

MENA Women News Brief

March 30-April 11, 2017

Egypt

April 4: In Egypt, female preachers get platform to fight extremism

"Inside a mosque in south Cairo, a group of women wearing the headscarf listen attentively to a sermon. The topic is about morals in Islam. The speaker is Wafaa Abdul Salam, one of more than 140 Muslim female preachers recently licensed by the government to offer religious lessons to women in the mostly Muslim country. The move is the latest step by state authorities to tighten their grip on mosques and deny the now-outlawed Muslim Brotherhood and its loyalists a key platform to influence worshippers." ([Gulf News](#))

April 7: Egyptian women's tales of sexual harassment anger conservatives

"Hundreds of Egyptian women and girls have come out to denounce sexual harassment and share personal stories about it on social media, breaking a taboo and raising the ire of some in the country's conservative majority. In posts on Facebook and Twitter from the weekend to Wednesday, April 5, rare, candid stories focused on women's first experiences of harassment, almost all of which occurred in childhood and some involving family members and teachers." ([USA Today](#))

April 9: New Egyptian anti-sexual harassment campaign challenges passive bystanders

"Egyptians have launched many campaigns in recent years to combat the sexual harassment that continues to plague Egyptian society. Some of these campaigns implore victims to speak up and report the incident, while other initiatives condemn the harassers. A recent awareness campaign launched by a team of three Egyptian women has adopted a new approach to fighting this social epidemic: bystander intervention." ([Al-Monitor](#))

April 10: This Egyptian Muslim Woman Died Defending Christians On Palm Sunday

"A Muslim police officer who died in the line of duty during a terrorist attack on Coptic Christians in Egypt is being hailed as a hero. Brigadier General Nagwa El-Haggar was one of at least seven Egyptian officers killed on that day, three of whom were Muslim women. She was reportedly posted at the entrance to St. Mark's Coptic Orthodox Cathedral in Alexandria on Sunday, April 9 where the Coptic Pope Tawadros was leading a Palm Sunday mass. The suicide bomber attempted to enter the cathedral through a main gate, but was stopped by security officers, according to the state-owned news organization Ahram Online." ([Huffington Post](#))

Iran

April 6: Female Tehran marathon participants forced to run inside

"Women may be forced to run on an indoor track during what has been described as Tehran's 'first international marathon' on Friday, April 7. 'TehRUN', in Iran's capital, is expecting 600 Iranian participants, including 156 women, and 160 foreign runners, among them 50 women, to take part in what its website describes as an opportunity for 'building bridges, breaking barriers.' Female participants were dismayed to be told in an email from the organisation three weeks ago that they would no longer be allowed to take part in the race." ([Independent](#))

Iraq

April 3: 20 bodies of women, children killed by IS found south of Mosul

"Twenty bodies of women and children, executed by the Islamic State, were found in the south of Nineveh province, a medical source said. 'The hospital of Qayyarah town, south of Mosul, received 20 bodies of women and children who were killed by IS while trying to escape the western side of Mosul,' the source told Alsumaria on Monday, April 3. The bodies were found by security troops near the town, he added." ([Iraqi News](#))

April 5: Peace Heroes: Iraq's Fatima Al-Bahadly

"Fatima left her home for 20 days, walking into the enemy's battlefield in search of her recruited son. Able to retrieve him, the mother of two boys did not stop at that, but was able to convince tens of other young men to disarm. 'My 15-year-old son, who was one of the best students in our province, decided to carry arms and go to battle without even informing me or his father,' Al-Bahadly told Ms. 'It was a big shock for me. I thought that my son will go to battle and die. For around 20 days I searched for him.'" ([Ms. Magazine](#))

Israel

April 5: Israel appoints its first female Muslim diplomat

"The Foreign Ministry on Wednesday, April 5 appointed Rasha Atamny, 31, to represent the Jewish state in Ankara, Turkey, making her Israel's first female Muslim diplomat. Atamny, who is completing the final months of the ministry's cadet course, will serve as the embassy's first secretary in the influential Muslim nation." ([Times of Israel](#))

April 5: Israeli women team up for equal pay in tech

"High-tech workers know there's no problem that can't be solved with a spreadsheet. So a group of Israeli women seeking to combat the gender wage gap in the industry created one last month with data about their qualifications and salaries. They hope to empower one another in salary negotiations. As of Friday, March 31, nearly 200 women had contributed to the survey, and the data showed a wide range of earnings – even for women with similar qualifications working in similar positions." ([Times of Israel](#))

April 10: How religious female soldiers are transforming the IDF

"Anyone who has participated in Israel Defense Forces (IDF) activities of late, or even just covered those activities for that matter, will have noticed a growing presence of women in an increasing number of field positions, including combat positions. All around the world, the IDF is seen as a trailblazer. It is perceived as a liberal army, constantly opening new opportunities for women, who volunteer to serve in combat positions." ([Al-Monitor](#))

Lebanon

April 5: Lebanese women decry 'unjust' Labor Ministry decision against foreign spouses

"Some 70 protesters Wednesday, April 5, rallied outside the Labor Ministry in Beirut's Ashrafieh to call on Labor Minister Mohammad Kabbara to overturn a law that treats spouses and children of Lebanese women as foreign workers. The protesters argued that the spouses and children of Lebanese women should have the same rights as Lebanese. Under Lebanese law, children carry the nationality of their fathers. Women cannot pass their nationality to their spouses and children." ([Daily Star Lebanon](#))

April 10: Documentary sews Palestinian narrative through women's eyes

“The Sofil cinema in Beirut hosted a fundraising event March 29 featuring a screening of “Stitching Palestine,” a documentary directed by Carol Mansour and produced and researched by Muna Khalidi. The occasion was to raise funds for a music program in the Rashidiyyah Palestinian refugee camp, in southern Lebanon.” ([Al-Monitor](#))

Libya

April 6: ISIS kidnapping refugee women, forcing them to convert and selling them as sex slaves in Libya

“Libyan authorities have released 28 Eritreans and seven Nigerians who were captured and enslaved by ISIS in Sirte and had been held in detention since the jihadist group lost the city in December. The group, all but two of whom are women and children, escaped from Sirte, a former Islamic State stronghold in central Libya, while forces from the nearby city of Misrata battled to oust the militants late last year.” ([Independent](#))

Morocco

April 9: Moroccan Young Women Writing out Their Dreams

“There is nothing more heart-warming, inspiring and promising than the atmosphere created by a team of Moroccan youth discussing and writing about their dreams. Their eyes were glinting with pride and excitement. When talking, their hands, gestures and facial expressions all revealed a compelling harmony that manifested – to a mind-blowing extent – the freedom they wholeheartedly felt, touched on and enjoyed.” ([Morocco World News](#))

Palestinian Territories

April 4: How this mentoring program is empowering young Arab women

“As part of the Big Sister/Little Sister program, girls 18-25 years old in the Gaza Strip and Beirut can choose a successful Arab businesswoman who lives either in an Arab or other foreign country as a big sister. They can consult with their big sisters by videoconference about the most important problems facing them in their educational or societal lives or even sensitive problems.” ([Al-Monitor](#))

April 7: Gaza's only fisherwoman navigates dangerous waters

“The world may not know her name, but anyone who has visited Gaza's seaport will recognise Madleen Kullab. The daughter of a fisherman, 22-year-old Kullab is the only female fisher in Gaza. It was not her choice to follow her father's path: As a child, she dreamed of becoming a fashion designer, but the winds do not always blow as the vessels wish.” ([Aljazeera](#))

April 9: How Palestinian female inmates are getting a second chance

“The General Directorate for Correction and Rehabilitation Centers, affiliated with the Ministry of Interior and National Security, which is responsible for managing civil prisons, inaugurated the ‘Glimmer of Hope’ exhibition on March 26. For two consecutive days, handmade products made by about 40 female inmates serving sentences for various crimes in prisons in Gaza were displayed and sold.” ([Al-Monitor](#))

Saudi Arabia

April 4: Arab TV station pulls women's campaign, and the "appropriated" LGBT rainbow

“A Saudi-funded private broadcaster has apologised after its social media campaign on women's empowerment sparked an online backlash. The Arabic ‘#Be_Free’ campaign was organised by one of the Dubai-based Middle East Broadcasting Centre's channels, MBC 4. While the original campaign

tweets have since been deleted, screengrabs are circulating online but MBC says some of them have been ‘fabricated’.” ([BBC](#))

April 5: Why women are taking to YouTube in Saudi Arabia

“Al-Juhara Sajer is a 25-year-old lifestyle and makeup vlogger from Saudi Arabia. With nearly half a million subscribers on YouTube, Sajer is part of a media revolution that has seen the Kingdom achieve the highest YouTube watch time per capita of any country in the world, according to analytics agency Tubular Labs. In a country where movie theaters are illegal and music concerts are seldom permitted, young Saudis are increasingly relying on social media for entertainment.” ([CNN](#))

April 10: Saudi Shura Council denies it will support motion to allow women to drive

“A Saudi Shura Council member has rejected claims that the body would discuss and support a motion to allow women to drive in the country. Sami Zaydan says it’s a ‘social issue’ not a legal one and the Shura Council was not the appropriate forum to discuss the matter. Reports last month claimed that the Shura Council, where women hold 30 of its 150 seats, would back the motion.” ([Gulf News](#))

April 11: 35,000 Saudi women studying abroad on government scholarships

“Some 35,000 Saudi women are studying abroad in 60 countries on government scholarships, said Shoura member Huda Al-Hulaisi, adding that Vision 2030 is based on the role of women and youths. She noted the gains of Saudi women in recent years as they have become members of the Shoura Council and municipal councils.” ([Arab News](#))

Syria

April 7: Trump Puts Thousands Of Women In Syria At Risk By Defunding U.N. Group

“President Donald Trump’s administration defunded a crucial global maternal health organization this week, and justified the move by accusing the group of supporting abortions and forced sterilization in China. But the United Nations Population Fund doesn’t actually fund, support, or administer abortions or sterilization procedures, said Sarah Craven, the program’s director. The core mission of UNFPA is to ensure that marginalized women get adequate access to maternal health care so that they can deliver healthy babies in a dignified way.” ([Huffington Post](#))

Turkey

April 11: ‘Art is my weapon’: meet the Turkish artist taking on Erdoğan

“Ekin Onat, 41, is a classically trained ballet-dancer-turned-artist with a history for making heavy political weather. A feminist current runs through her most provocative pieces – multimedia installations themed around sexual abuse, rape, child brides, women treated as second-class citizens – but her next project is set to be her most forceful yet. Onat is taking on President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.” ([The Guardian](#))

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