

MENA Women's News Brief

February 25-March 10, 2014

Gender parity in parliament possible within 20 years, new trends show

“The [IPU’s Women in Parliament] year in review noted that although the Americas maintained its lead as the region with the highest average of women MPs at 25.2 per cent, it was the Arab world that witnessed the biggest regional jump of the year. The historic appointment of 30 women to Saudi Arabia’s Shura Council in January 2013 for the first time ever and the election of an unprecedented 18 women to the Jordanian parliament thanks to quotas in both countries helped the Arab region’s average rise from 13.2 per cent to 16 per cent.” ([IPU](#))

March 3: 'Arab Women Rising' compiles untold anecdotes of Arab women changing societies

“Arab Women Rising”, a new book released by Knowledge@Wharton, shatters stereotypes by revealing women as entrepreneurs, business leaders, and changemakers, in an anthology of 35 anecdotes... Against the backdrop of the recent Arab Spring, these stories reveal women overcoming social pressure to build companies, pioneer new technologies, and evoke societal change over time.” ([Wamda](#))

Egypt

March 1: First woman to head a political party in Egypt says it proves the revolution has changed attitudes

“[Hala] Shukrallah is the first woman – and first Christian – to lead a major Egyptian party. At a time when the 2011 uprising seems to have achieved little, her election is a reminder of the seismic social shifts the revolution unleashed. At least, that is how she sees it. ‘What we’re seeing here is that something truly on-the-ground is happening,’ Shukrallah, 59, says of her election. ‘I think it’s a reflection of the changes in the people’s psyche since the 25 January [revolution that toppled Hosni Mubarak]. They do not really see these elements as significant – being a woman, being a Copt, or whatever. These elements are no longer significant in comparison to a much bigger thing that they are aspiring to.’” ([The Guardian](#))

March 1: Ministers in Egypt’s new cabinet

Four women are included in Prime Minister Ibrahim Mehleb’s new cabinet in Egypt, including minister of information, minister of environment, minister of manpower, and minister of social solidarity. ([Ahram](#))

March 6: First woman to head Egypt party worried over military

“The first woman to head an Egyptian political party has expressed concern that a return to military rule could threaten democracy in a country roiled by three years of turbulence. Hala Shukrallah, a Copt who now leads the liberal Al-Dostour Party, told AFP the failure of democratic groups to throw up a civilian leadership was benefitting the military, and could also help the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood make a comeback.” ([AFP](#))

Iran

March 1: Women given senior positions in Iran's Sistan-Baluchistan province

Iran's President Hassan Rouhani appointed two women to the position of regional governor in two cities in the southeastern province of Sistan-Baluchistan. "Massoumeh Parandvar is now serving as the governor of Hamoon, while Homeira Rigi, with a history of leadership roles in the health and interior ministries, is now governor of Qasreqand." ([Payvand](#))

March 9: Iranian activists say celebrating Women's Day is 'not enough'

"For the first time in five years, a permit had been issued in Tehran allowing people to celebrate International Women's Day on March 8... A women rights activist in Tehran said to *Al-Monitor*, 'Because of the new administration, a lot of women rights activists have restarted their activities and are optimistic. The most important change is that the female activists are now hopeful. Choosing Shahindokht Molaverdi as a vice president in the administration was very important. Molaverdi has always worked alongside civil activists and knows about their problems.'" ([Al-Monitor](#))

Iraq

March 8: Iraqi women demonstrate in Baghdad against child-marriage draft law

"About two dozen Iraqi women demonstrated on Saturday in Baghdad against a draft law approved by the Iraqi cabinet that would permit the marriage of nine-year-old girls and automatically give child custody to fathers." ([Reuters](#))

March 8: Nearly 3,000 female candidates expected in parliament elections

"Campaigning for the Iraqi parliamentary elections, scheduled for April 30, will begin in just a few days. This election is seeing the widest participation by women to date—there are almost 3,000 female candidates, all of whom are promising changes in Iraqi life and to compete with men in the political sphere." ([Asharq Al-Awsat](#))

Israel

March 2: Retired Supreme Court justice: Israeli women still face glass ceiling

"In honor of International Women's Day, on March 8, retired Supreme Court Justice Dalia Dorner, who has declared her candidacy to succeed President Shimon Peres when his term ends this summer, shared with TheMarker her thoughts about the role of women in Israel." ([Haaretz](#))

March 5: Only 8 women CEOs in Israel's top 100 companies

"Female representation atop the largest companies, which has doubled in the past year, is actually better than the companies further down the line; the top 300 companies have 19 women CEOs (6.3%) and the top 500 companies have just 27 (5.4%)." ([Jerusalem Post](#))

Kuwait

March 6: UNDP Kuwait launches women legal empowerment website

UNDP-Kuwait plans to launch a website as part of the Women Legal Empowerment Program. "The program aims at increasing women's legal awareness and also aims to bolster mechanisms through which women can realize their right of access to legal information and improving their capacities of retrieving and obtaining such information through information technology tools." ([KUNA](#))

Palestinian Territories

March 3: Honor killings rise in Palestinian territories, sparking backlash

“Twenty-seven women are thought to have been killed last year in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip by family members claiming reasons of ‘honor’—more than double the 13 cases documented in 2012. The age-old rationale can serve as a cover for domestic abuse, inheritance disputes, rape, incest or the desire to punish female independence, according to Maha Abu-Dayyeh, the general director of the Women’s Center for Legal Aid and Counseling, a Palestinian human rights group that tracks the killings.”

([Washington Post](#))

March 8: Palestinian women join West Bank anti-riot police

“Only three percent of the Palestinian police force’s 8,000 members are women, but other branches of the security forces are making tentative steps to boost women’s numbers in their ranks. This week, a group of 23 women finished their training to join the presidential guard, which protects key figures and carries out special operations.” ([Times of Israel](#))

Saudi Arabia

March 10: Saudi marks Women’s Day by driving

“A Saudi businesswoman has celebrated Women’s International Day by driving her car in the Eastern Province city of Khobar. Dr Aisha Al Manaa, often described as ‘a multi-talented and inspirational pioneer’ for her numerous accomplishments in entrepreneurial business activities and in promoting women’s rights, said that she wanted to refute once more the claim that women would be harassed in case they were allowed to drive.” ([Gulf News](#))

Tunisia

February 25: First woman to vie for Tunisian presidency

“The Leader of the Democratic Movement for Construction and Reform (MDER) in Tunisia, Amna Mansour, announced her candidacy for the next presidential elections, making her the first woman in the history of the country to run for presidency.” ([Middle East Monitor](#))

March 3: 32 Percent of Rural Women Cannot Read or Write

“The results of a survey on the ‘situation of women in rural areas,’ presented Monday in Tunis revealed that 32% of rural women cannot read or write and that only 19% of them have their own economic resources.” ([All Africa](#))

UAE

February 26: Media is ‘best tool’ to empower women, says pioneering female Emirati lawyer

“Diana Hamade, one of the first female Emirati lawyers in the country, still raises eyebrows when she walks into court. ‘Judges are shocked when a female stands up and argues,’ said the founder of International Advocate Legal Services in Dubai. ‘They tell me, ‘you look like a woman who can do a better job at home’.” ([The National](#))

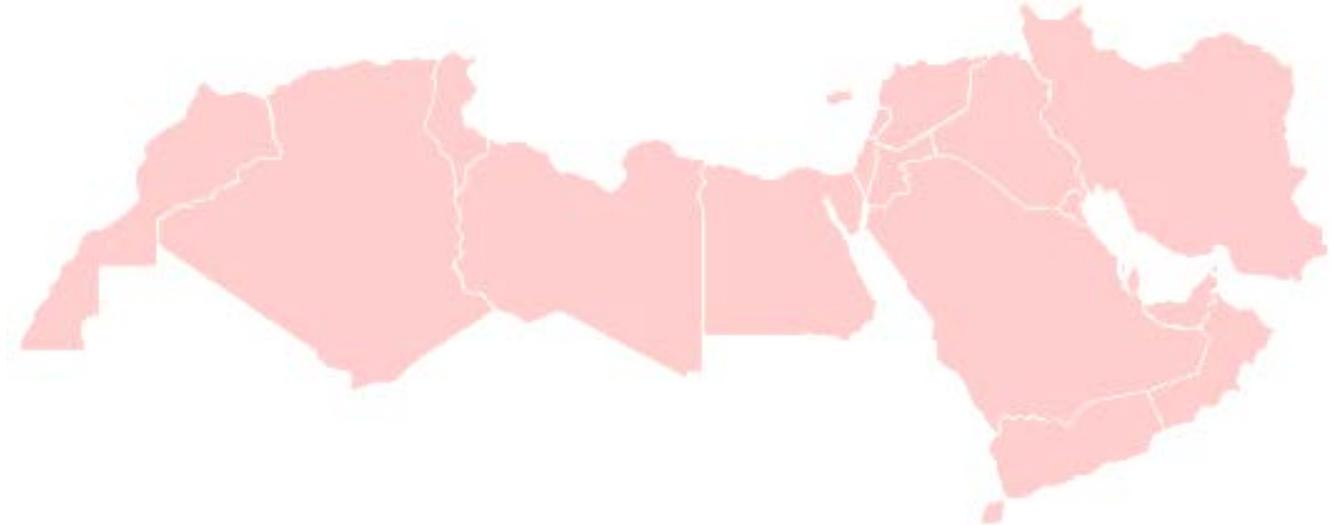
February 26: Emirati woman is one of the world’s most outstanding police officers

“The International Police Association has chosen Maj Amina Al Bloushi of Abu Dhabi as one of the four most outstanding police officers in the world.” ([The National](#))

Yemen

March 4: Yemen opens the door wider to women in office

“The Yemeni national reconciliation government's recent decision to adopt a 30% representation quota for women in public office and leadership positions at all levels has met with approval from a number of national women's groups.” ([Al-Shorfa](#))



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