

MENA Women News Brief

May 10, 2016-May 24, 2016

Egypt

May 13: The Initiative Fighting for the Dreams of Egyptian Women

“Are women discouraged from achieving their dreams in Egypt?” That is a question a group of American University in Cairo set to discover with their student initiative ‘Men 7a2ik’ (Arabic for ‘it’s in your right’). Unfortunately, the students soon discovered that 70 percent of women surveyed could not achieve their dreams. Who do they blame? Egyptian society. Hoping to tackle the issue, Farida Ezzat, Lara Magdy, Passant Waseem, Farah Farag and Ingy el Gabry formed ‘Men 7a2ik’ to tell the stories of Egyptian women.” ([Egyptian Streets](#))

Iran

May 12: She Won a Seat in Iran’s Parliament, but Hard-Liners Had Other Plans

“Minoo Khaleghi easily won a seat in the Iranian Parliament in February, part of a wave of independents and reformists who now have the numbers to wrest authority from the hard-liners. On Wednesday, May 11... citing “evidence” that had emerged against her, the Dispute Settlement Committee of Branches, a part of Iran’s generally conservative judiciary, ruled that Ms. Khaleghi could not be sworn in as a new member of Parliament, the semiofficial Fars News Agency reported.” ([The New York Times](#))

May 10: Family of woman held in Iran for five weeks will be allowed to visit

“The authorities in Iran have promised the family of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, the British-Iranian mother who has been held in solitary confinement for more than five weeks, that they may be allowed to meet her in jail. Zaghari-Ratcliffe, who works for the Thomson Reuters Foundation as a project manager, was arrested at Tehran’s international airport by members of the country’s Revolutionary Guard on 3 April.” ([The Guardian](#))

May 18: An Ayatollah’s Daughter Prompts a Debate on Religious Persecution in Iran

“A house visit by a daughter of a prominent ayatollah to a female leader of the persecuted Baha’i religious minority touched off a debate this week in Iran about the harsh treatment of a group deemed pagans and impure by the country’s dominant clerics. The issue was raised last week when the Iranian news media reported that Faezeh Hashemi, a daughter of the former president, Ayatollah Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, had sat down for tea with Fariba Kamalabadi, a Baha’i leader.” ([The New York Times](#))

May 24: UN condemns 16-year jail sentence for Iranian activist Narges Mohammadi

“The international community has reacted with outrage after Narges Mohammadi, the ailing Iranian human rights activist already serving a six-year jail term, was given a further 16-year sentence by a revolutionary court in Tehran. Mohammadi, 44, was found guilty of ‘establishing and running the illegal splinter group Legam,’ a human rights movement that campaigns for the abolition of the death penalty. Should an upper court uphold the judgment, she will have to serve at least 10 years.” ([The Guardian](#))

May 23: VP warns over impacts of aging female population

“The aging female population in Iran is growing, Shahindokht Molaverdi, Vice President for Women and Family Affairs, said, stressing that the problem should be addressed through adopting proper

policies. Currently, Iran is facing changes in maternal age pattern, having a growth to over 30s, said Molaverdi, adding that 40 percent of births in the first 9 months of the previous Iranian calendar year 1394 (started March 2015) has been related to mothers over 30.” ([Tehran Times](#))

Iraq

May 11: Yazidi women tell their stories through photography

“In August 2014, Khawla was one of over 400,000 Yazidis who fled their homes as Islamic State swept through northern Iraq... Khawla managed to escape to a refugee camp near Duhok in northern Iraq’s Kurdistan region. After spending her first few months in the camp trying to finish her final year of studies with ‘no schools, no books, no teachers,’ she enrolled on a new course offered by the UN’s children’s agency UNICEF. Devised by photographer Shayda Hessami, the two month course taught them photography skills both as a way to help them express themselves, and as a route to employment.” ([Thompson Reuters Foundation](#))

Israel

May 16: Women better educated but earning less than men, report finds

“An annual report providing a snapshot of life in Israel found that men still earn more than women—although women are better educated—wages have not increased to keep up with rising food prices, and pupils are migrating away from research universities and religious schools.” ([Times of Israel](#))

Kuwait

May 11: 30 Kuwaiti women jailed in labour allowance fraud

“Thirty Kuwaiti women were on Tuesday, May 10 sentenced to one year in prison for fraudulently receiving labor support allowances for two years. The Criminal Court convicted the women, mostly housewives, and fined them each KD1,000.” ([Gulf Digital News](#))

Libya

May 19: Libya’s ambassador to the European Union, Farida Allaghi, submits resignation

“Libya’s highly-respected ambassador to the EU, Farida Allaghi, has resigned, saying that she could no longer keep silent about the political situation on the country. Critical of the international community’s role in the country, and particular that of the EU, she is reported to have said that a number of Brussels and international officials bore some responsibility for the crisis in Libya. She had wanted to resign before but refrained because she was aware she was a role model for Libyan women.” ([Libya Herald](#))

Morocco

May 10: Moroccan Women Continue the Fight for Rights (Op-Ed by Fouzia Assouli)

“I have been fighting for women’s rights in Morocco for almost 40 years, and while we don’t yet have a month dedicated to commemorating women’s history as American women do, we have had many victories. And despite setbacks, I continue to have great hope for the future of women in my country.” ([Women’s News Network](#))

May 19: Morocco: Police Officers Convince Woman to Not File Complaint Against Harasser

“Police officers in Rabat have reportedly convinced a young woman, who had been followed and harassed by an unknown man, to refrain from filing an official complaint against the perpetrator after he had been caught by authorities, according to details of the incident posted on Lesiteinfo.com. The story is far from an isolated incident but Morocco’s legislature has so far been slow to pass a law condemning and punishing perpetrators.” ([Morocco World News](#))

Palestinian Territories

May 19: Palestinian women in south Lebanon protest UNRWA healthcare changes

“Palestinian women held a demonstration Thursday, May 19 in the southern Palestinian refugee camp of Ain al-Hilweh against controversial health modifications of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency. The state-run National News Agency reported that the Sidon Committee and the Palestinian Women’s Union launched the demonstration in front of the UNRWA office at the camp near the southern city of Sidon.” ([The Daily Star](#))

Qatar

May 11: Qatar sends female minister as representative to take seat on Volkswagen board

“Qatar, a major shareholder in Volkswagen, is to send a female representative to sit on the German car maker’s supervisory board, VW said today. ‘The board of management and supervisory board of Volkswagen are nominating Hessa Al Jaber for election by shareholders to the supervisory board,’ the group said.” ([The National](#))

Saudi Arabia

May 11: Social media campaign to get Saudi women driving finds support but also mockery

“Over the past few days, the hashtag #سيارتي_ساقود_١٥_يونيو_١٥ (#IwilldrivemycarJune15th) has trended across social media, scoring tens of thousands of mentions on Twitter and other platforms, according to BBC Arabic.” ([The Washington Post](#))

May 13: Saudi Arabia: Women face flogging and jail for checking husband’s phone

“Women in Saudi Arabia face flogging and imprisonment if they check their husband’s phone without his permission. The offence would be prosecuted as a violation of privacy because it is not covered in the country’s Islamic laws, senior lawyer Mohammad al-Temyat has said.” ([The Independent](#))

May 14: Saudi Arabia struggles to resolve transportation problems for its women

“The issue of transportation is a sensitive subject among Saudi women for many reasons such as the high number of fatalities that take place on the Kingdom’s roads and the number of jobs lost for women because they were unable to arrange for transportation or a driver to take them to and from work. Unfortunately, the problem of women’s transportation remains unsolved and for many, it seems like there is no solution in the horizon.” ([Al Bawaba](#))

May 18: Enroll Saudi women in military service, say Shoura members

“A number of Shura Council members and security specialists have called for enrolling Saudi women in military service, the Saudi Gazette reported. They said women should get military training to teach them the use of light weapons. Maj. Gen. Ali Al-Tamimi, deputy chairman of the council’s security committee, said Islam has not prevented women from participating in military affairs, recalling that women used to contribute to Jihad (fight for Allah) to serve Islam.” ([Al Arabiya](#))

Syria

May 11: A stitch in time for Syrian refugee women

“Dozens of Syrian women who have lost everything to war have found a new source of livelihood—stitching, thanks to a UAE charity project called ‘Sew for Syria.’ Set up by Barbara Evans from the UK and her Syrian friend Nada Doucsh the three-day project has helped empower the refugee women, housed in a small orphanage called Ufuk (horizon in Turkish) at the Turkey-Syria border, by teaching them how to sew clothes—for themselves and others.” ([Gulf News](#))

May 16: The women risking it all to flee Syria for a new start in Europe

“Maha is a 28-year-old doctor from Raqqa with a bright smile and a dark story of life in Syria. Travelling on her own to escape her home city, which is now so-called Islamic State's (IS) capital, she crawled through mud along the Turkish border to make it to safety. ‘Death was my companion at every step,’ she told me at the Kara Tepe camp on the Greek island of Lesbos.” ([BBC](#))

May 19: Syrian Women Are Disclosing Domestic Abuse Regularly: Agency

“The Syrian man showed up at the Arab Community Centre of Toronto after 10 days in jail. He told refugee settlement workers he'd come home to find his wife and two children missing. He thought she'd just taken them to school and so waited until the end of the day. But when they didn't return, he went to the police, where he was promptly arrested: his wife had accused him of abuse... On average, at least one Syrian woman a week is disclosing to them they are a victim of domestic violence.” ([Huffington Post Canada](#))

Turkey

May 15: Deniz Gamze Ergüven: ‘For women in Turkey it’s like the middle ages’

“Not too long after the film ‘Mustang’ was released in Turkey last October, its director and co-writer, Deniz Gamze Ergüven, was interviewed by the Nobel prize-winning writer Orhan Pamuk. ‘He was curious about how I’d lived through its reception,’ she says, with a characteristically wide-eyed smile. ‘Well, I was gloomy. I explained how I’d been attacked. I’d had some very aggressive, negative critiques there [in Turkey], the kind of thing I hadn’t received anywhere else. So I loved his response.’ ‘Mustang,’ nominated for best foreign language film at the 2015 Oscars and the winner of four César awards in France, has opened countless new doors for its director and, as a result, her appetite for work is more voracious than ever. Even so, she finds it hard to imagine working in Turkey again.” ([The Guardian](#))

May 17: Turkey’s first action plan on women’s employment launched

“The first action plan in Turkey focusing specifically on women’s employment, with a focus on contributing to women’s increased participation in the labor force, has been launched in the capital Ankara. The action plan, launched on Tuesday, May 17 at the International Labor Organization (ILO) office in Turkey, will be implemented by the Turkish Employment Agency (İŞKUR).” ([Hurriyet Daily News](#))

May 19: New project launched for women passengers in Turkey's Eskişehir

“Municipal buses in the Central Anatolian province of Eskişehir will allow women passengers to disembark wherever they wish along the route between 10 p.m. and 12 a.m., according to a new project from the city’s metropolitan municipality.” ([Hurriyet Daily News](#))

United Arab Emirates

May 14: All-female UAE armed forces team return from Everest base camp

“Twelve women from the UAE Armed Forces returned home Saturday, May 14 after climbing 5,364 meters to reach the Mount Everest base camp in the Khumbu valley in Nepal. The all-female team, which included nine military climbers, two trainers, and a doctor, was welcomed back by a number of senior military officers at Abu Dhabi International Airport.” ([The National](#))

May 20: In UAE, women earn more than men: Report

“On an average, women earn 18 percent less than men globally. But the UAE is bucking the trend, according to a pay gap analysis by Korn Ferry Hay Group... Women in the UAE at the same level,

company, and function actually earn 2 percent more than their male counterparts. In 2014, 13 percent of the women participate in the workforce in the UAE, according to the report.” ([Khaleej Times](#))

Yemen

May 16: For lasting peace in Yemen, bring women to the table (Op-Ed by Rasha Jarhum)

“For a decade now, Yemen has held the last position in the Gender Gap Index. This index shows that Yemen has the widest gap in gender equality among other countries across the continent. This poor performance is reflected in our high rates of maternal mortality and lack of educational opportunities for women, but this underdevelopment has been exacerbated by a lack of women political participation. In this moment of unrest in my country, we are at a crossroads. We must include women in the peace talks or risk perpetuating the poverty, inequality, and violence that have caused havoc in our country for years.” ([The London School of Economics Middle East Centre Blog](#))

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