

# **MENA Women News Brief**

**June 7, 2016-June 21, 2016**

## **Egypt**

### **June 10: Egypt: What Three Egyptian Women Have to Say About Sisi Two Years Into His Presidential Term**

“Before his inauguration as president in June 2014, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi repeatedly vowed that Egypt will be ‘as big as the world,’ heralding an improvement in Egyptians' living conditions. Aswat Masriya asked three Egyptian women of different socioeconomic strata about their views on how the country's economy has evolved two years into Sisi's four-year presidential term.” ([All Africa](#))

### **June 20: Egypt's Women Bikers Break Gender Barriers**

“As Egyptian women continue to challenge gender stereotypes and break barriers by engaging in activities typically associated with men, a group of Egyptian women have garnered attention for riding motorbikes. In a video by Reuters, a group of women share their experience with riding motorbikes in Egypt, despite the activity stereotypically being viewed as one for men, rather than women, would engage in and enjoy.” ([Egyptian Streets](#))

### **June 20: Egyptian Women Stand Up to Inequality and Harassment in New Campaign**

“It's time to stand up against inequality and chase your dreams. That is the message of a new campaign by the National Council for Women in coordination with Egypt branches of the UN Population Fund, UNDP, UN Women, and the Swedish Embassy in Cairo. In a series of videos, Egyptian women are urged to not let their gender stand in the way of their dreams.” ([Egyptian Streets](#))

## **Iran**

### **June 14: Iran cleric says women dressing immodestly is causing the country's rivers to dry up**

“A senior cleric in Iran said that women dressing in a Western style is causing the country's rivers to run dry. Seyyed Youssef Tabataba-nejad, a member of the country's senior clerical body responsible for appointing Iran's Supreme Leader, made the comments as he called on the country's government to do more to curb women's immodest dressing, saying that it is ‘useless’ to witness a sin and ‘only bicker about it.’ ‘The police force can use the [paramilitary] Hezbolloahi forces to carry out operations to root out vice,’ he said.” ([The New York Times](#))

### **June 14: ‘Women to hold 45 percent of labor market share in Iran by 2026’**

“[In] the next ten years about 45 percent of the Iranian labor market will be in the hands of women, Moslem Khani, an advisor to the Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor and Social Welfare, said on Monday, June 14. Studies show that the ratio of men to women in the market, which is currently around 80 percent to 20 percent, will completely change in the next 10 years and the country will face a phenomenon of ‘househusbands,’ he added. For the time being, the working population in Iran is around 24 million, 19.4 percent of which are women, Khani said.” ([Tehran Times](#))

### **June 15: Iran accuses British-Iranian woman of trying to overthrow state**

“A British-Iranian woman arrested in Tehran in April has been accused of espionage and attempting to overthrow the country's leadership, according to a statement from Iran's Revolutionary Guards on Wednesday, June 15. Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, 37, was accused of being ‘involved in the soft

overthrow of the Islamic Republic through... her membership in foreign companies and institutions,' the state-run Mizan news agency reported." ([Middle East Eye](#))

## **Iraq**

### **June 7: A Tide of Violence and Discrimination Against Women in Iraqi Kurdistan (Op-Ed by Johanna Higgs)**

"The situation for women and girls in Iraqi Kurdistan is indeed abysmal. During my first visit to the region I met with women's rights activists, politicians and the Iraqi Kurds themselves, both male and female. What I learnt was that women and girls face pervasive violence, domestic abuse, honor killings and blatant discrimination. A situation which has only been worsened by the arrival of ISIS."

([Huffington Post](#))

### **June 9: Exclusive: Amal Clooney to represent ISIS survivor Nadia Murad and victims of Yazidi genocide**

"In a triumphant win for the thousands of Yazidi women who have been enslaved by the Islamic State, Amal Clooney has confirmed that she will represent victims of the Yazidi genocide, including ISIS survivor and Nobel Peace Prize nominee Nadia Murad." ([The New York Times](#))

### **June 20: Disarming sexual violence as a weapon of war in Iraq and Syria**

"This week the UN released a report noting that Daesh has systematically used rape as a tool to erase Yazidi identity in Iraq and Syria to the extent of committing genocide, with thousands of young girls and woman sold into sexual slavery and forced into marriage. The Syrian regime meanwhile has been accused of using sexual violence to torture female and male prisoners." ([Middle East Monitor](#))

## **Israel**

### **June 7: Jewish woman detained for taking Torah scroll to Western Wall**

"Lesley Sachs, the executive director of Women of the Wall, was detained as she exited the Western Wall plaza Tuesday, June 7 after prayers to mark the start of a new month in the Hebrew calendar. Women of the Wall is a feminist group of Jews that has fought for 27 years for equal prayer rights with the male-dominated religious establishment that has enforced strictly Orthodox and traditional practice at the site." ([The Boston Globe](#))

### **June 11: Domestic violence is a major threat for Israeli Arab women. Why won't the police intervene? (Op-Ed by Ayelett Shani)**

"In the past decade, 1,170 people have been murdered in Arab communities, 90 percent of them with firearms. That includes violence against women, among criminals who are settling accounts with each other and also innocent victims. In April, six people were murdered, in some cases within hours of one another. People call it a 'phenomenon,' but it's not a phenomenon: It's our reality, and we have been living in it for a very long time." ([Haaretz](#))

### **June 15: Israeli Druze Women Seeking to Break Into Workforce Face Catch-22**

"Most of the Druze women who do work are employed in teaching and education, with very few in other fields. The focus on education helps to perpetuate high unemployment and low salaries. The Druze in Israel, who belong to an offshoot of Islam, are concentrated in the north of the country, with 98 percent of them living in 19 small towns. The area suffers from all the same problems of Israel's periphery – a shortage of jobs, a lack of support networks like day-care for working mothers, and inadequate public transportation to get them to jobs." ([Haaretz](#))

## **Jordan**

### **June 10: Jordan's first self-defense center for women boosts fight for rights**

"It started out as an ordinary day for Rasha Salih, a young woman who works as an accountant for a private trading company in the center of Amman. Like most women in Jordan, she wears a headscarf and modest clothes when she goes out. After a long day at work, the 26-year-old returned to her compound in the Shmeisani district at around 6pm and took the lift to her flat. A young man was already in the lift when she got in. He started to flirt with her, and before she knew it, he was trying to rip off her shirt. There was nowhere to escape, so Salih put her self-defense training to use by directing a few kicks to her attacker's head and stomach." ([The Guardian](#))

## **Libya**

### **June 20: How Libya's Savvy Women Entrepreneurs Are Building Businesses Amid Conflict**

"Canadian nonprofit MDA is empowering women entrepreneurs in Libya: 'Early on, MEDA's programs took place in person and in major cities, drawing women with both early ideas and operational businesses. One ran a private elementary school; another aspired to launch a recycling facility. But given the ongoing security concerns associated with travel between regions, MEDA is now piloting an online program in collaboration with education technology company D2L that's designed to reach to women in rural areas.'" ([Fast Company](#))

## **Morocco**

### **June 10: Morocco Liberalizes Abortion Laws, Amends Penal Code**

"The Moroccan government approved on Thursday, June 9 an amendment to the Moroccan Penal Code that liberalizes the nation's abortion laws. This amendment is the most recent manifestation of efforts to reform the 50-year-old code in accordance with the goals of the 2011 constitution. Previously, Article 453 of the Penal Code mandated that abortion was only permissible if the health of the mother was in danger. Yesterday's reform amended the law to allow abortion in cases of incest, rape, and birth defects." ([Morocco World News](#))

### **June 18: In Morocco's Atlas mountains, Amazigh girls find the way out of rural poverty: an education**

"Illiteracy rates for rural women and girls remain as high as 90 percent. Girls, especially those in areas such as the High Atlas, are more likely to drop out after primary school. Only 26 percent of girls in rural areas enroll for secondary education, according to the World Bank. These problems disproportionately affect the Amazigh, commonly known as Berbers, the indigenous people of Morocco." ([The Guardian](#))

## **Palestinian Territories**

### **June 13: Israel has arrested 215 Palestinian women since October**

"Israel has arrested 215 Palestinian women, including minors, since the start of the Jerusalem Intifada in October last year, QudsNet reported Sunday, June 12. According to the Palestinian Prisoners' Centre for Studies (PPCS), the captives included the mothers, wives, and daughters of prisoners, as well as women who are over 60 years old. PPCS spokesman Riyad Al-Ashqar said that there had been a 'notable increase' in the targeting of Palestinian women, noting that there is at least one arrest every day." ([Middle East Monitor](#))

### **Will new Palestinian agency be enough to stop violence against women? (Op-Ed by Ahmad Melhem)**

"Violence against Palestinian women is being reported more frequently, and women there are fighting back — but in a nonviolent way. One obstacle in the battle has been a lack of accurate statistics with

which to influence politicians and increase public awareness. Now the Ministry of Women's Affairs plans to establish the National Observatory on Violence Against Women. The ministry will collaborate with the Ministries of Social Affairs and Health, the police and a number of civil society institutions.” ([Al-Monitor](#))

## **Qatar**

### **June 13: Qatar convicts Dutch woman held 'after being raped'**

“A court in Qatar has convicted a Dutch woman of having sex outside marriage after she told police she was raped. The 22-year-old was handed a suspended sentence and fined \$824 (£580). She will also be deported. Her lawyer said her drink had been spiked at a Doha hotel in March and she had woken up in a stranger's flat, where she realized she had been raped. Her alleged attacker, who said the sex was consensual, was sentenced to 100 lashes for having sex outside marriage.” ([BBC](#))

## **Saudi Arabia**

### **June 7: Saudi grants 50 women the right to travel without a male guardian**

“Saudi Arabia has reportedly given 50 women whose guardians have passed away the legal right to travel alone. Saudi Gazette cited Tarahum Committee member and Takamul Initiative for Legal Consultancy lawyer Nisreen Al-Ghamdi as saying Jeddah Family Civil Status Courts had recently approved the applications, five of which were non-Saudis who were able to travel with their children.” ([Gulf Business](#))

### **June 16: Saudi court gives \$800,000 alimony to woman for years of abandonment**

“A personal status court in Riyadh found a man guilty of negligence and forced him to pay SR3 million in unpaid alimony to his abandoned wife, Al-Madinah newspaper reported. A source said the man in question had abandoned his wife after she gave birth to their first child in 1983.” ([Al Arabiya](#))

## **Syria**

### **June 9: Woman liberated from ISIS in Syria casts off mandatory black clothing and celebrates by only wearing red**

“Women in parts of Syria are celebrating being freed from ISIS and the group's draconian dress code by wearing brightly colored clothing - with one Kurdish woman vowing to wear red for the rest of her life. Under ISIS rule, women in Abu Qalqal, Manbij, were forced to wear only loose black clothing covering their whole body, and a double veil over their face – or risk imprisonment.” ([The Independent](#))

### **June 11: Child marriage on the rise among Syrian refugees**

“Salma, a 13-year-old Syrian refugee, was playing with friends outside her tent when her step-mother asked her to come inside and told her to prepare to get married in two days. Salma, who fled her home in Syria's Daraa with her step-mother and two sisters and lived in Zaatari camp, was shocked and thought her step-mother was joking.” ([Jordan Times](#))

### **June 17: Training women journalists in Syria**

“Returning to Syria after working for the BBC in London, Zaina Erhaim found that all of the citizen journalists reporting on the civil war were men. When she decided to run training sessions for women who wanted to be journalists, she quickly realized the obstacles they faced were enormous. Zaina spoke with the Thomson Reuters Foundation after a recent appearance at London's Frontline Club.” ([Reuters](#))

## **Tunisia**

### **June 9: Fears grow over ISIL recruitment of Tunisia women**

“About 700 women and girls are among the 5,000 Tunisians who have been recruited by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and other armed groups. As they travel to countries such as neighboring Libya, they leave behind their families who quickly become distraught about their loss.” ([Al Jazeera](#))

### **June 12: Women’s integration through ‘quota must for sustainable development’**

“Integration of women in all walks of life, including national assemblies and other law-making entities, through quotas is a must to achieving sustainable development of Arab economies, says a woman Arab leader, who was actively involved in drafting Tunisia’s new constitution.” ([The Peninsula](#))

### **June 16: Tunisian parliament passes gender parity bill for local elections**

“Tunisia’s parliament overwhelmingly passed a bill on Wednesday, June 15 that will greatly help the country to increase female representation across the country at next year’s March 2017 local elections. The new laws will see parties or blocks put forward an equal number of male and female list leaders, which should step up representation.” ([Middle East Eye](#))

## **Turkey**

### **June 11: Turkish President Under Fire for Views on Women**

“Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's renewed call for the country's women to forgo birth control and have at least three children has drawn ire from women’s rights advocates and is being questioned by Islamic scholars and political experts.” ([Voice of America](#))

### **June 19: Women’s rights and Erdoğan (Op-Ed by Saadet Oruc)**

“President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has been the target of baseless criticism in the international arena. Recently, his remarks on women's rights and motherhood were used to ‘confirm his anti-democratic rights policies’ by those who do not miss any chance to manipulate his image. His emphasis on the role of motherhood for a woman was harshly criticized, ignoring his intention to give a message on the importance of the different roles women have.” ([Daily Sabah](#))

## **United Arab Emirates**

### **June 7: Two UAE ladies among world’s ‘100 Most Powerful Women’**

“Two UAE women have been ranked among the world’s 100 Most Powerful Women by international magazine Forbes. Sheikha Lubna Al Qasimi, UAE's Minister of State for Tolerance, has been ranked 43rd in the list of Power Women 2016. Earlier this year, Sheikha Lubna Al Qasimi was appointed to the role of Minister of State for Tolerance. Second on the prestigious list is Raja Easa Al Gurg, Managing Director of Easa Saleh Al Gurg Group, who sits on 91st position.” ([Emirates 24/7](#))

### **June 13: UAE climber creates history: First Arab woman to scale 7 summits**

“Suzanne Al Houby, a Palestinian-born and UAE-based mother of two, has become the first Arab woman to conquer the daunting seven summits of the world. She achieved the feat by reaching the summit of Denali, which is the highest mountain peak in North America, at an elevation of 6190 meters ((20,310 feet) above sea level.” ([Emirates 24/7](#))

## General

### **June 9: UN campaign highlights unsung work of women in Middle East peace-building**

“Seeking to help a region plagued by war and violence, the UN has unveiled a campaign to highlight the role of women in peace-building and conflict resolution – hoping that their largely unsung work in Iraq, Yemen, Syria, Libya and Palestine will inspire others. A series of five films commissioned by UN Women is entitled in Arabic and English simply #WeAreHere, a statement of defiance and a message of future commitment.” ([The Guardian](#))

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