

# **MENA Women's News Brief**

**July 14, 2015-July 28, 2015**

## **Egypt**

### **July 16: Egypt pardons 42 indebted women**

“Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi has pardoned 42 indebted women on the occasion of Eid Al-Fitr, the Muslim religious feast, on Thursday, July 16. The decree comes under the campaign ‘Egypt without debts,’ which applies to those who failed to repay loans borrowed for family expenses. According to Article 376 in the penal code, debtors may face up to three years in prison. The law states that debtors may be released from prison only if their debts are paid for them, or the person they owe pardons them.” ([Ahram Online](#))

### **July 21: Sexual harassers in 340 reports released after girls failed to sign**

“Perpetrators of sexual harassment in 340 incidents, mostly verbal, have been released because no girls arrived to sign police reports, Youm7 reported Tuesday, July 21. The Morality Police issued 340 reports during the first day of Eid al-Fitr; most of the perpetrators are boys and teens. The department also commended the work of I Saw Harassment, a grassroots movement that releases reports on sexual harassment and includes volunteers that intervene in such cases on streets.” ([The Cairo Post](#))

### **July 22: A Win for Women in Egypt's Courts**

“Last month, Egypt swore in twenty-six new female judges, in the largest appointment of women to the judiciary since 2007. This brings the total number of female judges in Egypt to around eighty. Shortly after his own swearing in, Justice Minister Ahmed al-Zend had announced his intention to appoint a group of female judges in an attempt to ‘eliminate all hurdles facing women’s work in the judiciary.’” ([Atlantic Council](#))

## **Iran**

### **July 17: The Women behind the Iran Nuclear Deal**

“Federica Mogherini, the EU’s chief diplomat, was front-and-center as European and American political leaders congratulated each other over a historic nuclear agreement with Iran. But diplomatic sources said a corps of other women also played crucial roles in the long process of forging a deal, including Helga Schmid, Mogherini’s deputy; Wendy Sherman, a top U.S. State Department official; and Catherine Ashton, the previous EU foreign policy chief.” ([Politico](#))

### **July 24: Rape of young girl in Iran met with muted response**

“In late June, the Reformist Iranian paper *Ghanoon* reported an eyewitness account of a gang rape of an 11-year-old girl under a bridge in Tehran. Due to pressure from judicial officials, news outlets have not been able to follow up on the case and the crime was unfortunately largely overshadowed by the nuclear negotiations between Iran and world powers. Nevertheless, this tragic incident once again brought the issue of violence against women to the Iranian public’s attention.” ([Al-Monitor](#))

## **Iraq**

### **July 15: U.S. prepares charges against woman accused of holding American in Syria**

“Federal prosecutors are preparing criminal charges against an Iraqi woman suspected of taking an American aid worker as a hostage of the Islamic State terrorist group in Syria, U.S. officials said. But officials cautioned that her possible relocation to the United States is uncertain because the Iraqi government could object to her extradition and seek to put her on trial.” ([The Washington Post](#))

**July 16: Incredible documentary tells the story of those who rescue women and children from Islamic State**

“A documentary screened on Channel Four details the incredible bravery of those who brave the fanaticism of Islamic State to rescue kidnapped women and children in Iraq. Escape from ISIS, a *Dispatches* special, details the kidnap of some 3,000 Yazidi (an Iraqi ethnic minority) women and children following an ISIS attack last August in the Sinjar region of northern Iraq. ([Yahoo News](#))

**July 24: A Personal War: America’s Marxist Allies Against ISIS**

“Nine years ago, Zind Ruken packed a bag and left her majority-ethnic-Kurdish city in Iran, escaping a brutal police crackdown and pressure to marry a man she’d never met. Now the 24-year-old is a battle-hardened guerrilla, using machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades to fight Islamic State extremists in Syria and Iraq.” ([The Wall Street Journal](#))

**July 27: UN: Victims of ISIS Abuse Need Support**

“A United Nations diplomat is warning girls against joining the self-declared Islamic State militant group. If the girls become members of the group, she says, it will be the biggest mistake in their lives. Zainab Hawa Bangura is the UN’s Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict. She recently told VOA about meeting women and girls who have survived unspeakable abuses by the militants.” ([Voice of America](#))

**Israel**

**July 20: Israeli NGO asks Supreme Court to protect women’s rights at mikvah**

“An Israeli advocacy NGO has asked Israel’s Supreme Court to protect women’s rights at the mikvah, or ritual bath. The ITIM Advocacy Center filed a complaint with the court Sunday on behalf of 13 married Orthodox women against the Chief Rabbinate and the Jerusalem Religious Council, calling for women to be allowed to use the mikvah according to their personal customs and without supervision or with their own attendant if they wish.” ([The Times of Israel](#))

**July 21: Study finds high gender inequality in Israel**

Gender inequality in the labor market, corporate world and political echelons remains high in Israel, according to the equality division of the Education Ministry’s annual gender index, presented Tuesday, July 21 at Jerusalem’s Van Leer Institute. Though slight improvements are noticeable, the study found, there has yet to be a sharp change in trends to close the gaps.” ([The Jerusalem Post](#))

**Morocco**

**July 24: Morocco arrests women linked to ‘IS terrorist’ cell**

“Two women suspected of belonging to a cell linked to the Islamic State group that planned to carry out attacks in Morocco have been arrested, the interior ministry said Friday, July 24. ‘Two women extremists from the terrorist cell that was recently dismantled and whose members had pledged allegiance to the so-called Islamic State were arrested Thursday in Tangiers,’ a ministry statement cited by the official MAP news agency reported.” ([Yahoo News](#))

## **Palestinian Territories**

### **July 22: Palestine Among Lowest Female Labor Participation in the World**

“The number of Palestinian women in the labor force remains among the lowest in the world despite an increase during the past decade, a Palestinian research organization reported Wednesday, July 22. The female labor participation rate in the occupied Palestinian territories in 2014 was only 19.4 percent, compared to 25 percent in the rest of the Arab world, a policy brief by Al-Shabaka said, adding that the global average stands at 51 percent. The low rates come despite high education rates among Palestinian women, Al-Shabaka policy advisor Samia al-Botmeh notes in her report.” ([Al Bawaba](#))

## **Saudi Arabia**

### **July 16: Time to criminalize harassment (Op-Ed by Rasheed Abou-Alsamh)**

“The public outcry over the sexual harassment of the two young Saudi women on the Jeddah Corniche during Eid Al-Fitr, which we have seen now through the video posted online by someone who filmed it all on their cell phone, seems a little too late. After all this type of harassment of women has been taking place on our streets for very many years now, and we still do not have a specific law outlawing such behavior.” ([Arab News](#))

### **July 21: Saudi TV Just Got a Little More Feminist**

“An edgy drama about four young women who move to America is a surprise hit over Ramadan. At first glance, the four stars of a new Saudi television drama, ‘Mubta’ethat’ or ‘Sponsored Women,’ look a little mismatched. But they have one thing in common: They’ve each got a U.S. visa page in their green passport. It is their golden ticket to leave their homes in Saudi Arabia to pursue an education in Philadelphia.” ([TIME](#))

## **Syria**

### **July 15: UK radio campaign launched to stop girls joining ISIL**

“UK anti-terror authorities have launched a radio campaign aimed at stopping young British girls and women from travelling to the Middle East to join the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) group. The campaign comes after the high-profile case of three UK schoolgirls, who were caught on camera in February before they disappeared on their way to join ISIL in Syria.” ([Al Jazeera](#))

## **Turkey**

### **July 18: Turkey’s Women Only Newspaper**

“*Tunceli Emek*, a daily in the southeast province of Tunceli, has a feature that no other newspaper in Turkey has: All of its employees, from its owner to its reporters and from its editors to its page designers, are women.” ([Hurriyet Daily News](#))

### **July 19: A Phone App Will Not Stop Turkey’s Domestic Abuse Problem**

“A new phone app developed by Vodafone Turkey made headlines this past week. Called ‘the Easy Rescue app,’ it is designed to allow a woman (or a man, for that matter) who is being threatened or attacked to call for help without alerting her attacker. Although Turkey was the first country to ratify the Council of Europe’s treaty on violence against women, Turkish women are at a high risk of experiencing domestic violence. An estimated 42 percent of women over the age of fifteen in Turkey have suffered some kind of domestic abuse of a physical nature.” ([Muftah](#))

## **United Arab Emirates**

### **July 19: Foundation to empower UAE women doing business**

“A new project hopes to assist 100 UAE-based female entrepreneurs build their capacity as businesswomen and link them to financial services to grow their businesses. The project—conducted by the London-based Cherie Blair Foundation for Women and Planet Finance—began last October, and aims to train 100 women in financial literacy and enterprise development.” ([Khaleej Times](#))

## **General**

### **July 23: World’s Women Speakers Seek Gender Balance Progress**


“Female speakers from around the world will discuss how parliaments can empower and support women and promote gender equality, when they gather for the 10th Meeting of Women Speakers of Parliament. Delegates at the meeting in New York on 29-30 August will search for innovative ways to speed up the process of achieving gender equality. Their discussions will include improving gender balance in parliaments, ending violence against women and securing sufficient means to achieve gender equality.” ([Inter-Parliamentary Union](#))

### **July 28: Progress in women’s empowerment stalled by regional crises**

“Female leaders play an important role in Lebanon and the Arab world, but experts at an international conference warned Monday, July 27 that regional turmoil has interrupted the push for greater political participation and stymied efforts to improve women’s situation.” ([The Daily Star Lebanon](#))

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