

# MENA Women News Brief

March 15-March 29, 2017

## **Algeria**

### **March 27: Women in Algeria face 'financial blackmail' as a result of earning an income**

"More and more Algerian women are challenging traditional norms by getting jobs, but many see their salaries confiscated by their husbands despite a law against the practice." ([Al Bawaba](#))

## **Egypt**

### **March 19: Cairo film festival seeks to empower female filmmakers**

"An international women's film festival was held in Cairo this month to highlight cinematic work by female filmmakers, empower them and promote their presence and role in the film industry." ([Al Monitor](#))

### **March 22: Full women crews pilot two EgyptAir planes in celebration of Egypt's Women's Day**

"Egypt's Minister of Civil Aviation Sherif Fathi witnessed the take-off of two EgyptAir planes for the first time fully piloted by women crew members in celebration of the country's Women's Day." ([Ahram Online](#))

### **March 22: Are women the solution to Egypt's economic problems?**

"Efforts and programs calling for the empowerment of women at all levels, especially the economic level, have become an important part of the statements and plans of international organizations and Egyptian institutions." ([Al Monitor](#))

### **March 27: Banned from travel, Egyptian activist receives 'alternative Nobel Prize' in Cairo**

"Founder and director of Nazra for Feminism Studies Mozn Hassan has been awarded the Right Livelihood Award – dubbed the alternative Nobel Prize – for her work advocating the equality and rights of women who are subjected to violence, abuse and discrimination and lobbying the Egyptian government for equal rights." ([Middle East Monitor](#))

## **Iran**

### **March 21: The Story Of Rahele Zakaie: Another Woman Perished In Iran**

"News of Rahele Zakaie's death means nothing to many people. Another human being amongst the 7.5 billion now roaming the earth. She died of cancer. However, her loss brought much sorrow to those women who in recent years were and have been detained in the political prisoners' ward of Tehran's notorious Evin Prison, those who shared moments of joy and tears with Rahele." ([Forbes](#))

### **March 23: Iranian women take big risks to share 'illegal' videos of their 'ordinary' lives – acid attacks included**

"My Stealthy Freedom, the popular Facebook page famous for featuring photos sent by women from Iran 'who want to share their stealthily taken photos without the veil,' has announced a new project featuring weekly profiles of 'ordinary [Iranians] dealing or struggling with everyday issues inside Iran.'" ([The New York Times](#))

## **Iraq**

### **March 15: Self-immolations on the rise among Iraqi Kurdish women**

“Female Kurdish fighters, who represent less than 1 percent of the roughly 200,000 peshmerga forces, have become ‘the bankable icon’ of the fight against the Islamic State. But beyond the illusions of a land that supports women’s rights, the reality in Iraqi Kurdistan is much less glamorous.” ([Al Monitor](#))

### **March 22: Power, corruption and lies: Iraqi women battle for recognition**

“They have one of the best addresses in Baghdad and some of the worst accommodation. An unimpeded view of the slow-moving waters of the Tigris is little compensation for the misery of some 6,000 refugee families from Fallujah who live on the corniche in the northern suburb of Adamiyeh.” ([Middle East Eye](#))

### **March 26: Why one Iraqi female MP is calling for law to encourage polygamy**

“Iraqi parliamentarian Jamila al-Obeidi called on Sunday, March 12 for a bill that would offer financial support to men who take on more than one wife. She said the measure would be one way to tackle the social problems facing widows and divorced women in Iraq.” ([Al Monitor](#))

## **Lebanon**

### **March 25: Lebanese penal law allows rapists to walk free**

“A controversial law protecting rapists in Lebanon is expected to be reconsidered in parliament this week. Article 522 in Lebanese penal law allows men who rape women to avoid prosecution if they marry their victims. The law can also suspend any conviction for a person who has committed rape, kidnapping, or statutory rape. The only stipulation is marrying the victim.” ([Lebanese Examiner](#))

### **March 25: Lebanese women wage painful custody battles**

“Every week, young divorcee Rita Choukeir looks forward to the three precious hours she gets with her young son in Lebanon, where child custody is awarded according to religious rulings.” ([Gulf Times](#))

### **March 27: Lebanon: demonstrators call for equal citizenship rights for women**

“Scores of people from across Lebanon convened at Ain Al-Mreisse’s corniche Sunday, March 26 to protest a law which prevents Lebanese women from passing their nationality to family members.” ([Al Bawaba](#))

## **Libya**

### **March 23: Women and Tribal Leaders Call for “Balanced” Libyan Peace Process**

“A delegation of Libyan tribal leaders and women leaders has called on the UN to take a balanced approach to the Libyan peace process. The delegation from the National Movement for Libya (NML) met with UN officials and U.S. government representatives while visiting New York and Washington D.C. to discuss the UN-led peace process in Libya.” ([IPS](#))

## **Morocco**

### **March 15: Moroccan and Spanish Officials Meet to Implement New Family and Women Program**

“A Moroccan delegation of Human Rights Council members from Azghenghan traveled to Roquetas de Mar, Spain to learn about women and family training projects that could be implemented in Morocco.” ([Morocco World News](#))

### **March 20: World Bank Organization Launches Morocco’s “EmpowerHer” Hackathon**

“The World Bank Organization (WBO) launched its EmpowerHer Hackathon initiative for Morocco on March 18, at Technopark in Casablanca. The EmpowerHer Hackathon, already established in other

countries, is intended to address the restrictions that prevent women from playing a larger role in the labor force." ([Morocco World News](#))

**March 24: Women Saving the Planet: Hakima El Haité of Morocco**

"Hakima El Haité, host of COP22 in Marrakech, is a pioneer for women – in science and diplomacy, and above all in the struggle for climate justice." ([Pacific Standard](#))

**Oman**

**March 18: Omani women unhappy with hijab ban legalization in European Union**

"Ever since a European Union (EU) court passed a law last week, legalizing the headscarf ban in the workplace, Muslim women from all over the world have reacted with mostly disappointment. Omani women have reacted to this law with dissatisfaction." ([Times of Oman](#))

**Palestinian Territories**

**March 19: Meet the men behind Gaza's first female sports club**

"Rajab Sarraj and Hassan Skaik from the Gaza Strip are preparing to launch the first women's sports academy by June 2017. This unprecedented initiative aims to help revive women's sports in Gaza and will allow girls and women, between the ages of 4 and 40, to practice sports and become professional athletes." ([Al Monitor](#))

**March 20: Palestinian women try to bring baseball to Gaza**

"The young Palestinian women substitute Islamic headscarves for baseball caps and field tennis balls with fabric gloves, giving a decidedly local feel to the great American pastime." ([Arab News](#))

**March 22: Mother's Day and the suffering of imprisoned Palestinian mothers**

"The Arab world celebrated Mother's Day yesterday (March 21), but missing out on the celebrations and family time renews the suffering of 19 Palestinian mothers experiencing harsh conditions inside Israeli jails." ([Middle East Monitor](#))

**March 22: Women dare to dance in Gaza**

"Women in Gaza have increasingly begun forming and performing as all-female dance troupes to perform at local Muslim and Christian weddings. Their initiative has been driven in part by a desire to earn money, given the lack of job opportunities and Gaza's high rates of unemployment, as well as to make space for women in a conservative society only accustomed to male dance troupes." ([Al Monitor](#))

**March 26: UN commission approves draft resolution on Palestinian women**

"The United Nations Commission on the Status of Women approved a draft resolution on Saturday, March 25 regarding the status of Palestinian women, including strengthening economic and social policies to enhance the situation of women in the occupied territory, while strongly condemning Israel's human rights violations in the Palestinian territory." ([Middle East Monitor](#))

**March 26: New Film Spotlights Palestinian Women Navigating Life 'In Between' Cultures**

"Filmmaker Maysaloun Hamoud does not like being typecast. 'The Israelis say, you don't look Arab or Palestinian,' she says, rolling her eyes. 'Huh? If I wear a dress or outfit that [doesn't look] religious, I cannot be a Palestinian? I have to be, like, exactly how you design me?'" ([NPR](#))

**Qatar**

**March 20: QYH event aims to empower women**

“In what was termed by many as a revolutionary move, Qatar Youth Hostel (QYH) created a platform for women across Qatar to get inspired to reach heights, with the valuable tips of successful women, through an event titled ‘First Women’s Forum.’” ([The Peninsula](#))

### **Saudi Arabia**

#### **March 20: MULVIHILL: Give Saudi women a seat at the table**

“Saudi Arabian leaders made headlines last week when they launched the nation’s first Girls Council in Qassim province. When photos of the event were released, Internet users were quick to point out that the photo of the launch of the Qassim Girls Council contained no girls or women.” ([The Cavalier Daily](#))

#### **March 22: Girls, revolution, and Saudi Arabia? Meet the creator behind this bold new comic**

“Saudi Arabia's women are rising up to take on their oppressors - at least according to a comic that was recently presented in the ultra-conservative Islamic kingdom. ‘The ruling monarchy had a sick plan for your demise, but as you will soon see, not every woman can be suppressed,’ says the comic, which is entitled ‘The Saudi Girls Revolution.’” ([Al Bawaba](#))

#### **March 22: Saudi Arabia wants more women in the workforce by 2020: Ministry of Labor**

“The Saudi Ministry of Labor said the Nitaqat nationalization program aims to provide job opportunities for Saudi nationals and reduce the unemployment rate from 12.1 to 9 percent and boost the percentage of women in the Saudi workforce to 28 percent by 2020.” ([Al Bawaba](#))

#### **March 24: Private-sector jobs for Saudi women up by 145 percent**

“The number of private-sector Saudi female employees registered at the General Organization for Social Insurance (GOSI) reached 496,800 by the end of the third quarter of 2016. This marks a 144.62 percent increase from the 203,088 jobs that were occupied by the end of 2012.” ([Arab News](#))

### **Tunisia**

#### **March 20: Viral Video Exposes Cultural Response to Rape in Tunisia**

“Rania Bel Haj, a teen actor in Tunisia, didn’t consider women’s rights high on her list of priorities until she played a teen girl who was raped and forced to marry the older man who assaulted her in a high school video.” ([Women's eNews](#))

#### **March 27: Tunisians demand change to Muslim marriage decree**

“An alliance of Tunisian human rights groups on Monday, March 27, called on authorities to scrap a 1973 decree that bans Muslim women from marrying non-Muslims.” ([Arab News](#))

### **United Arab Emirates**

#### **March 20: ‘Sheikha Fatima is a role model for women in global affairs’**

“Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN Women, has praised the UAE’s active participation and support of the organization’s initiatives, and expressed her appreciation of the limitless efforts of Sheikha Fatima Bint Mubarak, Chairwoman of the General Women’s Union, Supreme Chairwoman of the Family Development Foundation, and President of the Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood in advancing the status and participation of women and girls, as well as in numerous humanitarian fields both regionally and internationally.” ([The Gulf Today](#))

### **Yemen**

#### **March 24: The Scourge of Gender Inequality, Underage Marriage in Yemen**

“In Yemen, discrimination and violence against women are endemic and have destructive consequences. Women’s rights are regularly bounded due to Yemeni tribal practices and a deaf legislature. Yemeni customs have classified women as a lower rank in society and made them an easy target for discrimination.” ([Morocco World News](#))

### **Regional**

#### **March 17: The hijab ruling is a ban on Muslim women (Iman Amrani)**

“Last week’s decision by the European Court of Justice to allow the hijab to be banned in the workplace is yet another sign of the continent’s obsession with how Muslim women dress. The ruling states that the hijab can be banned only as part of a policy barring all religious and political symbols – and so framed in a way that doesn’t directly target Muslim women.” ([The Guardian](#))

#### **March 18: Arab Women Take Back Their Images in Art**

“The depiction of Arab women in art is a relatively recent phenomenon. For centuries, it was unconditionally banned; the only existing representations were 19th-century European fantasies of women lazing in harems. Now, women from the Muslim world appear frequently in painting, sculpture and photography, yet the issue remains fraught.” ([The New York Times](#))

**By Oumama Kabli, Middle East Program**

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