

MENA Women News Brief

May 10-May 23, 2017

Egypt

May 18: 600,000 Egyptian Women Get Married Before Age of Consent: Study

"A study conducted by the International Population Council, the National Council for Population and Development, and Assiut University on rates of early marriage in upper Egypt has revealed that about 600,000 women have been married before reaching 18 years old in 2015-2016." ([Egyptian Streets](#))

May 21: Starting over: The sky is the limit for Syrian businesswomen in Egypt

"After losing everything in a devastated Syria, women are taking charge of their finances and futures by starting businesses in Egypt. One of them is Maram Ahmed, a businesswoman who also runs a salon in Cairo and is planning on opening up a gym. She was running similar businesses in Damascus before the unrest." ([Middle East Eye](#))

Iran

May 12: Iran election: Could women decide the next president? (editor's note: pre-election coverage)

"When Iranians go to the polls to choose a new president next Friday (May 19), all the names on the ballot paper will be male. In the nearly four-decade history of the Islamic Republic, no woman has been allowed to stand for the top office. Even though they are not allowed to stand, women comprise just under half the electorate, so their vote is important and presidential candidates usually make an effort to reach out to them." ([BBC](#))

May 20: In pictures: Iran women vote in election

"With about 40m votes cast in the Iranian election, we look at the women making their decision." ([BBC](#))

May 22: Women win highest ever seats in Tehran council election

"Six women have been elected to Tehran's 5th city council election, registering a record high out of the total 21 members. The number of female councilors has been doubled in the 5th council elections compared with the previous rounds, in which women's number was not more than three, Khabaronline reported here on Sunday, May 21." ([Tehran Times](#))

Iraq

May 22: Lipstick and dresses return to Mosul's streets

"The videos, filmed in March on mobile phones, show how some aspects of women's lives are returning to normal, with shops starting to sell clothes and cosmetics once again. However, women living in the city describe how the legacy of IS rule remains." ([BBC](#))

May 22: Iraqi forces free three Yezidi women from ISIS captivity western Mosul

"The Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) on Saturday (May 20) freed three Yezidi women from an ISIS detention centre in the western part of Mosul city, in Iraq's northwestern Nineveh province. The freed captives, who were taken to the Sinjar (Shingal) district on Saturday evening (May 20), were among thousands of Yezidi girls who were taken by ISIS extremists as sex slaves in the summer of 2014." ([ARA News](#))

Israel/Palestinian Territories

May 22: Female reporters 'unable to listen' to Trump's visit to Western Wall due to gender segregation

“Female reporters accompanying President Donald Trump on his trip to the Middle East have been separated from their male colleagues and the President during his historic visit to the Western Wall in Jerusalem.” ([Independent](#))

May 22: Inside Palestine’s first camp for former female prisoners

“The Women's Association for Development and Empowerment in Jerusalem concluded May 6 the first-of-its-kind camp for former Palestinian female detainees in Jabal Baba in the town of al-Eizariya, southeast of Jerusalem. Eleven former female prisoners ages 12 to 18 from various West Bank governorates attended the camp.” ([Al Monitor](#))

Jordan

May 15: Over 35 women debtors released from prison

“More than 35 women will be able to spend Ramadan and Eid with their families following their recent release from prison, where they had been held for failing to repay small amounts of money taken ‘out of necessity,’ activists said on Monday, May 15. A recent campaign, which started after learning of a woman imprisoned for a debt of JD355, aims to release as many women as possible before the holy month of Ramadan, according to the campaign’s co-founder Hamzeh Hussami.” ([The Jordan Times](#))

May 17: Jordan’s Water Wise Women

“According to the Ministry of Water and Irrigation, it is estimated that by 2025 Jordan's water needs will exceed its resources by more than 26 percent. Empowering citizens to make responsible water usage a personal mission is among the ministry's methods of water management. Through the Water Wise Women's initiative, local ladies are being trained to be plumbers. They are now able to deal themselves with any leakages in their homes and communities, thereby saving water.” ([Al Jazeera](#))

May 21: Youth, women dominate 1st day of WEF in Jordan

“The challenges of Arab youth and women were identified as the two key issues facing business leaders and policymakers at the opening of the World Economic Forum (WEF) regional meeting at the Dead Sea resort in Jordan. Top executives from across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and from Europe said that unemployment among the 150 million young people and an absence of gender equality in many countries were the top issues that needed to be considered in the two-day meeting.” ([Arab News](#))

May 22: EBRD supports female entrepreneurs and refugees in Jordan

“The EBRD is providing a loan of up to US\$ 2 million in local currency to the Microfund for Women (MFW) for on-lending to female entrepreneurs in Jordan. Access to finance through banks remains extremely limited for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in Jordan, a country that is also particularly exposed to the crisis caused by the civil war in neighbouring Syria, with refugees currently representing 20 per cent of Jordan’s population.” ([The Financial](#))

Kuwait

May 15: Why Kuwait’s Only Female MP Needs to Be On Your Radar

“Safa Al Hashem, a liberal politician, is currently the only female member of Kuwait’s parliament, and even made history as the first woman to win a seat in consecutive elections. However, despite being the sole female of the 2016 assembly, the businesswoman is making sure her voice is heard.” ([Emirates Woman](#))

Lebanon

May 18: Ogasapian declares Nov. 4 as 'Lebanese Women's Day'

"The country will officially mark its first 'Lebanese Women's Day' on Nov. 4 after Cabinet Wednesday, May 17 agreed to institute the new annual celebration. 'I chose Nov. 4 because on that day a decree was signed by the government giving women the right to vote for the first time,' Minister of State for Women's Affairs Jean Ogasapian, told The Daily Star after the session Wednesday, May 17." ([The Daily Star](#))

Morocco

May 17: "Women's Voices in the Mediterranean and Africa" Speak Up Against Religious Extremism

"Giving voice to the increasing gender-based violence in the name of radical Islam was at the heart of the 8th edition of the 'Women's Voices in the Mediterranean and Africa' Forum, held on May 5-7 in the city of Fez, Morocco. Attended by academics, activists and political actors from more than 4 countries, the forum was devoted to Mediterranean women who chose to resist to extremism. It highlighted debates on women's rights in the Mediterranean and Africa, Islamic feminism and the ongoing fight against radicalism." ([Morocco World News](#))

May 21: Moroccan Mountaineer Bouchra Baibanou Climbs World's Highest Mountain

"Baibanou broke the news on her Facebook page, expressing happiness that her dream of summiting Everest has come true. The Moroccan mountaineer started her mission to conquer Everest in April with an aim to realizing her bigger dream of climbing the highest mountains on each of the world's continents, comprising what the climbing world calls the Seven Summits." ([Morocco World News](#))

May 22: Moroccan Soup Bar owner Hana Assifiri only hires Muslim women

"The program described Moroccan Soup Bar as a 'restaurant with a difference', and Ms Assifiri as 'on a mission to combat rising Islamophobia.' Ms Assifiri runs regular 'Speed Date a Muslim' sessions at her Fitzroy restaurant, where customers are encouraged to come and ask Muslim women any questions they like about Islam – 'nothing is off the table.'" ([news.com.au](#))

Qatar

May 9: ExxonMobil Qatar's Women's Network hosts workshop

"More than 200 female employees from ExxonMobil Qatar, Qatar Petroleum, RasGas, and Qatargas took part in a workshop that was hosted by ExxonMobil Qatar's Professional Women's Network, EMRA'A, in Doha last week. The workshop focused on providing the participants with a range of strategies and tactics to manage change effectively. It also inspired them to develop a positive attitude to the benefits of change and to understand the demonstrable advantages that it brings to an organization." ([The Peninsula](#))

Saudi Arabia

May 10: Saudi women encouraged to prosecute 'offensive' preacher

"A former judge in Saudi Arabia has pledged to assist any woman wishing to sue a controversial preacher who caused deep outrage in Saudi Arabia after he claimed that, if allowed to drive, women would come home late and drunk and would disregard their husbands." ([Gulf News](#))

May 10: Jeddah abused-girls protection home stands empty

"Although domestic violence is a common problem among women in Jeddah, only a negligible proportion of women plan to seek help. Policy makers should therefore improve social support services

to encourage and cater for the needs of abused women, according to women's rights advocates interviewed by Arab News." ([Arab News](#))

May 12: Saudi woman defies driving ban, saving man's life

"In Saudi Arabia, where women are banned from driving cars, a female university student has heroically driven a bus driver to safety after he suffered a stroke while behind the wheel. Ashwaq al-Shamri this week saved the life of the driver in the northwestern city of Hail as he transported her home from university along with several of her female classmates." ([The New Arab](#))

May 16: Saudi women's national chess team eyed

"A Saudi national women's chess team and academy to develop talent in the game is in the works, according to a member of a Saudi sports body. Al-Jawhara Al-Hasan, a member of the Saudi Mind Sport Committee, said that 15 women have been recruited to be the first professional coaches in chess in the Kingdom." ([Arab News](#))

May 21: Saudi Arabia, U.A.E. Pledge \$100 Million to World Bank's Women Entrepreneurs Fund

"The World Bank announced Sunday, May 21 at an event with Ivanka Trump, the U.S. president's daughter and senior White House adviser, that Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates have pledged a combined \$100 million to a fund that will assist women entrepreneurs and small business owners." ([The Wall Street Journal](#))

May 22: Princess Reema sees 'transformation' in Saudi women's role in labor market

"The deputy president of Saudi Arabia's Women's Sports Authority was speaking at a news conference on the role of Saudi women under the Vision 2030 reform plans. 'There has been a transformation regarding the role Saudi women can play in the labor force,' said Princess Reema, who is also vice president of the Saudi General Authority for Sports Planning and Development." ([Arab News](#))

Syria

May 10: Statues and words tell story of Syrian women's plight

"A small statue in Zico House, a multi-use art space in Beirut, shows a female figure on a chair whose body is convulsed in its desire to scream out her pain. It depicts Leila, one of the Syrian women whose stories have inspired a marriage of forms and words in a storytelling event organized by the Syrian Female Journalists Network (SFJN) in Beirut on May 10." ([Al Monitor](#))

May 17: Syrian Women Have A Message: Drop Earrings, Not Bombs

"Run by the NGO Small Projects Istanbul, Drop Earrings, Not Bombs is an income-generation and community-building project enabling around 30 Syrian women like Farida to express themselves through handcrafts." ([Huffington Post](#))

May 18: Women Must Be Empowered to Rebuild Syria: U.N. Advisor

"As the latest round of Syria peace talks kicked off in Geneva on Tuesday, May 16 Sawsan Zakzak is working behind the scenes to amplify the often overlooked perspectives of Syrian women and solidify their role in the United Nations-led negotiations aimed at finding a political solution to the war in Syria." ([News Deeply](#))

May 19: An untold economic success story in Syria

"Hidden almost literally under the rubble of the civil war in Syria is an economic success story that is rarely told. Hanan Odah is a 30-year-old Palestine refugee living in Jaramana refugee camp in

Damascus. She supports her multiply displaced family of three from a thriving micro-enterprise venture.” ([Middle East Monitor](#))

Turkey

May 18: Turkey’s First All-Female News Agency Fights Media Oppression

“Turkey’s first all-female news agency, Jin Haber Ajansi (JINHA), was born out of great struggle – to provide ‘an alternative to the media of our country, which are the greatest ideological apparatuses propagating subjugation of the female body,’ according to Zehra Doğan, an ethnic Kurdish journalist formerly with the agency.” ([The Establishment](#))

May 22: Turkish women back at French Open after making history last year

“When French Open starts today, May 22 there will be three Turkish women to represent the country. Çağla Büyükakçay, İpek Soylu and Başak Eraydın are confident they will be successful. Büyükakçay and Soylu already left their mark in the tournament last year, becoming the first Turkish women to make it the main draw of a Grand Slam tournament.” ([Daily Sabah](#))

United Arab Emirates

May 16: Why This Emirati Teen is Racing Ahead for Females Behind the Wheel

“Motorsport talent Amna Al Qubaisi is set to become the first Arab woman to compete in Formula 4 when she takes to the track in Europe next season. The graduate of Abu Dhabi’s Daman Speed Academy will be pitted against some of the world’s best rising drivers when she joins the Prema team for her F4 debut.” ([Emirates Woman](#))

Regional

May 10: UN gender equality report gives insight into Arab male identity

“Do Arab men support gender equality? What challenges do they face in their daily lives? What does it mean to be a man in the Middle East and North Africa in 2017? These are some of the questions that 10,000 men and women across Egypt, Morocco, Lebanon and the Palestinian territories were asked in the International Men and Gender Equality Study in the Middle East and North Africa.” ([CNN](#))

May 11: Muslims abroad must respect law on veils, MWL chief reiterates


“A Muslim World League (MWL) official has reiterated the position of its Secretary-General Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdul Karim Al-Issa that Muslims abroad must respect the laws of the land they live in. The official told Arab News, in light of what he described as recently published inaccurate reports by a number of media outlets, that Al-Issa’s position on wearing the hijab in non-Muslim countries has always been clear and has been repeated and published several times.” ([Arab News](#))

May 16: UN: Sexual violence increasingly used as ‘terrorism’ tactic

“Sexual violence is increasingly being used as ‘a tactic of terrorism’ from Iraq, Syria and Yemen in the Middle East to Somalia, Nigeria and Mali in Africa, a top UN official said Monday, May 15.” ([Arab News](#))

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