

# **MENA Women's News Brief**

**July 27, 2015-August 11, 2015**

## **Bahrain**

### **August 7: 10-year-old Alzain Tareq becomes youngest-ever swimmer at world championships**

“When a 10-year-old Alzain Tareq from Bahrain took to the water in the 50m butterfly at the World Championships in Kazan on Friday morning, August 7, it prompted raised eyebrows and no little confusion. She has her eyes set on the Olympics although given there are age restrictions imposed by the IOC, the earliest at which she would be considered is Tokyo in 2020.” ([The Guardian](#))

## **Egypt**

### **July 31: Pink taxis seek to put brakes on harassment of women**

“Egypt's new pink taxis are being hailed as one more weapon in the battle against sexual harassment and violence toward women. The pink car experience lets women drive women to their destinations to protect them from potential sexual harassment or attacks. The cars are equipped with a GPS service to track the vehicle's movement and a counter to calculate the fare.” ([Al-Monitor](#))

## **Iran**

### **August 2: Iran to Host Int'l Exhibition on Women's Role: VP**

“Iranian Vice-President for Women and Family Affairs Shahindokht Molaverdi announced that the country would hold the second International Exhibition and Conference on Role of Women in Sustainable Development next month.” ([Tasnim News](#))

### **August 6: Iran negotiations: The women who made the Iran nuclear deal happen**

“President Barack Obama continues to push for Congress to sign off on a nuclear deal with Iran. But the historic negotiation was brokered with the help of an unprecedented number of female diplomats. Three Western women—two European and one American—were central to a comprehensive deal reached to curb Iran's nuclear programme.” ([BBC News](#))

### **August 7: Women's Rights In Iran: Two Steps Back, One Step Forward**

“Haleh Esfandiari spoke with us about pre- and post-revolutionary Iran—about the progress women made for themselves, for their families, and for their country before Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's oppressive regime, and how women are working to continue that progress under the current president, Hassan Rouhani.” ([Refinery 29](#))

## **Iraq**

### **July 27: Grading Iraqi Kurdistan's Progress Against Female Genital Mutilation**

“A great case study comes from the Kurdish region of Northern Iraq, which is currently considered one of the world leaders in female genital mutilation eradication. Aid organizations there first discovered that the practice was occurring in 2003 as workers fanned out to the countryside in anticipation of a refugee crisis following the U.S. invasion and toppling of Saddam Hussein. The refugees never came, but aid workers got an earful about what was happening to girls in the village.” ([Foreign Affairs](#))

**July 30: I am from Iraq. I am a feminist. Why is it so hard for people to understand? (Op-ed by Sarah Yahya)**

“People often assume (and this frustrates me to no end) that I come from an oppressive culture where my decisions are restricted. But I can’t remember a time my father has said no to me concerning the decisions I make about my own life. I’ve heard people say they think my father is not happy with the degree I chose to study. Quite the contrary, he was the one who encouraged me to pursue my passion for journalism. I was born in a household of strong feminists.” ([The Guardian](#))

**July 31: The Islamic State’s Christian and Yizidi Sex Slaves**

“Unlike Muslims, who can conform and wait out ISIS until the day it is defeated, Christians, along with ‘polytheist’ Yizidis, can don veils and give up cigarettes and alcohol, but, as non-Muslims, their very presence is an intolerable offense to the year-old ‘caliphate.’ These minority religious groups in Iraq and Syria, lacking protecting armies or militias of their own, find themselves in unique peril.” ([The American Interest](#))

**August 8: Meet the woman who left Sweden to help Yazidis flee ISIS**

“Aid worker Delal Sindy quit her job in Sweden and postponed her studies to go to Iraqi Kurdistan to help people flee ISIS, the Independent reported on Friday, August 7. The 24-year-old, half-Swedish and half-Kurdish, left Sweden 10 months ago to volunteer after ISIS launched its insurgency across northern Iraq and Syria.” ([Al Arabiya](#))

**Israel**

**July 30: Israel's secret-keeper seeks censorship reform**

“Sima Vaknin-Gill may be Israel's last chief military censor. And she makes no secret of welcoming that. After 10 years in a role that stirs frequent annoyance and occasional dread among journalists, Vaknin-Gill wants her office, which dates back to the country's wartime founding, replaced with a streamlined civilian agency more in sync with contemporary media freedoms.” ([Reuters](#))

**August 3: Israeli Army Inducts Third Mixed-gender Combat Unit**

“The Israel Defense Forces is expanding the number of female combat soldiers and establishing a third mixed-gender light infantry combat battalion. The first recruits for the new unit, which will comprise half of men and half of women, enlisted on Sunday, August 2.” ([Haaretz](#))

**Lebanon**

**August 11: Clashes in east Lebanon follow detention of 2 women**

“Clashes erupted Monday, August 10 night in the east Lebanon city of Baalbek between the Lebanese Army and armed men after two women were detained at the Dahr al-Baidar checkpoint, a security source told The Daily Star Tuesday, August 11.” ([Daily Star Lebanon](#))

**Libya**

**July 28: Profiles in Peace: Alaa Murabit (Video)**

“Alaa Murabit is the founder and president of The Voice of Libyan Women (VLW), a nonprofit organization working to promote women’s political participation in Libya through a combination of grassroots organizing and policy advocacy.” ([Georgetown Institute For Women, Peace and Security](#))

## **Morocco**

### **August 9: Moroccan Women Affected by Sexual Harassment Share Their Views**

“Although sexual harassment has been discussed over and over again, it remains an issue that women continue to endure on a daily basis. Women walking alone on the streets often times find themselves in a rush, not enjoying a simple walk due to fear of being harassed. The testimonies included in the article further prove that this can no longer be tolerated.” ([Morocco World News](#))

## **Oman**

### **August 7: Drop in female Shura aspirants cause for concern in Oman**

“Only 21 out of the 674 candidates for October’s Majlis Al Shura elections are women, a number that is raising concerns about the lack of female representation in Oman’s political system. In the 2011 elections 77 out of the 1,133 candidates were women, a total of 6.7 per cent. This year women represent just 3.1 per cent. In the current Majlis Al Shura, the lone woman, Naama Jamil Al Busaidi, makes up 1.2 per cent of the 84-member chamber.” ([Times of Oman](#))

## **Saudi Arabia**

### **August 7: In Saudi Arabia, Social Media Is Helping Reveal The Harassment Of Women**

“Two videos showing men harassing women on city streets in Saudi Arabia have spread across social media networks in recent weeks, renewing debate about harassment of women in the country. Video footage filmed in the city of Jeddah during Eid al-Fitr celebrations, published to YouTube on July 18, showed two girls being surrounded and harassed by a group of young men.” ([Huffington Post](#))

### **August 10: Saudi Women Are Joining the Workforce in Record Numbers**

“The number of employed Saudi women has surged by 48 percent since 2010, more than double the rate for men, according to the country’s Central Department of Statistics and Information. The change is especially noticeable in the private sector, where women can now be seen working as supermarket cashiers or selling lingerie in a high-end shopping mall.” ([Bloomberg](#))

## **Syria**

### **July 29: Woman with three children held on suspicion of planning to travel to Syria**

“A 30-year-old woman travelling with three children has been arrested by counter-terrorism police at Birmingham airport on suspicion of planning to travel to Syria. The woman, from Leicester, was arrested at 9.40am on Wednesday, July 29 on suspicion of preparing to engage in terrorist acts in the war-torn country.” ([The Guardian](#))

### **July 30: Assyrian Christian woman shares story of captivity by Islamic State**

“A Christian Assyrian woman released recently agreed to meet with Al-Monitor at her daughter’s home in the outskirts of Beirut and tell her story of those months living as an IS hostage and what she could learn about her captors and their identities. For security reasons, her name will not be disclosed.” ([Al-Monitor](#))

### **July 30: The Syrian refugee mother transforming women's lives in Turkey**

“Najlaa Sheekh has come a long way. Today, as the driving force behind the only known Syrian-run women's community centre in southeast Turkey, she is proving just how far she’s come. Najlaa's journey began in the midst of Syria's civil war, when armed men raided the apartment block in Damascus where

she was living with her two sons. Grabbing them, she hid in the elevator until the men left. Then she escaped to Aleppo. ([UNHCR](#))

### **August 3: Islamic State Circulates Sex Slave Price List**

“A senior United Nations official says Islamic State is circulating a slave price list for captured women and children, and that the group’s ongoing appeal and barbarity pose an unprecedented challenge. The official, Zainab Bangura, said that on a trip to Iraq in April she was given a copy of an Islamic State pamphlet, which included the list, showing that captured children as young as one fetch the highest price. The bidders include both the group’s own fighters and wealthy Middle Easterners.” ([Bloomberg](#))

### **Turkey**

#### **August 3: ‘Be quiet as a woman’ was not a sexist insult, Turkish Deputy PM says**

“Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Bülent Arınç has defended telling a female member of parliament to “be quiet, as a woman” was not a sexist insult. “Would I address her as madam if I intended to insult by asking her to be quiet as a woman?” Arınç said on private broadcaster NTV on Aug. 3.” ([Hurriyet Daily News](#))

#### **August 10: U.S. consulate in Turkey targeted as wave of attacks kills 9**

“Two women shot at the U.S. consulate in Istanbul on Monday, August 10 and at least nine people were killed in a wave of separate attacks on Turkish security forces, weeks after Ankara launched a crackdown on Islamic State, Kurdish and far-left militants.” ([Reuters](#))

### **United Arab Emirates**

#### **August 5: SMEs in the UAE narrow the gender gap**

“Big business often means a big gender gap – but the opposite is true of the thriving SME (small and medium-sized enterprises) sector in the Emirates. SMEs are approaching equality in terms of the employment of men and women, unlike the country’s male-dominated corporate boardrooms, new research has found.” ([The National](#))

### **Yemen**

#### **August 7: French Hostage Isabelle Prime Returns Home From Yemen**

“French hostage Isabelle Prime returned home to France on Friday, August 7 after spending months in captivity in war-torn Yemen. Ms. Prime, a consultant on a World Bank-funded development project, was kidnapped on Feb. 24 in Yemen’s capital Sana’a. Early Friday, August 11 Mr. Hollande said his government successfully negotiated her release from her captors”. ([Wall Street Journal](#))

### **General**


#### **August 2: Chechen women ‘cheat ISIS recruiters out of money’**

“Police in Russia’s province of Chechnya have opened a probe against three local women who have allegedly cheated the ISIS group out of money. He said they would unlikely face any punishment for fraud since it would require ISIS to file a complaint.” ([AP via Al Arabiya](#))

By **Julia Craig Romano**



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