

# **MENA Women's News Brief**

**June 2, 2015-June 16, 2015**

## **Egypt**

### **June 9: Beatings, abuse and blame: being transgender in Egypt**

“Aisha is one of many transgender women who have been targeted in Egypt since 2014. More than 150 transgender people, women in particular, have been arrested, says Scott Long, a gender and rights activist who has been actively documenting the crackdown.” ([The Guardian](#))

### **June 15: Egyptian activists fear female genital mutilation initiative will fall short**

“The national female genital mutilation (FGM) abandonment strategy, announced in the ballroom of the Grand Nile Tower hotel in Cairo on Sunday, June 14 calls for doctors to be trained, prosecutors to be mobilised, and a media campaign to be launched to change public perceptions. Yet some activists fear the campaign will fall short in eradicating FGM, and even the officials behind the new programme acknowledge they face a formidable task.” ([The Guardian](#))

## **Iran**

### **June 4: Female genital mutilation performed in Iran**

“The first in-depth report into female genital mutilation (FGM) in Iran has claimed that the practice is prevalent in ‘secret pockets’ of at least four provinces of Iran and ‘continues to violate aspects of women's sexual rights.’ The report, authored by Kameel Ahmady, a research anthropologist based in London was released today to coincide with the International Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression observed every year on 4 June.” ([Newsweek](#))

### **June 8: With Backpacks and Exposed Skin, European Officials Roil Iranians**

“The woman wore form-fitting clothes and a scarf wrapped around her head that revealed a few of her blond tresses. The men carried backpacks to official meetings. Nothing all that unusual in most places, but enough to touch off a firestorm of criticism this weekend from Iranian lawmakers, who accused their visitors of flouting Islamic law by, as one put it, wearing ‘extremely weird clothing.’ Two worlds collided when the foreign affairs committee of the European Parliament met with the head of the Iranian Parliament, Ali Larijani, a top power broker whose idea of a wild outfit is wearing a blue vest under his dark suit in winter.” ([New York Times](#))

### **June 9: AP Interview: Iran partially opens stadium doors to women**

“A limited number of Iranian women will be allowed to watch Volleyball World League games in Tehran later this month, Vice President for Women and Family Affairs Shahindokht Molaverdi, has told The Associated Press, part of a government move to allow women and families to attend male sporting events.” ([Associated Press](#))

### **June 9: Iran will stop protests against women in stadiums**

“Iran will not tolerate demonstrations against the presence of women at male sporting events, Mohammad Bagher Nobakht, a government spokesman said Tuesday, June 9 after threats from ultraconservatives to disrupt any relaxation of restrictions.” ([France 24](#))

### **June 16: Doubts persist over Iranian pledge to ease ban on women at sports events**

“The international volleyball federation says it has received assurances from Iran that women will be allowed to attend a world league match in Tehran on Friday, June 19 amid concerns that the country might backtrack at the last minute. Women’s rights activists have complained that Iran appeared to be retreating from an earlier decision to ease restrictions on female attendance due to increasing pressure from hardliners. Hopes that the longstanding ban could be eventually overturned is left hanging in the air with various officials expressing conflicting statements.” ([The Guardian](#))

### **Iraq**

#### **June 8: ISIS slave markets sell girls for 'as little as a pack of cigarettes', UN envoy says**

“Teenage girls abducted by Islamic State fighters in Iraq and Syria are being sold in slave markets ‘for as little as a pack of cigarettes,’ the UN envoy on sexual violence Zainab Bangura said on Monday, June 8. Bangura visited Iraq and Syria in April, and has since been working on an action plan to address the horrific sexual violence being waged by ISIS fighters.” ([The Guardian](#))

### **Israel**

#### **June 5: First female Arab Israeli lawmaker to head Knesset committee**

“Israel’s Knesset elected on Thursday, June 4 an Arab Israeli lawmaker to chair a committee, for the first time in its history, Israeli paper Haaretz reported. Aida Touma-Suleiman, 50, was elected by a unanimous vote to head the Committee on the Status of Women.” ([Al-Arabiya](#))

#### **June 12: Israel’s Abortion Committees (Op-ed by Journalist and Translator Mairav Zonszein)**

“I knew Israeli law required that all abortions be approved by a committee. I also knew that the procedure was widely accessible. I’d never heard of an Israeli woman being denied an abortion (as opposed to say, a divorce, which must be granted by the husband in a religious court). I am 33 and free of medical issues. But because my partner and I are not legally married, I felt some relief knowing that I had a clear ticket out. Still, I balked at the realization that I had to request permission.” ([New York Times](#))

### **Jordan**

#### **June 8: What Does the Future Hold for the Women of Jordan? (Op-Ed by Huffington Post Women Contributor Zeena Saifi)**

“For the past couple of years, the Middle East has witnessed cycles of economic, political and social turmoil. Although some may think otherwise, Jordan was not excluded from these cycles. Witnessing the riots taking place in Jordan, I noticed a trend resounding on the streets of Amman. In a society marred with social, political and economic inequality, men and women alike were taking to the streets calling for reform and protesting price increases.” ([Huffington Post Women](#))

### **Lebanon**

#### **June 10: The Women Leading Lebanon’s Startups**

“Beirut is rapidly shaping up as a crucial player in the region’s startup scene. Venture Magazine spoke to four Lebanese female entrepreneurs who have made major headway in Lebanon, the region, and even the world with their startups and creations.” ([Venture Magazine](#))

## **Oman**

### **June 13: Why women are a minority in the private sector in Oman? (Op-ed by Times of Oman columnist Saleh Shaibany)**

“Women are a minority in the private sector making up only 21 percent of the total work force as men continue to dominate various positions. This situation has improved slightly in the last five years. In the period between 2009 and 2014, women made up only 18 percent in the private sector. However, they have been making impressive progress in the civil service. They now make up 44 percent of all civil servants from 31 percent in 2009. Why then should women lag behind in the private sector?” ([Times of Oman](#))

## **Saudi Arabia**

### **June 8: Saudi Arabia shuts 90 bridal shops ‘for not employing women’**

“Saudi authorities have shut 90 bridal shops in Jeddah for failing to employ women, it was reported on Monday, June 8. The Ministry of Labour conducted raids in a popular mall where there is a cluster of bridal shops. It claimed the shops have violated a law that requires such establishments – which are mainly patronised by female customers – to offer job opportunities to women.” ([Arabian Business](#))

### **June 10: Eighty women to run for Saudi Arabia’s Eastern Province council**

“There are over 80 women running for the Saudi Arabian Eastern Province city council elections in August with at least 10 female candidates contesting places on each municipal committee, a social activist told Al-Hayat. Fowziyah Al-Hani of the ‘Baladi’ campaign, which works to increase women’s representation in the city council, said female participation in the Shoura Council has improved Saudi society.” ([Al-Arabiya](#))

## **Syria**

### **June 14: Artists help Syrian refugee women tell their stories**

“Since the beginning of the Syrian civil war in 2011, the stories of female Syrian refugees in Lebanon have been told through various media and reports by nongovernmental organizations, expressing great concern for their safety. Some art initiatives are trying to create an image of these women beyond that of a victim, giving them voice through works that sensitively look at their lives and situations.” ([Al-Monitor](#))

## **Turkey**

### **June 8: Record number of women elected to Turkish parliament**

“Dilek Öcalan, niece of Abdullah Öcalan, the jailed founder of the Kurdistan Workers’ party (PKK), is one of a record number of female MPs entering the Turkish parliament. A total of 96 women won seats in Turkey’s Grand National Assembly in Sunday June 7’s elections, bringing the proportion of female deputies to a historic high of 17 percent, compared with 14 percent after the 2011 elections.” ([The Guardian](#))

### **June 12: Turkish court makes landmark ruling on women’s murders**

“In a landmark ruling in late May, an Istanbul administrative court held the Interior Ministry responsible for the murder of Ayşe Ince, who was stabbed to death by her husband after a pattern of domestic abuse, ordering the Ministry to pay 360,000 Turkish lira (\$132,500) in compensation to the family. ‘Protecting its citizens’ life and property is a fundamental duty of the state,’ the ruling said.” ([Al-Monitor](#))

## Yemen

### **June 10: Meet Amani Yahya, Yemen's first female rapper**

"Twenty-two-year-old singer Amani Yahya, who has had to flee her troubled homeland of Yemen, is determined to use her music to highlight women's rights, child marriage and sexual harassment in the Arab world. Yahya, along with her family, has had to flee to Saudi Arabia, where the kingdom's strict rules mean her fledging musical career has come to an abrupt halt." ([Gulf News](#))

## General

### **June 7: The Trials of Spring**

"The Trials of Spring is a six-part series about women who played important roles in their countries during the Arab Spring. The series is presented by The New York Times."

"Tunisia: Keeping the Peace" is available [here](#).

"Libya: Wake Up, Benghazi!" is available [here](#).

"Bahrain: Our Oath" is available [here](#).

"Syria: Brides of Peace" is available [here](#).

"Egypt: Life's Sentence" is available [here](#).

"Yemen: When is the Time?" is available [here](#).

By **Julia Craig Romano**

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