

MENA Women's News Brief

February 10, 2015-February 24, 2015

February 15: Turkey rallies over murder of woman who 'resisted rape'

“Thousands of women in Turkey have protested at the murder of a young woman who allegedly resisted an attempt by a bus driver to rape her. Police discovered the burnt body of Ozgecan Aslan, 20, in a riverbed in the city of Mersin, on Friday, February 13. They have arrested three men in connection with her death—a minibus driver, his father and a friend.” ([BBC News](#))

February 24: Op-ed: Conflicts are proving most dangerous to women by Zainab Hawa Bangura, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict

While wars are devastating for all civilians, women and girls are confronted with specific threats because of their gender. Due to deep-rooted gender norms, they are more likely to have their rights trampled upon than their sons, brothers and fathers. Among the most abhorrent of these abuses are rape as well as other forms of sexual violence. ([Daily Star](#))

Egypt

February 11: Former Egyptian diplomat cites progress on women's rights

“In the area of gender equality, Egypt is making progress, according to Moushira Khattab, the former ambassador to South Africa and the Czech and Slovak republics. According to Khattab, women’s rights regressed under the administration of President Mohammed Morsi. President al-Sisi, Khattab said, has signaled his support for women by appointing one as his national security adviser, naming three women deputy governors, and visiting the female victim of a sexual assault as his first act after taking office last June.” ([Al-Monitor](#))

February 14: Interview with female Bedouin candidate on upcoming parliamentary elections

“Daily News Egypt interviewed Na’sa Ibrahim, a female Bedouin activist from South Sinai who will run individually for the seat in the Ras Sidr and Al-Tor electoral district. ‘Running for the elections was not a new decision for me, as I have been in the political and social scene in South Sinai for 15 years now. The parliament seems to be a good opportunity and channel to achieve more effective goals. If I get elected, I will aim to work with the governorate to transform South Sinai into an industrial area.’” ([Daily News Egypt](#))

February 22: National Council for Women: Female representation in 2015 parliament weak

“With the 2015 parliamentary elections quickly approaching, many are concerned that female representation in this parliament will be weak. According to the latest statements from the Egyptian High Elections Commission, there are only 949 women among the 7,416 candidates running. Within a few days of the closure of parliamentary applicants, the National Council for Women (NCW) submitted 100 women to fill the lists of various parties and alliances and were surprised to find some lists were completely devoid of female candidates.” ([Egypt Independent](#))

Iran

February 12: Iranian Vice President Shahindokht Molaverdi Meets Pope

“Iranian Vice President for Women and Family Affairs Shahindokht Molaverdi met with Pope Francis on Thursday, February 12. The Iranian official stated that the sides held expert talks on medical, legal,

and sociological issues related to women and the family, as well as the topics of marriage and domestic violence against children and women.” ([Payvand](#))

February 13: Iranian translator of Blue Is the Warmest Color 'declared persona non grata'

“An Iranian poet who translated the prize-winning French graphic novel *Blue Is the Warmest Colour* into Persian has claimed she is the target of a smear campaign in Iran for supporting homosexuality. A group of hardline Iranian news websites have attempted to discredit Sepideh Jodeyri for the Persian translation of Julie Maroh’s 2010 graphic novel. ‘I’ve been declared persona non grata in my own country,’ said Jodeyri.” ([The Guardian](#))

February 19: Profile: Meet first woman vice president

“As the first female vice president of Iran and the head of Iran’s Environmental Protection Organization, Masoumeh Ebtekar may be the most powerful woman in Iran. Thirty-six years after the hostage crisis in Iran, Ebtekar said Iranian society is open to dialogue and understanding with the American people, but that there is a persistent distrust of the U.S. government, specifically as it relates to the war against the militant group ISIS.” ([Yahoo News](#))

February 24: Children of Iranian women and foreign spouses to get Iranian IDs

“The Iranian President's adviser for legal affairs, Elham Aminzadeh, said on Tuesday, February 24 that Iranian Civil Status Registration Organization will present Iranian identification cards to children of Iranian women who have foreign husbands. 'Unfortunately those children have thus far been deprived of many civil rights, such as education, medical services ...etc. in Iran,' Aminzadeh told IRNA on the evening of Tuesday, February 24 on the sidelines of the 4th session of Council of Judicial Departments of Seman Province.” ([IRNA](#))

February 24: Iranian woman wins rights award for hijab campaign

“Masih Alinejad, an Iranian journalist, has received a human rights award from the Geneva Summit for Human Rights and Democracy for creating a Facebook page inviting women in Iran to post pictures of themselves without their headscarves in defiance of rules requiring them to wear a hijab. Alinejad launched Stealthy Freedoms of Iranian Women last year, attracting more than half a million likes on Facebook in a matter of weeks. Thousands of Iranian women took off their veils in public and sent in their photos to be published.” ([The Guardian](#))

Iraq

February 10: Powerful New Films Tell The Stories Of Women Captured By ISIS

“Angelina Jolie, Special Envoy for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, made two new films during her visit to a Kurdish refugee camp in northern Iraq last month. They were published on the Guardian website on Tuesday, February 10 and tell the stories of some of the women captured by the Islamic State group as well as their families. They provide a devastating glimpse of the horror endured by over 2 million Iraqis who fled their homes during the onslaught.” ([Huffington Post](#))

The films can be accessed [here](#).

February 17: Iraqi women trafficked into sexual slavery: rights group

“Up to 10,000 women and girls in Iraq have been abducted or trafficked for sexual slavery, prostitution or ransom, according to a report by Minority Rights Group International and the Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights on Wednesday, February 11. They called for the Iraqi government to crack down on

crimes against women. Campaigners estimate some 14,000 women have been killed since the U.S.-led invasion of 2003, and many women and girls—including children as young as four—have been raped in that time.” ([Reuters](#))

February 21: Zekra Alwach becomes Baghdad's first female mayor

“A woman has been named as mayor of Baghdad for the first time, a government spokesman said Saturday, February 21 amid widespread corruption and rampant violence. Zekra Alwach, a civil engineer and director general of the Ministry of Higher Education, becomes the first female to be given such a post in the whole country, where international rights groups have condemned women's rights abuses.” ([AFP via Al-Arabiya](#))

Israel

February 22: Police officially promote woman to rank of assistant chief

“Officer Gila Gaziel was promoted on Sunday, February 22 to the rank of assistant chief, becoming the highest-ranking woman and second highest rank of the Israel Police. She is positioned at the head the law enforcement agency’s Manpower Branch.” ([Jerusalem Post](#))

Jordan

February 15: Gender discrimination rife in Jordanian workplaces

“A study recently published by the European Training Institute, an EU-affiliated institute headquartered in Turin, showed that working women in Jordan suffer from discrimination and sexual harassment. The study, which took place between 2011 and 2013, examined the female workforce in the tourism, information technology and communications industries in the formal private sector. The study found that ‘employment in the two sectors shows a clear degree of horizontal and vertical segregation between the genders.’” ([Al-Monitor](#))

Libya

February 24: Friend Says Female Libyan Activist Shot to Death in Tripoli

“A female Libyan activist has been shot to death in the capital, Tripoli, which is controlled by militias backed by Islamist groups. Taha Krewi, a friend of the victim, confirmed the death of activist Intissar al-Hasaari on Tuesday, February 24. Al-Hasaari was the founder of the Enlightenment Group, which led protests against militias. The Libyan al-Wasat news website reported that the activist was found dead in her car with her aunt, also killed.” ([AP via ABC News](#))

Saudi Arabia

February 10: Women constitute 13 percent of Saudi workforce: statistics agency

“Saudi women occupy only 13 percent of private and public positions occupied by nationals despite accounting for 51 percent of Saudi graduates, according to statistics from the Saudi Central Department of Statistics and Information. The department’s statistics included candidates graduating from both undergraduate and postgraduate levels and from universities in the Kingdom and abroad.” ([Al-Arabiya](#))

February 12: Saudi Arabia Releases Two Women Drivers From Jail

“Saudi Arabia on Thursday, February 12 released two women who were held since December for challenging the country’s ban on female drivers. Loujain Al Hathloul and Maysaa Al Amoudi were released from a jail in the eastern region of Al Ahsa after 72 days in detention. Ms. Hathloul’s lawyer

confirmed her release on Twitter. Ms. Amoudi's husband confirmed her release in a message to The Wall Street Journal.”([Wall Street Journal](#))

February 23: Thirty women to run in municipal vote

The next municipal council elections are expected to have at least 30 women candidates standing for seats all over the Kingdom. Hatoon Ajwad Al-Fasi, the general coordinator of the Baladi Initiative, which trains women to be decision makers through seminars and workshops, said “judging by the number of participants, we can say Saudi women from various cultural background and ages are willing and prepared to be candidates or organizers and coordinators in the elections.” ([Saudi Gazette](#))

Syria

February 11: Women arrested over Syria-related 'terror offences'

“Two UK women have been arrested on suspicion of committing Syria-related terrorism offences. One of the women, aged 23, is suspected of preparing for acts of terrorism, while the other, aged 33, was arrested on suspicion of failing to disclose information. Both were arrested at their homes in Walsall, UK by officers from the West Midlands Counter Terrorism Unit.” ([BBC News](#))

February 19: UK police launch hunt for London schoolgirls feared to have fled to Syria

“British counter-terrorism police have launched an international hunt to find three London schoolgirls feared to be making their way toward ISIS territory in Syria after fleeing the UK. The girls, named as Shamima Begum, 15, Kadiza Sultana, 16, and an unidentified 15-year-old girl, slipped out of their homes in east London last Tuesday, February 17 and caught a flight to Istanbul, Turkey, from where they are thought to be travelling to the Syrian border.” ([The Guardian](#))

UAE

February 11: A step towards narrowing the gap for women

“On February 10, the Emirati government announced the formation of new Gender Balance Council that will ensure that women play a leading role in the country's development. Sheika Manal, President of the Dubai Women's Establishment, will be its chair. She has already spoken of the need to recognize that women play a key role in economic development.” ([The National](#))

Yemen


February 19: Women and democratic transition in Yemen

“In 2013, Culture Minister Arwa Othman headed a committee on “rights and freedoms” as part of the process for constitutional reform. Committees were responsible for drafting recommendations for changes in the constitution. Many of the recommendations supported women's rights such as enhancing women's political participation, combating violence against women and ending child marriage.” ([Yemen Online](#))

By Julia Craig Romano



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