

# **MENA Women News Brief**

**February 16, 2016-March 1, 2016**

## **Bahrain**

### **February 27: Equal Opportunities Unit convenes**

“[Bahrain’s] Equal Opportunities Unit at the Works, Municipalities Affairs and Urban Planning Ministry’s Municipalities Affairs has approved its bylaw and the 2016 action plan in line with its keenness on consolidating women’s social and functional roles.” ([Bahrain News Agency](#))

## **Egypt**

### **February 18: Egyptian women launch “One Girl is Worth 100” campaign**

Rania Ayman, a founding member of the campaign “One Girl is Worth 100,” speaks to Al-Monitor about women who struggle to make a living in jobs traditionally limited to men. “‘One Girl is Worth 100’ is a project undertaken by a group of female activists who shed light on the struggles of women with onerous or hazardous jobs. The group's objective is to affirm that these jobs are not limited to men and that there are some women who are much more successful than men.” ([Al Monitor](#))

### **February 27: Egyptians call for end to female genital mutilation after surgeon’s ban**

“Earlier this week, the Disciplinary Court in the Nile Delta province of Mansura revoked the medical license of Raslan Fadl, months after he was convicted of manslaughter in the death of Suheir Al Bataa due to complications blamed on FGM surgery he performed on the 13-year-old. The court also ordered Fadl’s private clinic closed for a year. Al Bataa’s father was given a suspended three-month sentence on charges of complicity.” ([Gulf News](#))

### **February 28: Ninth International Women’s Film Festival hosts 60 international movies**

“Over the past eight years, the Cairo International Women’s Film Festival created a meeting space for female filmmakers from around the globe. The festival intends to hold its ninth annual edition from 27 February to 3 March that will organize screenings for 60 Egyptian, Arab, and international movies for amateur and experienced filmmakers from 40 countries worldwide.” ([Daily News Egypt](#))

### **February 29: Egypt TV presenter Saeed jailed for 'shaming assault victim'**

“A TV presenter in Egypt has been jailed for 'violating the privacy' of an assault victim interviewed on her show. Reham Saeed was sentenced to a year in jail for the interview, in which she suggested a sexual harassment victim deserved her fate. Her guest had uploaded footage to Facebook of an assault by her harasser after police failed to prosecute him.” ([BBC News](#))

## **Iran**

### **February 19: More than an ornament: Iran's 'female statesmen' and elections (Op-ed by Farnoosh Amirshahi)**

“Traditionalist clerics often invoke a masculine term to discourage women from running for political office in Iran. While the question of gender isn’t addressed in Iran’s electoral laws, candidates wishing to participate in the Iranian political scene must be considered ‘Rajol-e-siasi,’ or statesmen. If the political arena is legally defined as the purview of statesmen, women have no business entering it, conservatives argue.” ([The Guardian](#))

### **February 21: Meet the teenage girls on Iran's death row**

“In Iran, the death penalty can be applied to minors, and in 2014, a United Nations report estimated that at least 160 juvenile offenders were on death row in the country. Today Mahsa is one of them, held in a detention center in Zibashahr, near Tehran, with other minors awaiting capital punishment.” ([Quartz](#))

### **February 22: How one Kurdish woman went from child soldier to Swedish lawmaker**

“An Iranian Kurd, Kakabaveh belonged to the Revolutionary Society of Iranian Kurdistan's Toilers, better known as Komala. She had joined its armed wing as a child to become a peshmerga, or a Kurdish guerrilla fighter. A member of the Swedish parliament today, Kakabaveh was in Diyarbakir last week to observe firsthand developments in Turkey's ongoing crackdown on urban Kurdish militants.” ([Al Monitor](#))

### **February 29: Iran set to elect record number of women into parliament**

“With reformist-backed candidates securing a sweeping victory in Tehran, and moderates leading in provinces, a record number of women are set to enter the next Iranian parliament. Estimates based on the latest results show that as many as 20 women are likely to enter the 290-seat legislature known as the Majlis, the most ever. The previous record was set nearly 20 years ago during the fifth parliament after the 1979 revolution, when 14 women held seats. There are nine women in the current Iranian parliament.” ([The Guardian](#))

## **Iraq**

### **February 17: Islamic State Stones Four Rape Victims for 'Adultery'**

“The four victims were arrested on Wednesday, February 17 in a raid by ISIS jihadis,” stated Raafat Zarari, spokesman of the Nineveh Media Center. ‘The jihadis claimed to have captured the women while committing adultery.’ A Sharia court operated by the Islamic State sentenced the women to death.” ([Breitbart](#))

### **February 26: In Mosul, ISIS uses brutal tool known as “the Biter” to clip women's flesh**

“As conditions deteriorate in ISIS-controlled Mosul, in northern Iraq, reports say that a metal tool, known as ‘the Biter,’ is being used to punish women whose clothes do not completely conceal their body. ‘The Biter has become a nightmare for us,’ says Fatima, a 22-year-old housewife who says she escaped Mosul after several failed attempts.” ([New York Times](#))

## **Israel**

### **February 17: Five top Israeli women DJs on blazing a trail to a traditionally male bastion**

“Leading Israeli DJs reveal the travails of being judged by their looks as much as their professional prowess.” ([Haaretz](#))

### **February 28: How Arab women fought genital mutilation in Israel (Op-ed by Eli Aminov)**

“Just 20 years ago, female genital mutilation was an accepted practice in six Bedouin tribes in southern Israel. Jewish researchers couldn't figure out why the practice disappeared — because they didn't talk to the Arab women's group fighting it.” ([+972](#))

### **February 29: Energy Ministry Refusing to Include Women in Gas Deal Implementation Panel**

“The National Infrastructure, Energy and Water Ministry is refusing to include women on the team that will implement the country's natural gas policy even though it is required to do so by law. The ministry is basing its decision on the grounds that the team ‘does not set policy,’ but the move contravenes equal

opportunity law and rulings by the High Court of Justice. Only the team's coordinator is a woman.” ([Haaretz](#))

### **February 29: Protesters disturb women's prayer service at Western Wall**

“A women's prayer service at the Western Wall was disturbed by protesting haredi Orthodox men and women. The Original Women of the Wall group held morning services on Monday, February 29 using a small Torah scroll that they smuggled in for the service. The more than 20 women were wearing prayer shawls and phylacteries. According to a statement issued by the group, the prayers were 'brutally disturbed' by several haredi Orthodox men and women.” ([Times of Israel](#))

## **Jordan**

### **February 18: Jordanian self-defense trainer helps empower women**

“SheFighter provides specialized self-defense and martial arts training for girls and women. It combines classic martial arts techniques with self-defense and self-empowerment strategies, aiming to help women acquire the necessary skills to protect themselves in dangerous situations, as well as develop self-confidence.” ([Al Arabiya](#))

### **February 29: Tragic: One in three Jordanian women experience violence, only three percent would report it**

“Only three percent of victims of gender-based violence would seek support from the police after experiencing violence, a local study revealed on Sunday, February 28. The study said societal pressures to reject claims of violence against women persist within the justice system.” ([Al Bawaba](#))

## **Lebanon**

### **February 17: Being a woman is just an added burden for Syrian refugees in Lebanon**

“Syrian refugee women in Lebanon are at risk of being exploited by people in positions of authority, in part because of the government's refusal to renew residency permits for Syrian refugees and a severe lack of international aid money, according to Kathryn Ramsay, a gender researcher with Amnesty International and author of a new report on the topic.” ([Al Bawaba](#))

### **February 25: Female Entrepreneurs Launch Online Sexual Harassment Tracker in Beirut**

“Three female entrepreneurs have kickstarted a sexual harassment tracker in Beirut in the hope of combating crimes against women in the Lebanese capital. A beta version of Harass Tracker—launched on Monday, February 29—will provide a three-month trial in the city after which, if successful, it will be expanded across the entire country.” ([Newsweek](#))

## **Morocco**

### **February 16: Human Rights Watch Urges Morocco to Toughen Laws Against Domestic Violence**

“Human Rights Watch (HRW) wrote a letter on Monday, February 15 urging Morocco to pass reforms to criminalize domestic violence and ensure that law enforcement officers investigate domestic violence cases. A national survey conducted by the Moroccan High Commission for Planning in 2009 found that 62.8 percent of women aged 18 to 65 had experienced physical, psychological, sexual, and economic violence.” ([Morocco World News](#))

### **February 23: How to Prevent the Radicalization of Women - the Moroccan Model (Op-ed by Loubna Amhair)**

“The Moroccan government has responded to the threat of terrorism by identifying ways and taking measures to increase women's activities, building and strengthening their capabilities and improving

their quality of life, thereby reducing the possibility of extremism and terrorism. These measures include establishing micro-credit programs, increasing the enrollment of girls in primary schools, and creating ways to better living through work in garment factories.” ([Morocco World News](#))

## **Oman**

### **February 21: Tourism sector in Oman needs more women leaders**

“Creation of job opportunities for women is the ministry’s vision and mission, according to Maitha bint Saif Al Mahrouqi, undersecretary of the Ministry of Tourism. ‘Only 26 per cent of women work in Oman’s tourism industry. Women’s leadership in the tourism sector is very important and there is an urgent need to attract more Omani women at various professional levels,’ said Al Mahrouqi.” ([Times of Oman](#))

## **Palestinian Territories**

### **February 22: In Gaza, Bicycles Are a Battleground for Women Who Dare to Ride**

“Many Palestinians frown at the idea of women bicycling in public because men might inappropriately leer at their legs moving up and down or ogle their bottoms. Female cyclists are a fairly unusual sight throughout the Arab world. The women of a small cycling club, who began riding together in December, are the first in years to pedal publicly in Gaza, where the nearly decade-long rule of the Islamist Hamas movement has been accompanied by various initiatives to restrict the modest efforts of women hoping to practice sports.” ([New York Times](#))

## **Saudi Arabia**

### **February 23: Saudi puts 26 women on trial for ‘terror activities’**

“As many as 26 women accused of ‘terror activities’ are being tried by the Specialized Criminal Court in Riyadh and no special privileges have been given to them, Mansoor Al-Qaffari, spokesman of the Ministry of Justice, has said. ‘The women are being tried under the same procedures as male suspects and are given complete privacy and rights guaranteed by the law,’ he said.” ([Saudi Gazette](#))

### **February 25: The oil crisis makes a compelling case for women's equality in Saudi Arabia (Op-ed by Belinda Palmer)**

“The lowering of oil prices should serve as a resounding clarion call for a nation that needs to plan for a near-future in which oil wells are drying up. It is time to drill into a far richer well, that of talented, modern women. A well that need never run dry.” ([The Guardian](#))

### **February 29: When Saudi women rise to meet armed forces’ needs**

“If women have their own major role to play while a nation is at war, the women in Saudi Arabia is certainly not behind. This is what was at display during a recently held Armed Forces Exhibition for Diversification (AFED) where the women of the Kingdom made their presence felt not just in terms of job nationalization efforts, but also their readiness to actively participate in the area of military requirements.” ([Arab News](#))

### **February 29: 350,000 Saudi women are employed in the private sector**

“Recent statistics from the Ministry of Labor show that the Saudi private sector employed more than 350,000 women at the end of 2015, and the figure is expected to reach 450,000 by the end of 2016, a local publication reports.” ([Arab News](#))

## **Syria**

### **February 16: Syrian women hope to join Turkey's textile industry**

“A group of Syrian refugees hope to join the ranks of Turkey's employed soon thanks to vocational training and a recent change in Turkish law. Eighty women at the Öncüpınar refugee camp in Kilis province near the Syrian border have enrolled in a machine knitting course organized by the UN and Turkey's Disaster and Emergency Management Authority.” ([Daily Sabah](#))

### **February 24: Syrian women refugees find shelter in Turkey**

“Women have borne a special burden in this Syrian conflict. As villages and cities became combat zones, many men took up the rifle to fight. Women and children were forced often to fend for themselves. One refugee named Bushra describes how she first fled her village for the safety of Aleppo when Assad's forces attacked protesters in the area of Idlib in northwest Syria.” ([Turkish Weekly](#))

### **February 26: IS stones two girls to death in Syria**

“Two teenage girls have been stoned to death by Islamic State militants after they were found in a house with two men—who were each flogged 50 times, media reported on Friday. The girls, Hasna, 17, and Madiha, 16, were accused of committing adultery and executed in front of a crowd of hundreds in Deir ez-Zor city, eastern Syria.” ([Business Standard](#))

### **February 28: Baghdadi appoints ISIS female fighter to Syria battalion**

“ISIS chief Abu Bakr al-Baghdad has reportedly appointed a female Saudi fighter to head up a new battalion in northeastern Syria, according to an activist. Nada al-Qahtani, who joined the group in 2013, used to lead the Khansa battalion in the militants' de facto capital of Raqqa, located in Syria. She will now lead a new branch of the all-female fighting unit in Hasakeh, the activist told the Arabic website of Al Arabiya News Channel.” ([Al Arabiya](#))

### **February 29: Syria's war liberates Kurdish women as it oppresses others**

“Nubohar Mustafa is proud of what her leaders and fellow activists have done for Kurdish women in northern Syria. Coming from the self-proclaimed autonomous region of Rojava, wedged between the Turkish border and territory held by Islamic State, Mustafa enjoys freedoms that few women living under the militants' rule could dream of.” ([Reuters](#))

### **March 1: Bangladeshi women trafficked to war-torn Syria as sex slaves, maids**

“Scores of Bangladeshi women have been lured with the promise of a good job in the Middle East and then trafficked to war-torn Syria, where they are forced into domestic or sex work, Commander Khadaker Golam Sarowar of RAB-3, a senior Bangladeshi police official said. He said his unit had come across 45 cases of women who had been exploited, beaten, tortured or raped in Syria in the last year.” ([Thomas Reuters Foundation](#))

## **Turkey**

### **February 16: Turkish women lead major sectors in global economy**

“From Coca-Cola and PepsiCo to Unilever and Microsoft, female executives are in fierce competition with their male counterparts for the throne of these global firms. While female executives have been playing a great part in conglomerates in various sector for some time, recently the target for female Turkish executives is the finance sector.” ([Daily Sabah](#))

### **February 17: Study reveals 414 women murdered across Turkey in 2015**

“Umut Vakfi (Hope Foundation) prepared a map to reveal the prevalence of violence against women according to which 414 women, 309 of whom were killed by guns, died in incidents of violence across Turkey during 2015. Among those slain were infants and an 85-year-old woman.” ([Today's Zaman](#))

**February 26: ‘Rampant sexism’ in attacks on Turkey’s women journalists: Three leading reporters describe persistent online harassment**

“The deterioration of press freedom in Turkey is hardly breaking news for international media; the imprisonment of journalists, the abuse of anti-terror laws, online censorship, and sporadic bans on social media are among the most well-known methods being used to silence critics. But another serious challenge to press freedom is going mostly unreported: online attacks against journalists, including harassment and threats.” ([International Press Institute](#))

**February 26: Ruling allows Turkish women to keep maiden name after marrying**

“The ruling by the Supreme Court of Appeal’s General Assembly of Civil Chambers confirmed a September 30, 2015 decision that allowed Turkish women to apply to a family court to keep their maiden name after marriage.” ([Hurriyet](#))

**March 1: Turkey's female entrepreneurs breaking down barriers**

In a week where it was revealed that Turkey’s richest businesswoman has a \$2.2 billion fortune, Anadolu Agency has been meeting a new generation of female entrepreneurs. Many have said that an elaborate system of state subsidies for would-be businesswomen have provided a strong platform from which to build. ([Andalou Agency](#))

**Yemen**

**February 18: Report from Yemen - Transforming the lives of women in a conflict zone**

“The nearly year-old conflict in Yemen has now embroiled 21 of the country’s 22 governorates, civilian casualties are increasingly common, food is in short supply and many hospitals, police stations and other institutions essential for protecting and caring for the population, especially women and girls, have been forced to shut their doors.” ([United Nations Population Fund](#))

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