

# MENA Women News Brief

June 7-June 21, 2017

## **Algeria**

### **June 12: Camel pizza: Sahrawi woman delivering fast food by Mercedes in the desert**

"A young female entrepreneur, Hindu Mani, from a Sahrawi refugee camp in Algeria has opened the first pizzeria run only by women. 'From the beginning I thought of [opening a pizzeria] with the idea of empowering young Sahrawi women who have been unable to [finish] their studies or work,' Mani said." ([Middle East Eye](#))

### **June 13: Algeria TV normalizes violence against women**

"Images and speeches contained in programmes broadcast by certain Algerian television channels 'publicly incites violence against women', the National Council for Human Rights (CNDH) has warned. The group called for measures to be taken in Algeria to put an end to such imagery, a statement said yesterday (June 12)." ([Middle East Monitor](#))

## **Bahrain**

### **June 11: Bahraini girl wins NAS cycling at Ramadan Sports Tournament**

"Samah Mohammed Khalid of Bahrain and Adel Abdulbaqi Al Beloushi clinched top honours in the women's and UAE Nationals' categories at the 75km road cycling held as part of the 5th Nad Al Sheba (NAS) Ramadan Sports Tournament held on Saturday, June 10." ([Sport 360](#))

### **June 18: HRH Premier Praises Bahraini Women's Dedication in Serving Nation**

"HRH the Prime Minister Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa lauded Bahraini women's dedication, and their influential contributions to enhancing the comprehensive development march witnessed by the kingdom in various fields. HRH Premier expressed pride in Bahraini women who, he said, have been able to project to the world the civilizational image of Bahrain whose renaissance is based on the muscles of all its citizens -men and women." ([Bahrain News Agency](#))

## **Egypt**

### **June 11: Women-only cafe opens in Upper Egypt**

"The instantly popular Pink Cafe for women meets a need in Upper Egypt, a conservative place where women have few options for socializations and entertainment. The cafe caters to entirely female customers. The entrance is marked with 'Girls Only' signs and the all-female staff wears pink uniforms in the all-pink decor." ([Al Monitor](#))

### **June 12: The country where tampons may cause a security alert**

"A woman travelling through Cairo airport may find her sanitary products confuse and alarm security staff, writes the BBC's Claire Read. Tampons are not discussed as an option because of the fear that they take a girl's virginity, or rather, break the hymen." ([BBC World](#))

### **June 16: Egyptian families pay huge price for gender-based violence**

"According to a new study by CAPMAS, around 42.5 per cent of Egyptian women experience psychological violence from their husbands. The study found that illiterate women are more likely to face physical violence from their husbands, at 37 per cent. Most Egyptian women – a staggering 86 per cent – experience psychological problems as a result of violence perpetrated by their husbands." ([Middle East Monitor](#))

### **June 19: Egypt woman gives wake-up call to Ramadan fasters**

"Just before dawn, Dalal Abdel-Qader paces the streets of Cairo, beating a drum and calling out to her neighbors to wake up and eat a final meal before the start of the daily Ramadan fast. The 43-year-old is one of only a few women to serve as a 'mesaharati,' a volunteer who wakes up the Muslim faithful so they can eat 'suhour,' the last meal before the start of the dawn-to-dusk fast. The centuries-old tradition is mainly carried on by men." ([Washington Post](#))

## **Iran**

### **June 12: 'They said girls don't ride bikes': Iranian women defy the cycling fatwa**

"In autumn of 2015, a young environmentalist in Arak, started a 'car-free Tuesday' campaign to encourage people to commute by bike. But when women in Marivan, a city in west Iran, took to their bikes, they were arrested by police – despite having explicitly followed the advice of the local authorities to cycle instead of drive. Khamenei issued a fatwa in September 2016, stating women were allowed to ride bikes – just not in public. The fatwa sparked a reaction from female cyclists, who posted photographs on social media of themselves on their bikes, with the hashtag #IranianWomenLoveCycling." ([The Guardian](#))

### **June 13: Iran bans women's Zumba aerobics classes**

"The Islamic Republic's Shiite leaders announced this week that, under religious law, the 17-year-old Colombian dance aerobics craze is forbidden. Ali Majdara, the head of public sports in Iran, issued a statement Sunday, June 11, banning "Zumba and any harmonious movement or body shaking instruction." The ban applies to public and private gyms, clubs and classes." ([Los Angeles Times](#))

### **June 16: Iranians rally behind soccer player suspended over wife's modeling**

"The suspension of an Iranian soccer player, Mohsen Forouzan, over his wife's (Nasim Nahali) modeling has led to a public and media outcry. The reason for the move was described as due to 'materialistic measures adopted by his wife' that 'had circulated in social media networks and later in public opinion.'" ([Al Monitor](#))

## **Iraq**

### **June 12: The Power Of Women**

"Standing on the frontline with ISIS in Northern Iraq, I stood flanked by a group of female Peshmerga soldiers. Just over the mountain behind the small Peshmerga army base, we could see a cloud of smoke shooting up into the air. The women pointed excitedly and shouted, 'they're bombing ISIS.'" ([Huffington Post](#))

### **June 15: Iraqi feminists mobilise against sectarian laws**

"Feminists and civil society activists in Iraq are calling once again for the withdrawal of a proposition made by two parliamentary commissions, the legal and the Awkaf, to re-introduce in a new form the previously rejected Ja'fari law. The law includes legislation related to personal status such as marriage, divorce, custody and inheritance etc. Activists of the Iraqi Women Network, as well as the Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq and prominent civil society activists firmly opposed all the measures that break with the unifying and relatively egalitarian nature of the PSC." ([Open Democracy](#))

## **Israel/Palestinian Territories**

### **June 19: Meet Palestine's youngest female mayor**

"Badwan, 25, became the youngest female mayor in the Palestinian territories after her independent list, the Prisoners' Bloc, won in the local elections. On May 22, the elected bloc chose a mayor, and Badwan won with six out of 11 votes." ([Al-Monitor](#))

### **June 20: Meet the Female Arab DJs Setting the West Bank Free**

"One of our friends, Mousa, from the town of Husan outside Bethlehem, insisted that we vote for Yasmine Eve Kheshiboun, 'the only female DJ in Palestine.' The 27-year-old DJ, who's just starting her career, is a native of Nazareth, where she owns the Tree House bar. Over the last year, Tree House has attracted a number of young DJs who come to practice their art in front of an audience." ([Haaretz](#))

## **Jordan**

### **June 11: Micro-fund boosts women's opportunities for entrepreneurship**

"Initiated by Save the Children over 20 years ago, the Micro-fund for Women (MFW) is a non-profit organisation that aims to empower women in the field of business and encourage them to become self-sufficient breadwinners for their houses and communities. 'As working women, we have overcome hardships and proved that we can do it. We were married at a young age and didn't get the chance to continue our studies. This is a way to do what we love and gain income,' Manal Obeid said." ([Jordan Times](#))

### **June 15: Two Jordanian women prepare for world record highest-elevation football game**

"Two Jordanian female football enthusiasts will take their passion to a new level, moving from the football pitches of Jordan to the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro. Their passion for football will see Yasmeeen Shabsough and Haneen Khateeb travel to Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, defying the odds in order to inspire more young, female Jordanians to join in and play football." ([Jordan Times](#))

## **Kuwait**

### **June 12: Women and Family Affairs Panel Approves 3 Proposals**

"The Women and Family Affairs Committee in the National Assembly approved three proposals on Monday - obligating those planning to get married to undergo medical examination before the wedding, participate in a two-week training course and submit criminal case sheet." ([Arab Times](#))

## **Lebanon**

### **June 8: The 81-year-old woman inspiring a nation to recycle**

"81-year-old Zeinab Mokalled who set up an all-woman rubbish collection team in her village in Lebanon now has a stream of visitors asking how she did it. For nine months in 2015 and 2016 rubbish piled up on the streets of the capital, Beirut, and even now a lack of landfill sites means some of the city's waste is being thrown in the sea." ([BBC World](#))

### **June 17: Women's Quota: A societal challenge**

"Lebanon has been able to overcome another gridlock by agreeing on a new electoral law. The early discussions around the new draft law included pledges of a quota for women in order to guarantee better representation of Lebanese women in politics. Unfortunately, the political factions could not agree on the women's quota which has been negatively perceived by women's rights associations. Historically, women in Lebanon have been leading in various sectors; however, political participation is still weak since 1963 when the first woman entered Parliament." ([The Daily Star](#))

## **Morocco**

### **June 8: Riffian Women Activists Step Out, Breaking Stereotypes**

"The conservative nature of the northeastern region has proven to not be an obstacle for women, as protestors like Nawal Ben Aissa, Salima Zayani and Yasmina El Farsi have come out to express their opinions, defend their cause and stand for their families." ([Morocco World News](#))

### **June 12: Shredding the patriarchy: Two Moroccan women just surfed onto the world stage**

"Although it's the first time the Agadir Open has held a women's division, El Gardoum and Berrada have been competing at other Moroccan surf contests for years. Recently the two also travelled with the national team to the International Surfing Association's World Surfing Games in France, making them the first women to represent Morocco at a surf contest abroad." ([PRI](#))

### **June 14: Morocco's Aicha Chenna Wins Monte Carlo Woman of the Year Award**

"Aicha Chenna, a Moroccan civil society activist defending for more than five decades the rights of unwed mothers and their babies to a decent life, has received the Monte Carlo Woman of the Year Award in Monaco in recognition for her lofty actions in promoting civil rights for a vulnerable social category." ([The North Africa Post](#))

### **June 16: Meet the Grassroots Association Empowering Moroccan Women**

"Mina Rouatab, the President of IKHAE Fraternité Association, founded the organization after she saw the need to advocate for women who were victims of domestic violence in Rabat. Since then, with the help of volunteers, the non-profit has grown to include more than 150 women and has led to new opportunities for the women involved." ([Morocco World News](#))

## **Qatar**

### **June 12: Migrant Women Sentenced for Having Unmarried Sex in Qatar**

"In Qatar, like in most of the Middle East, 'zina' laws ban unmarried couples from having sex. Rights advocates say those most likely to end up in jail for this transgression are low-skilled migrant women. There are no official statistics on zina cases, but Rothna Begum, Human Rights Watch's women's rights researcher for the Middle East and North Africa, says most of the cases they learn of take place in the Gulf region, and that it is mostly women who are charged with the crime." ([News Deeply](#))

## **Saudi Arabia**

### **June 8: Saudi woman driver activist released after second arrest**

"A Saudi Arabian human rights campaigner, Lojain al-Hathoul, who was famously detained for 73 days in 2014 for defying the kingdom's ban on female drivers, has been released after being held in Dammam on Sunday, June 4. Lojain al-Hathoul's husband tweeted on Wednesday, June 7 that she had been released after being detained at King Fahad International Airport, thanking all those who'd supported them." ([Middle East Eye](#))

## **Syria**

### **June 14: Syrian Kurds working to liberate Yazidi women enslaved by ISIS**

"Khalaf is one of many Yazidi women that Kurdish fighters in northern Syria have set out to free from ISIS in covert operations, a female Kurdish militia commander told Reuters. They have dubbed the operation 'revenge for the women of Sinjar', the homeland of Iraq's ancient Yazidi minority which ISIS overran in the summer of 2014." ([Straits Times](#))

### **June 19: A Teenage Syrian Refugee on a Mission to Educate Her Generation**

“Nineteen-year-old refugee education campaigner Muzoon Almellehan has become the youngest-ever UNICEF goodwill ambassador. After she and her family fled to Zataari refugee camp in Jordan, she was upset to see many girls getting married young and dropping out of class. Almellehan was appointed as youngest ever UNICEF goodwill ambassador on June 19. She is also the first UNICEF ambassador with official refugee status.” ([News Deeply](#))

### **Turkey**

#### **June 14: Pioneering Turkish women’s rights activist Şirin Tekeli dies at 73**

“Turkish author, translator and women’s rights activist Şirin Tekeli died at the age of 73 in the Aegean province of Muğla on June 13, Doğan News Agency has reported. An iconic pioneer in women’s rights movements in Turkey, Tekeli founded many associations working to better the lives of women in the country. She translated over 25 books about women and democracy from French and English into Turkish.” ([Hurriyet Daily News](#))

#### **June 16: Turkish city introduces female-only carriages, shrugs off criticism of ‘excluding women’**

“Starting from this month, women in the affluent Turkish city of Bursa will have priority boarding rights on designated inter-rail coaches. The innovation - mimicking those in Japan and Germany - has drawn anger from feminists and opposition politicians. ‘The issue is not that men and women can no longer be in the same coach - we have merely prioritized their comfort,’ Mayor Recep Altepe said.” ([RT](#))

### **United Arab Emirates**

#### **June 10: Emirati women feeds 6,000 workers iftar in Abu Dhabi**

“Every Ramadan, the act of charity fills all nooks and corners of the UAE. However, some individuals go the extra mile with the spirit of giving. Thirty-year-old Afra Al Dhaheri is one Emirati who truly believes in these words, saying that it is in her "blood" to help the community as much as she can. Al Dhaheri has various initiatives up her sleeves, including helping find homes for the neglected and abandoned animals in the UAE Capital, as well as feeding a whopping number of 6,000 workers Iftar.” ([Khaleej Times](#))

#### **June 13: NAMA highlights achievements of three generations of Emirati women**

“More than 200 female participants attended the event organised by NAMA Women Advancement Establishment, a Sharjah-based women’s advancement organisation, which shed light on women’s achievements and experiences in the field of business, leadership and volunteer work, through a session whose speakers have utilised their talents to give back to the community, the business or to oneself.” ([Gulf Today](#))

### **Yemen**

#### **June 11: Yemeni expats find sisterhood, escapism on Beirut roller derby track**

“Despite bruises and broken ankles, a dozen young women from different countries are determined to keep up the first roller derby club in Beirut. Today, Roller Derby Beirut is a team of a dozen girls, mostly undergraduate students from different Arab countries – from North Africa to the Gulf. The multinational group attracts attention for practicing an unusual sport in the region, especially as it is rare to see hijabi women playing rough sports.” ([Al Monitor](#))

### **June 10: Activists say women in Yemen victims of militia brutality**

“Yemeni Coalition for Monitoring Human Rights Violations confirmed that Yemeni women are the first victims of assaults and brutal acts of coup militias in the country. The Coalition held a seminar on Friday, June 9, at the United Nations in Geneva on the sidelines of the 35th session of the Human Rights Council where its member Hani al-Aswadi said that since the Houthi coup against the legitimate authority in Yemen in September 2014, discriminatory practices against women have increased following the marginalization of all Yemeni women’s movements and organizations.”

([Asharq Al-Awsat](#))

### **Regional**

### **June 13: Amal Awad: ‘Arab women have traditionally been written about in a very patronizing way’**

“With insight into both the western and Arabic worlds, the author Amal Awad explores how these cultures intersect and what it means for women like her. She interviewed more than 60 women in Australia and the Middle East about feminism, religion, love, culture and more for her latest book, *Beyond Veiled Cliches: The Real Lives of Arab Women*. ‘I had read so many books by women who aren’t Arab who go into the Arab world to explore the lives of Arab women – and I found them quite patronising.’ ([The Guardian](#))

### **June 15: Why Do Men Harass Women? New Study Sheds Light On Motivations**

“A May study from Promundo, an international research group, and U.N. Women sheds fresh light on men's motivations for harassing women on the streets in four areas in the Middle East: Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco and the Palestinian territories. About half the men surveyed said they felt stressed, depressed or ashamed to face their families. Perhaps harassing women is a way to assert their power, suggests Barker.” ([NPR](#))

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