

# **MENA Women's News Brief**

## **December 16 -December 29, 2014**

“More than 60 per cent of women in the GCC region found it hard to get good jobs, a new survey has revealed. The survey also found out that 46 per cent of women complained of lack of opportunities to improve their professional skills and 38 per cent spoke of not having enough opportunities to relax or socialize as challenges in their life. Thirty-two per cent of women considered it hard to lead a healthy lifestyle and 30 per cent of women did not feel connected enough within their industry, says 'The Bayt.com Status of Working Women in the Middle East' survey, which was recently conducted by Bayt.com, the career site in the Middle East, and YouGov, a research and consulting organization.”  
([Times of Oman](#))

### **Egypt**

#### **December 16: (Op-Ed) Sisters in the vanguard as Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood battles to survive**

“In homes and streets around Egypt, women are keeping alive a group the authorities are determined to crush. They teach Muslim Brotherhood values to children, organize its protests, preserve its networks, and take an ever more prominent role in politics. With most Brotherhood leaders in jail or exile, women who have long lived in their shadow have been thrust into the vanguard of the organization's battle for survival.” ([Reuters Blog](#))

#### **December 24: Government institution to pay fees for female candidates in parliamentary election**

“The National Council for Women (NCW), headed by Mervat Al-Tallawy, announced an initiative to financially support and assist young female candidates who wish to run for the parliamentary elections of 2015. Individual candidates are required to pay a sum of EGP 3,000 in insurance fees, while candidates running through lists will pay double the fee, according to the parliamentary elections law.”  
([Daily News Egypt](#))

#### **December 28: Egypt Court Reduces Protester Sentences to 2 Years**

“An Egyptian appeals court on Sunday, December 28 upheld the conviction of 23 activists for staging an illegal protest, but reduced their sentences from three years to two, a defense lawyer said. The secular activists were sentenced in October for staging a peaceful protest near the presidential palace to call on President Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi to abolish a law that severely restricts the right to stage protests. The defendants include Sanaa Seif, who hails from a well-known activist family. Yara Sallam, a prominent women's rights activist, was also among the defendants whose sentences were reduced.” ([ABC News](#))

### **Iran**

#### **December 18: (Op-Ed) Women Continue Struggle for Rights Despite Barriers**

“On December 10, 1950 the UN General Assembly proclaimed the day as Human Rights Day to bring the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to the attention of people across the world as the common standard for all peoples and nations. Sixty four years forward and unfortunately human rights violations in different forms continue to take place in all human societies. Unlike the efforts of those who fight for human rights and follow the Declaration's goals, the implementation of the principles of the declaration is not realized particularly in the countries of the Global South. The focus of this presentation is on the

struggles of members of the women's movement in Iran against human rights violations, particularly since the 1979 Islamic revolution, up to 2014." ([Payvand](#))

### **December 24: Judiciary Chief: Claims on Women's Rights Violation in Iran Repetition of Old Lies**

"Iranian Judiciary Chief Sadeq Amoli Larijani said the West's allegations about violation of women's rights in Iran are sheer lies and propaganda." Women in Iran can have different (governmental) posts in accordance with the law, but their absence in some positions does not mean that their rights are being violated," Amoli Larijani said, addressing a number of judiciary officials in Tehran on Wednesday, December 24." ([Fars News](#))

### **Iraq**

#### **December 17: ISIS executes at least 150 women for refusing to marry its militants**

"According to a statement released by Iraq's Ministry of Human Rights on Tuesday, December 16 ISIS militants carried out a number of attacks in Fallujah and buried the victims in mass graves in one of the city's neighborhoods. 'At least 150 females, including pregnant women, were executed in Fallujah by a militant named Abu Anas al-Libi after they refused to accept jihad marriage,' the statement said. 'Many families were also forced to migrate from the province's northern town of al-Wafa after hundreds of residents received death threats.'" ([Al-Akhbar](#))

#### **December 22: Yazidi women tell of sex-slavery trauma (video)**

"The BBC's Paul Wood and cameraman Fred Scott went to northern Iraq to meet women who have escaped enslavement. The Yazidi religious minority community in Iraq says 3,500 of its women and girls are still being held by the so-called Islamic State (IS), many being used as sex slaves. A few have managed to escape and here tell their harrowing stories." ([BBC](#))

#### **December 23: Women Excised From Public Life, Abused by IS**

"Extremists are working to excise women from public life across the territory controlled by the Islamic State group, stretching hundreds of kilometers (miles) from the outskirts of the Syrian city of Aleppo in the west to the edges of the Iraqi capital in the east. The group has been most notorious for its atrocities, including the horrors it inflicted on women and girls from Iraq's minority Yazidi community when its fighters overran their towns this year. A report by Amnesty International released Tuesday, December 23 said the captives — including girls as young as 10-12 — endured torture, rape and sexual slavery, and that several abducted girls committed suicide." ([New York Times](#))

The Amnesty International report can be found [here](#).

### **Israel**

#### **December 19: The Israeli General With an Asterisk**

"Israel is the only nation with a gender-neutral draft, but that may sound more equal than it is: 57 percent of drafted women serve, compared with 73 percent of men. Though 92 percent of positions are open to women, a scant 2.9 percent of female service members were in combat roles in 2013, making up 4.3 percent of combat troops. Among reservists—a huge part of the force that fought in Gaza—8 percent are female. But more than half of Israel's military officers are women, compared with 17 percent in the United States, where there are three female four-star generals on active duty. Israel recently created a new coed combat battalion, and in January appointed its first female battalion commander." ([New York Times](#))

### **December 21: Morocco's workplace gender gap widens**

“In its second report on gender equality in the workplace, the Economic, Social and Environmental Council (ESEC) described the employment situation of Moroccan women as alarming. In its 2012 report, ESEC made clear recommendations to the government to fight discrimination against women. In the new report, released on Nov. 27, 2014, ESEC focuses on the realities of female employment and the "ineffective" laws working against women. The female employment rate in Morocco (ratio between the number of people employed and the total number of individuals) is 22.7 percent, which means that less than one in four women has a job.” ([Al-Monitor](#))

### **Saudi Arabia**

#### **December 23: Report: First woman leader in Saudi Arabia's Holy Mosques Presidency**

“Fatimah Al-Rashoud has become the first woman to occupy a leading position at the General Presidency of the Two Holy Mosques, Makkah daily reported. Due to the growing need for women leaders in the kingdom’s organizations and the active role women play in the development of the Two Holy Mosques, the organization’s president Sheikh Abdulrahman Al-Sudais appointed Al-Rashoud as head of the Women Guidance Committee and supervisor of the women’s section of the Grand Mosque library.” ([Al-Arabiya](#))

#### **December 25: Two women referred to ‘terror’ court for driving in Saudi Arabia**

“Two Saudi women detained for nearly a month for defying a ban on females driving were referred to a court established to try terrorism cases on Thursday, according to friends of the defendants. Activists said it was the first time female drivers have been referred to the specialized criminal court in Riyadh, and that their detention is the longest of female drivers in Saudi history. Four people close to Loujain al-Hathloul, 25, and Maysa al-Amoudi, 33, said they are not being charged for defying the driving ban but for voicing opinions online. They declined to elaborate on the specific charges because of the sensitivity of the case and anonymously for fear of government reprisal.” ([The Guardian](#))

### **Syria**

#### **December 23: Islamic State's female bloggers draw European women to Syria**

“Initially it was widely believed that young women who were lured to Syria by the Islamists had gone there to provide sexual services to members of the Islamic State (IS). It was later revealed, however, that the women who join IS primarily fulfill traditional roles, such as taking care of the household. Mary, the mother of Vanessa, a 19-year-old Dutch woman who joined IS in August, underlined that women generally have noncombatant roles.” ([Al-Monitor](#))

### **Yemen**

#### **December 19: Yemeni women fear Houthis curbing freedoms**

“When Yemeni Arwa Othman took a dance at the headquarters of a political party in Sanaa, she exposed the kind of deep hostility that is worrying women’s rights campaigners now that Houthi rebels control the capital. The prominent activist was immediately subjected to a barrage of criticism from hard-line Islamists as well as supporters of the Houthi rebels. When Othman was selected as the new Culture Minister, Houthi activists and pro-Houthi newspapers ridiculed her.” ([The Daily Star](#))

By Julia Craig Romano

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