

# **MENA Women News Brief**

**March 15, 2016-March 29, 2016**

## **Egypt**

### **March 19: Egyptian women workers challenge norms at Cairo petrol station**

“For 20-year-old Amira, the opportunity to take a job that is usually reserved for men in Egypt's patriarchal society was a no-brainer. ‘This is something that has long been only associated with men...it is a new and fun thing that I was so excited to try,’ said Amira, part of a small group of female petrol station attendants who started working at a station in Cairo in November.” ([Ahram Online](#))

### **March 21: New campaign against face veil sparks controversy in Egypt**

“A new campaign titled ‘Ban the niqab’ was launched in Egypt earlier this month, calling for a ban on the full face veil in all state institutions, including universities, public hospitals, schools, and government departments. In an interview with *Al-Monitor*, Mohamed Attiya, the campaign's founder, said that the reason he launched the campaign was the volatile political climate in Egypt and the attempts made by the Muslim Brotherhood and its supporters to cause chaos and panic among Egyptians by carrying out terrorist attacks against state institutions.” ([Al Monitor](#))

## **Iran**

### **March 16: Controversy engulfs multiple Iran's female lawmakers**

“It has only been three weeks since Iran held landmark parliamentary elections, yet several controversies have already arisen over remarks made by both an incoming female lawmaker and a veteran member of parliament. Meanwhile, the qualifications of two Reformist candidates, one of them a woman, have also been challenged.” ([Al Monitor](#))

## **Iraq**

### **March 16: Women in Raqqa Make Secret Film: Life Under ISIS (video)**

“Using hidden cameras, two brave Syrian women show what life is like inside al-Raqqah, capital city of the Islamic State in northern Syria. The women made the film knowing they would be stoned to death if caught.” ([The Clarion Group](#))

### **March 17: As Kerry condemns ISIS genocide, calls to recognize something else: Femicide**

“While the United Nations defines the term ‘genocide’ as ‘acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group,’ it does not cover systematic violence against a particular sex. And according to one French lawmaker, the violence being committed by the Islamic State against women is so systematic and so ferocious that it needs a new term in international law to define it: femicide.” ([The Washington Post](#))

## **Israel**

### **March 16: Is It Safe to Be a Woman in Israel? Knesset Releases the Numbers**

“The Knesset Research and Information Center has released the results of a survey dealing with the status of women in Israel. The survey, commissioned by the Knesset Committee on the Status of Women and Gender Equality, revealed large gaps between different groups of Israelis, with Arab women feeling the most unsafe. The survey examined a woman's sense of safety and security from different perspectives, including economic, political, and health security.” ([The Jewish Voice](#))

### **March 29: Israel's "chained women" fight for right to divorce**

“Marriage in Israel is governed by Jewish law, which requires the husband to grant permission through what is known as a ‘get’ before his wife can divorce him. If the woman has a child with another man without an official divorce, the child is considered fatherless and cannot marry under Jewish law. There are officially 131 ‘chained’ women involved in rabbinical court cases in Israel, where around 11,000 divorces of Jewish couples are granted annually, said rabbinical courts director Shimon Yaakobi.” ([Your Middle East](#))

## **Morocco**

### **March 20: Why Domestic Violence Still Plagues Morocco**

“Morocco is hailed as one of the most progressive Muslim countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. Yet despite amendments made to the Family Code in 2004 that increased women’s rights, domestic violence is still not a crime. A bill addressing violence against women [VAW] in Morocco had been in limbo for more than 10 years when, on Thursday, March 17, lawmakers finally took up the issue and passed the bill.” ([Newsweek](#))

### **March 24: Morocco’s indigenous Amazigh women unite against Islamists and Arab elites**

“In North Africa, Berber women have banded together to fight political Islamism, polygamy, child marriage, and impunity for perpetrators of domestic violence. In Morocco, home to the largest population descended from the region’s original inhabitants, activists blame the dominant contemporary Arabic culture as well as imported religious extremism and ideologies aligned with Islamic State.” ([New York Times](#))

## **Palestinian Territories**

### **March 15: How this new divorce law further marginalizes Gaza's women**

“The Higher Sharia Court Council in the Gaza Strip issued a decision Sunday, February 7 granting a husband the right to file for divorce if his wife subjects him to verbal or physical abuse. The ruling has angered the feminist community, because it gives the husband the opportunity to divorce his wife while denying her rights to which she would otherwise be entitled in a divorce.” ([Al Monitor](#))

### **March 16: Gaza's first female runner steps out for women**

“Inas Nofal, a 15-year-old from the Mughazi Refugee Camp in Gaza, first started jogging eight months ago after watching running programmes and competitions on television, and has become the first female runner in the Gaza Strip. Conservatives attitudes mean female participation in sports is not the norm in her community, but Nofal wants to challenge her critics and says she will proudly represent the people of Palestine in competitions around the world.” ([Al Bawaba](#))

## **Saudi Arabia**

### **March 19: Call to end special treatment of women at Saudi security checkpoints**

“According to the Ministry of Interior, deviant groups were using women to carry out terrorist acts because they knew security officers were unlikely to frisk women. Usually women are given special treatment and are unlikely to be searched, but this approach should be reconsidered and women should be searched just like men at any checkpoint if they arouse a security officer’s suspicion, according to security experts interviewed by Al-Riyadh Arabic daily recently.” ([Al Arabiya](#))

### **March 28: New domestic violence center in Saudi Arabia flooded with calls**

“The undersecretary for social welfare, Abdullah Almeiqil, revealed that the Center for Domestic Violence received 1,890 calls during the first three days of its establishment. Almeiqil said that about 49

percent of the cases reported to the center were new. ‘In total, the center received 916 new cases during the three days,’ he added.” ([Arab News](#))

### **March 28: Labor Ministry insists on 100 percent feminization in women shops**

“The Ministry of Labor is insisting on 100 percent feminization of all positions in retail stores selling women’s accessories in major cities of the Kingdom, according to a ministry source. He said the ministry cooperates with the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs to enforce the decision. The source said the two ministries are in the third phase of the drive to feminize of women’s retail sector.” ([Saudi Gazette](#))

## **Syria**

### **March 15: The Heroic Women Digging Out Syria’s Bomb Victims**

“Meet the brave first-aid workers risking their lives to help dig civilians out of the rubble.” ([The Daily Beast](#))

### **March 21: Asian Women Are Being Trafficked Into Syria as Servants and Slaves**

“In recent months, multiple reports have surfaced of poor, rural women from Bangladesh and Nepal being trafficked into Syria to work as domestic servants—and sometimes as sex slaves. ‘They are innocent, uneducated women who come from the villages. They do not know anything about Syria and what is happening there,’ Commander Khadaker Golam Sarowar of the Bangladeshi police told Reuters. In the past year alone, he says his unit has come across 45 different cases of women who have been beaten, tortured, or raped in Syria.” ([The Daily Beast](#))

### **March 24: Yazidi Women, Children Freed in IS Prisoner Exchange**

“Fifty-one Yazidi women and children were released this week by Islamic State (IS) after a prisoner exchange by Kurdish forces in Syria, reports and local activists said. The former IS prisoners were returned home to the town of Sinjar in northern Iraq where they were kidnapped by militants nearly 19 months ago.” ([Voice of America](#))

## **Turkey**

### **March 26: More Turkish women consider writing code as career**

“In Turkey, the percentage of female code writers surpasses 20 percent, according to Nuri Ödemiş, deputy chairman of the Istanbul-based IT and Software Authors Association, or BIYESAM. In recent years, Turkish girls have outperformed boys at the central university placement exams. Not only are girls outscoring boys in tests, they are also enrolling into universities in higher numbers.” ([Hurriyet](#))

## **General**


### **March 22: The role of women is imperative for peace (Op-ed by Haifa Fahoum Al-Kaylani and Ibrahim Gambari)**

“UN Security Council Resolution 1325, adopted in 2000, recognized, for the first time, the vital contribution of women to conflict prevention and resolution. As a symbolic act and practical call to action, the resolution acknowledged what we have experienced throughout our careers in diplomacy, business, academia, and development: the involvement of women in peace processes significantly improves the prospects for a more durable peace. Yet, 16 years on, formidable political, socio-cultural, and economic obstacles remain to the full participation of women in peace efforts, whether as peacemakers or as citizens - something the resolution was supposed to help overcome.” ([Gulf Times](#))

By Nishaat Shaik



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