises bar on women participation in Rio Olympics

“The UAE’s weightlifting star, Aisha Al Balushi, arrived in Rio to join her compatriots competing in the Rio Olympic Games from 5th to 21st August. Aisha, who is the ninth UAE athlete set to compete in the Games, stated that she aims to present a correct image of women’s sports in the UAE and the huge support accorded to the sport.” ([Al Bawaba](#))

August 8: A career that Emirati women can bank on

“Banking is a great sector for Emiratis, especially woman, says Noura Abbas Ahmed, who is the head of training and business development at the Emirates Institute for Banking and Finance Studies (EIBFS).” ([The National](#))

August 9: UAE committee set up to review maternity law

“Working mums who bemoan a lack of maternity leave could see positive changes after a committee was set up to review and support the role of women in the workplace. The committee, established on the direction of Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak, Chairwoman of the General Women’s Union, Supreme Chairwoman of the Family Development Foundation and President of the Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood, will review the UAE’s Maternity Law to provide women with a supportive work environment.” ([The National](#))

August 9: Back to black: why the traditional abaya is a favourite for Emirati women

“In the past decade the plain black abaya has undergone a transformation, with dramatic changes in cut, fabric, design and colour. The changes to such an iconic, regionally important clothing not only reflect a fashion evolution, but a major shift in attitudes and lifestyles. Still, wearing anything other than a plain, black abaya can be a complicated change for Emirati women, many of whom choose to continue to embrace tradition for a variety of reasons.” ([The National](#))

Yemen

August 10: A day in the life of a community midwife in Yemen

“In the early morning hours of an otherwise ordinary day in Yemen’s Bani Hushaysh District, the sounds of bombs suddenly pierced the air. Residents of the community were frightened, and Ms. Kawkab Abdu Mohammed is the only community health worker who came to work that day. In a health system that is deteriorating because of the ongoing conflict, midwives like Ms. Abdu are a lifeline for Yemen’s mothers and children.” ([UNICEF](#))

General

August 10: Hijab is a good fit for the Olympic Games

“Doaa El-Ghobashy and Nada Meawad of Egypt made their country’s Olympic Games debut in women’s beach volleyball this week, and they did it wearing modest uniforms – with El-Ghobashy in a hijab – in a sport dominated by bare skin. Playing against and ultimately losing to a German duo in bikinis, the photographs capturing their historic match went viral – and with them, a vigorous debate.” ([The National](#))

Special Feature

August 16: Policy experts decry Middle East sexism. What about sexism in our own profession? (Nancy Okail)

“A few weeks ago, I started to think that I’d mistakenly walked into the men’s locker room. Wrong: As it turns out, I had merely arrived at the national security conference at which I was scheduled to speak, and my fellow panelists — all men — were gearing up to talk about the threat the Islamic State poses to the progressive Western world. Too bad the irony of a male-dominated conference, criticizing the repressive male-dominated culture of the Islamic State, was lost on all.” ([Washington Post](#))

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