

MENA Women's News Brief

May 6-20, 2014

Algeria

May 8: UN praises Algeria for appointing seven female ministers

“Seven new women in Algeria's cabinet is a milestone for the Arab world, the United Nations says.”
([Al-Ahram](#))

Egypt

May 6: Egyptian women scared to speak out against sexual harassment

“The phenomenon of sexual harassment in Egypt has led to the emergence of grassroots movements defending a woman's right to safely walk in public places. These movements include the ‘I saw harassment’ movement and the Facebook page ‘I will not remain quiet about harassment,’ among many other movements, most of which are established by victims of harassment.” ([Al-Monitor](#))

May 10: Draft law combating sexual harassment is a positive yet insufficient step: Women's rights advocates

“The new amendments to the Penal Code regarding sexual harassment are an ‘important yet insufficient step in fighting harassment’, said Fatma Khafagy, Director Ombudswoman for Gender Equality at the National Council for Women (NCW).” ([Daily News Egypt](#))

May 14: Almost a fifth of Egyptian households are headed by women: CAPMAS

“Women are the heads of 17.8 percent of Egyptian households, according to data released by CAPMAS, Egypt's public statistics body. CAPMAS estimates the total number of households in January 2014 at 19.9 million, 46 percent of which are in urban areas, with the majority – 10.7 million households – in rural areas.” ([Al-Ahram](#))

May 15: The impact of the 2014 Constitution on women

“Compared to its 2012 predecessor, the 2014 Constitution includes some advances for women, but those advances are mired in ambiguous language, leaving women's aspirations in doubt.” ([Al-Ahram Weekly](#))

May 15: Egypt's blind women's orchestra struggles post-revolution

“Described as ‘Egypt's miracle,’ Al Nour Wal Amal (Light and Hope), the blind female orchestra, is feeling the economic pangs of the revolution. Prior to the January 25 Revolution, the orchestra staged regular monthly concerts, traveled annually and had multiple donors supporting the organization and its initiatives. Today, the picture is somewhat bleak, shown by the infrequency of concerts, little or no international travel and dwindling funds.” ([Al-Monitor](#))

May 16: Egypt allocates \$19 million for women, children's health insurance

“Egypt's finance ministry on Thursday approved the allocation of LE135.6 million (\$19.3 million) for the state's programmes to subsidise the healthcare of children and female heads of households.” ([Al-Ahram](#))

May 18: Egyptian women's council launches anti-sexual harassment campaign

“Egypt’s National Council for Women (NCW), a Cairo-based non-governmental organization, launched Saturday a week-long campaign to combat sexual harassment against Egyptian women. During the week, workshops taking place in Cairo and Alexandria targeting civil society and media personnel will be held to spread awareness on fighting sexual harassment.” ([Al-Arabiya](#))

Iran

May 9: Women Rights and Gender Equality (under Rouhani)

“Many women voted for Rouhani due to his promises for social freedom, gender equality, and because he was presented as a moderate candidate. Nevertheless, as Sima, an Iranian teacher and women's rights activist who lives west of Tehran in the city of Karaj stated, ‘President Rouhani has been successful in making a nuclear deal and resolving some of the tension regarding nuclear issues, but the reality is that women's conditions have not changed. The conditions are still the same as they were under former president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's era.’” ([Huffington Post](#))

May 14: Iranian women theological students pay first visit to the US

“A delegation of Iranian women students from Jamiat al-Zahra, the world’s largest theological seminary for women, is in the United States for the first time to attend lectures at Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Virginia. The group of nine women — mostly postgraduate students in their 20s — from the Iranian theological center of Qom, also visited Washington and spent a weekend in the Amish country around Lancaster, Pennsylvania.” ([Al-Monitor](#))

May 16: Iran protesters demand enforcement of hijab rules

“Around 1,000 Iranians staged a rally on Friday [May 16] to demand that the government fully enforce obligatory rules that women be veiled in public.” ([Daily Star](#))

Israel

May 13: The 'false empowerment' of female Knesset members?

“The current Knesset holds the record for the number of women: 27 female members out of 120, the greatest level of representation of all time, and more than three times the low point of the seventh Knesset (1969-1974) — eight women.” ([Al-Monitor](#))

May 18: Key environmental role for female IDF soldiers gets axed

“Without the move drawing much attention, one of the social-environmental groups in the Israel Defense Forces, which for years was its pride, is about to be closed. The ‘green’ female soldier-teachers, who have been taking schoolchildren on hikes all over the country since the 1950s, will disappear from the desert paths.” ([Haaretz](#))

Jordan

May 9: Loophole halts justice for honor killing victims in Jordan

“In Jordan, an official average of 20 females die each year in ‘honor’ crimes, although some estimates vary slightly and experts agree that actual numbers are likely higher, as some deaths go unreported. In 2014, nine such deaths have been reported, making the rate higher than usual despite predictions earlier this year by the Jordanian branch of the women's rights group Sisterhood Is Global Institute that ‘honor’ crimes would decrease in 2014.” ([Al-Monitor](#))

Lebanon

May 13: Joint citizenship committees' meetings on citizenship law fails

“The current Lebanese law does not allow women to pass on citizenship to their spouse or children. Women's rights organization KAFA (Enough Violence and Exploitation) issued a statement Monday saying they were against the law and that the priority should be given to a bill allowing Lebanese women to pass their nationality to their children.” ([Daily Star](#))

May 16: Judiciary can protect victims of early age marriage

“It may be years before early age marriage is prohibited in Lebanon, but some judges are re-interpreting existing laws to protect minors from the practice anyway For Judge Fawzi Khamis, who served as the head of the juvenile court from 2004-09, the key to protecting young women from early age marriage lies in how a judge interprets the legal definition of danger, as it relates to Articles 24-26 in the law for juveniles.” ([Daily Star](#))

May 16: Syrian War Sparks Gender Violence, Strains Support Networks In Neighboring Lebanon

“In Syria, pre-war government-sponsored surveys found that one in four women had experienced some form of violence from a male relative, usually a husband. During the past three years, international organizations have also documented rape as a weapon of war in Syria, as well as widespread sexual exploitation in refugee camps and among vulnerable women who are separated from their families.” ([International Business Times](#))

May 19: KAFA launches ‘disturbing ride’ campaign

“Women's rights organization KAFA (Enough Violence and Exploitation) launched an unusual campaign to encourage women to speak up against violence.” ([Daily Star](#))

Libya

May 8: The constitution will represent all Libyans, including women: Ali Tarhuni

“Speaking very briefly today at a UN organized women’s workshop on empowering Libyan women in the political process, including the constitutional drafting process, Ali Tarhuni head of the Constitutional Drafting Committee – assured the overwhelmingly female audience that they will be part of the process.” ([Libya Herald](#))

Palestinian Territories

May 10: Meet the first all-female Palestinian racing team

“A new documentary called *Speed Sisters* explores the first all-female, Palestinian racing team. *Speed Sisters* is still in production, but there is already a trailer. The movie focuses on five women from the Speed Sisters racing team and how they use motorsports to deal with the challenges in their lives. In a broader context, it's an examination of modern life in the Middle East for women.” ([Autoblog](#))

Saudi Arabia

May 7: Expatriate women struggle for their divorce rights

“Many expat women in Saudi Arabia struggle for their rights given the different legal framework in the country. Women who spoke to Saudi Gazette reported cases of physical and emotional torture and said they lack support and the right to get a legal divorce and khula in Saudi Arabia.” ([Saudi Gazette](#))

May 8: Women employees suffer in prevailing gender pay gap

“(According to a recent study) Saudi women are more ambitious and career-oriented than their male counterparts, yet continue to lag behind in monetary benefits.” ([Zawya](#))

May 13: Licensing sought for women working from home

“Many unemployed Saudi female graduates have demanded that the work of Saudi women operating businesses from their homes be more organized and in accordance with international standards.” ([Arab News](#))

May 15: Employment of Saudi women top priority for KSA companies

“The employment of women in Saudi Arabia has experienced a steady increase over the last few years, which has been widely attributed to KSA companies making the move to prioritize the hiring of female employees. The growth in employment comes as a welcome surprise amidst the fact that the Kingdom has the lowest proportion of female employment as compared to other neighboring countries.” ([Zawya](#))

May 18: State school offers sports for girls in Saudi first

“In a first for ultra-conservative Saudi Arabia, a state school has introduced sports for girls, after a call for the lifting of a ban on women in sports, a newspaper reported Sunday.” ([Daily Star](#))

UAE

May 8: Marriage Fund to encourage Emirati men to marry UAE women

“With more Emiratis marrying foreigners, the Marriage Fund will focus on encouraging men to marry UAE countrywomen in coming years. According to statistics, over 500 Emirati women married non-Emiratis, while around 2000 Emirati men married foreigners in 2011.” ([Gulf News](#))

May 12: Female entrepreneurs on mission to UK

“A group of female entrepreneurs from the UAE are to meet with industry specialists in the UK as part of a business mission. Touring London, Manchester and Belfast, the UAE Women in Business Mission to the UK is designed to explore possibilities of cooperation, partnerships, and opportunities.” ([Arabian Business](#))

May 16: More women make cut to top corporate positions on the back of social changes

“The rise of women in leadership posts is not just evident in mature markets like the US, but also in the Arab region, where there is a growing pool of female professionals who are not afraid to break barriers.” ([Gulf News](#))

By Samaa Ahmed



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