

MENA Women News Brief

March 29, 2016-April 12, 2016

Egypt

March 31: Egyptian feminist leader Mozn Hassan resolute in face of official investigation

“The head of a women’s rights organization remained defiant after becoming the focus of an investigation launched by the Egyptian authorities as part of its ongoing crackdown on civil society. Mozn Hassan, executive director of Nazra for Feminist Studies, said the group would continue to work, regardless of what happened to her.” ([The Guardian](#))

April 6: Why Egyptians have mobilized against public sexual violence (Op-ed by Vickie Langohr)

“In 2012, young Egyptian female and male activists launched a number of groups dedicated to ending public sexual violence, or PSV. They sought to end sexual harassment on the street and in public transit, and to stop mass sexual assault on major shopping boulevards. Though Egypt has not witnessed the democratic blossoming many had hoped for in the immediate aftermath of the uprisings, discourse on key social issues has evolved in significant ways.” ([Washington Post](#))

April 8: Why Egypt abstained from voting on UN sex crime resolution

“Egypt’s UN ambassador Amr Abu Atta created quite a stir by abstaining during an otherwise unanimous vote to punish and repatriate UN peacekeeping battalions that include personnel suspected of sexual abuse in their assigned countries. There’s a lot of speculation over why Abu Atta declined to vote Friday, March 11 on the U.S.-drafted resolution before the UN Security Council. Some imply he simply chose to swim against the tide to become famous. But there are many alternative reasons. Egypt believes a country could suffer far-reaching consequences under the UN resolution.” ([AI Monitor](#))

April 8: Egypt, Uprising and Gender Politics - Gendering Bodies/Gendering Space (Essay by Sherine Hafez)

“Though the Egyptian uprising of 2011 sought democracy and social justice, women quickly discovered that, despite their extensive participation in the protests, they were to be excluded from rewriting the Egyptian constitutional referendum, barred from committees chosen to negotiate with the military forces, and repeatedly harassed and threatened with gang rape in Tahrir Square. Women’s bodies, once mobilized, and mobilizing, after the end of Mubarak’s regime became the source of contention and debate.” ([Project on Middle East Political Science](#))

April 9: 'My rights? What rights?' New study sheds light on women’s unpaid work in Egypt

“Illiterate, poor and concentrated in Egypt’s south — or Upper Egypt — they mostly work in small businesses or on agricultural land owned by their families. Egyptian women doing unpaid work of this sort constitute 46 percent of Egyptian women working for family-owned businesses, according to a study released in April.” ([Egypt Independent](#))

Iraq

March 30: Why Women Are Leaving The U.S. & Europe To Join ISIS — & What Can Be Done (Op-ed by Jenifer Fenton)

“Sally Jones left the United Kingdom to join her husband in Syria. Yusra Ismail allegedly stole a friend’s passport to make the trip from her Minnesota home. Hoda Muthana aided the fight from

Alabama, where she reportedly ran a Twitter account urging more Americans to move the war-torn Middle Eastern country.” ([Refinery 29](#))

April 1: UK urged to give asylum to 100 women who fled Isis captivity in Iraq

“Campaigners have called on the British government to grant asylum to at least 100 women and girls who escaped after being kidnapped and raped by Islamic State militants in northern Iraq. Although many hundreds have managed to escape or have been rescued, according to Kurdish regional authorities, they are often deeply traumatized and face uncertain futures on returning to their communities.” ([The Guardian](#))

April 5: ISIS arrests Fallujah woman who revealed group’s atrocities

“ISIS has arrested a woman in the Iraqi city of Fallujah after she revealed atrocities committed by the group in a video aired on Al Arabiya News Channel and its sister station al-Hadath.” ([Al Arabiya](#))

April 7: Iraqi widows, mothers and girls face heightened risks in displaced camps

“In addition to nearly one million Iraqis displaced since 2006/7, there are more than 3.3 million people in Iraq who have been displaced since January 2014, the U.N. refugee agency, UNHCR, said last month. In 2015, more than half of Iraq’s displaced were women, most of them aged between 25 and 59, the United Nations said. Lone women, whose husbands or fathers have been killed or gone missing, are especially vulnerable with forced marriages, destitution and violence a reality for many struggling to survive without a male figurehead in the family.” ([Reuters](#))

Kuwait

April 8: Kuwait leads the Gulf states for women in workforce

“Allowing women to become servicewomen was, in fact, a breakthrough in the northern Arabian Gulf country where despite all the openness that characterizes it, the society overall remained conservative and did not easily accept changes, especially to the status of women. However, thanks to a robust determination from the country’s leaders and pro-women activists, the situation started to change and more women have gradually entered the security and work forces, steadily rising to positions of power and influence.” ([Gulf News](#))

Lebanon

April 4: Rescued Syrian sex slave worker talks to BBC (video)

“Lebanese police, last week, freed 75 women held against their will and forced into sexual slavery. Many of the victims came from Syria. Their captors would allegedly threaten to publish naked pictures of them online, to force them into prostitution. BBC has spoken to one of the victims—a sixteen-year-old who was duped into leaving Damascus.” ([BBC](#))

Palestinian Territories

March 31: She’s a young runner in Gaza, and she refuses to give up the race

“Inas Nofal, 15, is Gaza’s only competitive female runner. Since the militant Islamist movement Hamas took over the strip in 2007 and barred mixed groups of men and women in many public activities, female athletes have faced wide-ranging restrictions. Girls rarely participate in sports, and if they do it is behind closed doors.” ([Washington Post](#))

April 10: Gaza women revive henna tattoo tradition

“The tradition of henna body painting has resurfaced among Palestinian women who paint their bodies and feet for ornamental purposes. This tradition vanished in the past decades, but it is gaining popularity

again and has become a source of living for many women who help to make ends meet amid the deteriorating living conditions in the Gaza Strip.” ([Al Monitor](#))

Syria

April 2: Mass grave including women and children found in Palmyra after recapture from Islamic State

“Syrian troops have identified 45 bodies so far in a mass grave found in the city of Palmyra after it was recaptured from the Islamic State, a military source said. It held the bodies of both civilians and Syrian army members captured by the Islamic State. Syrian state news agency SANA said on Friday, April 1 the grave contained many women and children and some of the bodies had been beheaded.” ([Reuters](#))

April 3: One woman’s battle to heal her home city of Homs

“A 34-year-old architect and mother of two, Marwa al-Sabouni was born and grew up in Homs, scene of some of the most vicious fighting. Unlike many, however, she did not leave Syria – or even Homs itself – during the war. The practice she and her husband still run together on the old town’s main square was shut up almost immediately: this part of the city quickly became a no-go area. But her home nearby somehow survived intact, and her family safe inside it.” ([The Guardian](#))

April 4: Former IS captive: Calling it a genocide is not enough

“Women who spoke to Al-Monitor about their experience being captured and held by the Islamic State say that genocide is not a strong enough label for the terror group's crimes.” ([Al Monitor](#))

April 6: 'Another Madaya': Women in Syria's Daraya warn of mass starvation

“Women in Daraya, a Syrian town besieged for more than three years by government forces, warn in an open letter that they are ‘on the verge of witnessing’ their children and relatives starve to death if aid does not reach them soon. With a population of 8,000 and within a few miles of aid warehouses, Daraya has never received UN food aid, ‘not one crumb,’ U.S. Ambassador to the UN Samantha Power said this week.” ([Middle East Eye](#))

April 8: Syria's detained women face a lifetime of rejection

“The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR), a UK-based, independent violations monitor, estimates at least 117,000 men, women and children have been arbitrarily arrested and detained since the uprising began in 2011. The government, the SNHR concluded, carried out the large majority of those arrests. After being freed, women may face social stigma and rejection from spouses and family members, in part due to a widespread belief that all women are raped while in detention.” ([Middle East Eye](#))

Tunisia

April 11: Tunisia uncovered a history of state sexual violence. Can it do anything? (Op-ed by Hind Ahmed Zaki)

“For decades, thousands of Tunisian women suffered from systematic sexual violence at the hands of state agents. The establishment of the Truth and Dignity Commission less than two years ago has empowered many of these women to seek legal remedies and public recognition of those crimes. Redress for gender-based violations at the hands of state agents in Tunisia represents an important, albeit until recently ignored, dimension of Tunisia’s post-revolutionary democratic transition.” ([Washington Post](#))

Turkey

March 31: These women in Turkey saw the need for a different kind of news, despite the danger

“Founded four years ago, Jinha Women’s News Agency is an all-female, multilingual news agency spread across Turkey, Iraq, and Syria. Its coverage is proving increasingly important in a region wracked by conflict and hardly notable for gender equality. Much of the focus is on women and children.” ([Los Angeles Times](#))

April 1: Majority of Turkish women subjected to violence, pursue legal means

“Some 86 percent of women in a recent study by Turkey’s Ministry of Family and Social Policies said they have been subjected to physical or psychological violence by their partners or family, and pursued legal proceedings in the aftermath, revealing the prevalence of violence against women across the country. The research was undertaken by Turkey’s family ministry investigate a current law in place to protect families and prevent violence against women.” ([Hurriyet](#))

April 7: The spiral of violence - How misogyny in Turkey threatens democracy and peace (Op-ed by Colleen Curry)

“Last year more than 300 women were killed in Turkey — a 20 percent increase — and 94 women have been killed in the first three months of 2016, according to Bozkurt, who has launched an organization called We Will Stop Women Homicides. The increase in violence has come from a change in attitude toward women’s rights at the top, with Erdogan and men in the government telling the country that women belong in the home, raising children, and are not equal to men.” ([New York Times](#))

April 11: Turkey’s women’s movement, a century in the making

“This week marks 92 years since the establishment of Turkey’s first women’s organization, which is nearly as old as the Republic of Turkey itself. The organization was initially founded as a political party; in fact, the newly-founded Turkey’s first party amazingly catered specifically to women’s rights. Kadınlar Halk Fırkası, or the People’s Party of Women, was founded to institute the political and social rights of women.” ([Hurriyet](#))

United Arab Emirates

March 31: Power of Emirati women growing in the UAE’s nuclear industry

“Emirati women now make up 21 per cent of those working for the country’s nuclear sector. According to a report by the UAE mission to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), 50 women were employed in 2014 with more than 150 joining the following year.” ([The National](#))

Yemen

March 31: year of conflict puts 3.4 million women of reproductive age at risk, UN reports

“A year of conflict in Yemen has left an estimated 3.4 million women of reproductive age between 15 and 49 years in need of humanitarian assistance, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has reported, expressing growing concern about the situation. Of them, nearly 500,000 are pregnant and will give birth within the next nine months. The lack of reproductive health services and supplies can result in an estimated 1,000 maternal deaths among 68,000 pregnant women who are at risk of life-threatening complications during childbirth.” ([UN News Centre](#))

General

April 9: Can Arab Gulf women be successful as peace negotiators? (Op-ed by Samar Fatani)

“An innovative approach involving women to address the threatening challenges within the region is the need of the hour. The conflicts and the political crisis in the Arab region make it very critical to involve women according to their merit and not their gender in addressing the threats of wars, conflicts and terrorist activities. Educated and qualified women experts should be given an opportunity to negotiate solutions to the escalating violence and highlight the injustices inflicted by wars and global conflicts.”

([Al Arabiya](#))

By Nishaat Shaik



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