

# **MENA Women News Brief**

**November 17, 2015 –December 1, 2015**

## **Egypt**

### **November 18: Egyptian women in parliament polls - hopes and hurdles (Op-ed by Mariam Mecky)**

“With a high turnout of women voters in Egypt's parliamentary elections, the fact remains that the number of women candidates is relatively low in a field already stacked with political hurdles against female hopefuls.” ([Ahram](#))

### **November 20: Can women, Copts make it to parliament without the quota? (Op-ed by Ahmed Fouad)**

“It seems women and Copts are unlikely to get high representation without quotas in the second round of the current parliamentary elections. But women's and Copts' accession to the parliament through the quota system could help them make political gains that would push citizens to support them in the next parliament, without quotas.” ([Al Monitor](#))

### **November 21: Slapping Back – Sexual Harassment in Egypt**

“Last month, while shopping in a mall in Cairo, a young woman was approached by an older man, who insisted on taking her out, she says. The two argued as they walked towards an exit, where she stopped and gestured for him to leave. At that point he turned and hit her twice in the face. The scene was captured by a security camera, but the police seemed uninterested. After the video was posted online, it went viral. In telling her story to the press, the victim faced more resistance.” ([The Economist](#))

### **November 25: NGO documents 20 cases of rape against female political prisoners in Egypt**

“More than 2,000 Egyptian women have been detained since the 2013 ouster of former President Mohamed Morsi, the Revolutionary Coalition for Egypt's Women said. In a statement, the group also said it has documented 20 cases of rape against female political prisoners in Egyptian jails.” ([Daily Sabah](#))

### **November 29: Egypt's Parliamentary Candidates**

“The incoming parliament will potentially have the highest female representation in Egypt's parliamentary history. Women candidates have already secured 61 seats, with a great boost from a quota imposed by law on the electoral lists system. The female representation in the four lists, as required by law, has given women a total 56 seats so far, nearly half of all seats won through electoral lists. Additionally, five women won seats contested through the individual seat system, and in the final run-off in the next few days, 18 women will be competing for individual seats.” ([All Africa](#))

## **Iran**

### **November 24: Female Soccer Captain Gets One-Time Exemption To Leave Iran Against Her Husband's Wishes**

“In September, Iranian football player Niloufar Ardalan, missed the final of the Asian Games in September because her husband, sports journalist Mahdi Toutouchi, enforced the right given to him by Islamic sharia law to prevent her from traveling. But for a 2015 Futsal World Cup event in Guatemala

this week, Iranian authorities overruled her husband's wishes and granted Ardalan, whose nickname is 'Lady Goal,' a single exit visa." ([Think Progress](#))

### **November 30: Iranian orchestra barred over women musicians**

"A high-profile performance in Iran by the Tehran Symphony Orchestra was cancelled at the last minute because it was to feature female musicians, its conductor, Ali Rahbari, said on Sunday, November 29. Rahbari said he was told 15 minutes before the orchestra was scheduled to play at a major sporting event that they could not." ([Your Middle East](#))

### **Iraq**

### **November 27: Finding a Path Back to Iraq, and Toward Securing Women's Freedom**

"Yanar Mohammed runs a secret network of safe houses in her native Iraq. The women who come through its doors are honor-killing runaways, rape survivors, war widows and assorted others who have been to the cliff edge of hell and back. The shelters are meant to give them a second chance in life. Running the shelters gave her a second chance, too." ([New York Times](#))

### **Israel**

### **November 18: Western Wall Rabbi Forbids Women's Hanukkah Candle-lighting Ceremony**

"A demand to allow feminist activists to hold their own official state-sponsored Hanukkah candle-lighting ceremony at the Western Wall has been rejected." ([Haaretz](#))

### **November 30: Women Wage War at Western Wall (Op-ed by Noah Feldman)**

"At the Western Wall—known to Muslims as the Noble Sanctuary—another long-ranging controversy has been simmering, one posing its own challenge to Israel's identity as a Jewish and democratic state. The struggle concerns Jewish women who've been prohibited from reading the Torah at the Orthodox-dominated Western Wall. On Sunday, November 29, a group of them brought the issue to the Israeli Supreme Court, charging the Orthodox rabbi in charge of the holy site with discrimination on the basis of sex." ([Bloomberg](#))

### **Lebanon**

### **December 1: Former wife of Islamic State leader released by Lebanon in prisoner swap**

"A former wife of the Islamic State's leader was released Tuesday, December 1, after more than year in custody in Lebanon as part of a prisoner swap involving Lebanese security forces held captive by militants in Syria. Lebanese authorities handed over Saja al-Dulaimi, an Iraqi who was briefly married to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the presumed head of the Islamic State. Along with Dulaimi was a group of mostly Islamist detainees, according to officials in Lebanon's military." ([Washington Post](#))

### **Libya**

### **November 23: Libyan women forge agenda for peace**

"UN Women together with the United Nations Support Mission in Libya and the Switzerland Ministry of Foreign Affairs supported a diverse group of 38 Libyan women representing political opponents and civil society actors in coming together and drafting a Minimum Women's Peace Agenda for Libya. They successfully reached consensus on how to secure peace and protect women's rights during both peace and transitional processes." ([UN Women](#))

### **Saudi Arabia**

### **November 23: Saudi labor ministry opens up ‘all job opportunities for women’**

“Under pressure from the International Labor Organization (ILO), the Saudi Ministry of Labor has dropped a clause which protected women workers from hazardous and dangerous jobs, Makkah Arabic daily quoted a source as saying on Sunday, November 22. The source said the ministry had adopted Article 149 of the ILO Labor Law by adding a clause which assured women equal job opportunities as men as long as the occupation is not dangerous or risky for them.” ([Al Arabiya](#))

### **November 27: Saudi suffragettes: The first steps on a long journey (Op-ed by Lyse Doucet)**

“The change is slow and the wait long. But for Saudi suffragettes, even a vote in local elections is a step to celebrate. And in the conservative kingdom's third round of municipal polls on December 12, women are also allowed to run as candidates for the first time. But response to this recent breakthrough has been muted. Women make up only about 20 percent of a total of half a million registered voters in a country of nearly 30 million people.” ([BBC](#))

### **November 30: Saudi Women Appeal Against Electoral Ban**

“Three Saudi women who have campaigned for the right of the country’s women to drive said they would appeal the government’s decision to exclude them from running in upcoming municipal elections.” ([Wall Street Journal](#))

## **Syria**

### **November 21: ISIS Women and Enforcers in Syria Recount Collaboration, Anguish and Escape**

How three women, all former members of the Islamic State morality police, survived and escaped to Turkey. ([New York Times](#))

### **November 29: Scotland to train female Syrian peacemakers in conflict resolution**

“Scotland is to offer training to the Syrian women involved in building a lasting peace in the region. Nicola Sturgeon, First Minister, announced she has accepted an invitation from the UN special envoy for Syria to host an international women’s summit, which will offer female peacemakers training in negotiation and communication.” ([The Guardian](#))

## **Tunisia**

### **November 17: Tunisia arrests seven women over ISIS propaganda**

“Seven women have been arrested in Tunisia for posting propaganda on the Internet on behalf of the country’s branch of the Islamic State militant group, the interior ministry announced Monday, November 16.” ([Al Arabiya](#))

### **November 25: Tunisia must protect gender-based violence victims**

“Tunisia must change its legislation to protect victims of gender-based violence, who are frequently punished and blamed when they report the crimes, Amnesty International said in a report published Wednesday, November 25.” ([Al Arabiya](#))

## **Turkey**

### **November 18: Women lead the way in Turkish politics (Op-ed by Esra Biçer)**

“In the past decade or so, women have become a defining factor in Turkish politics. While many believe the secular establishment was the facilitator of this process, in actuality the limitations imposed on the conservative sections of society and the subsequent trauma forced women to become more politically active.” ([Daily Sabah](#))

### **November 19: Veiled women detained, handcuffed spark public outcry in Turkey**

“Turkish police carried out simultaneous raids on 35 locations in the western Turkish town of Manisa on Nov. 10 to detain suspects of the ‘parallel state.’ The 26 detainees included lawyers and educators, but what really caught the attention of the media were the photos of two young handcuffed women wearing headscarves. The handcuffing of women wearing headscarves under the rule of the AKP government, and in an AKP-led ‘witch hunt,’ raised many questions.” ([Al Monitor](#))

### **November 24: Only 2 women chosen out of 26 ministers in new Cabinet**

“In the new Cabinet announced by Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu on Tuesday, November 24, only two seats out of 26 were allocated to women, continuing the pattern of limited female representation in positions of political power in the country.” ([Today’s Zaman](#))

### **November 30: Violence against women in Turkey increases both in number and brutality**

“In Turkey, the number of women who are subjected to violence and murder has increased, but so has the brutality of the violence, according to an Izmir-based jurist. Nuriye Kadan, who heads Izmir Bar Association’s Women’s Rights and Legal Support Office, says that the last decade has not only seen the increase in the numbers of women subject to violence, but that the violence itself has become more intense and barbaric, ‘bordering on torture.’” ([Hurriyet](#))

## **United Arab Emirates**

### **November 20: UAE's first woman Speaker of Parliament a breakthrough for Arab world**

“The election of Dr. Amal Al Qubaisi as the first ever woman Speaker of the UAE Parliament has been warmly welcomed by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) as a breakthrough not only for the Gulf State but also for the Arab world as a whole. She has been particularly active on gender and youth issues. Her engagement on youth participation at IPU contributed to the creation of IPU’s Forum of Young Parliamentarians, a unique body that provides youth perspectives in international political decision-making.” ([Gulf Today](#))

### **November 24: More women are speaking up about domestic violence**

“Over 1,500 cases of domestic violence against women have been reported to the Dubai Foundation for Women and Children (DFWC) during the last seven years. While no official figures on cases of domestic violence against women are available in Dubai, Ghanima Hassan Al Bahri, Care and Rehabilitation Director of DFWC, said more women are speaking up and seeking help.” ([Gulf News](#))

## **General**

### **November 19: The Young Women Standing Up to Extremism in the Middle East**

“Fighting extremism and building democracy in Syria and other Middle Eastern countries may seem like an unrealistic goal. But if smoking a jihadi with a drone missile isn’t the solution, what is? The answer may lie in grassroots activism, much of it spearheaded by young women from the region.” ([VICE](#))

### **November 23: The 2015 Global Gender Gap report: how did MENA countries rank?**

“The Global Gender Gap report, which marks its tenth year in 2015, was first introduced by the World Economic Forum in 2006 as a framework for capturing the magnitude of gender-based disparities and tracking their progress among the thresholds of political economic, education, and health. In the Middle East and North Africa region, Kuwait ranked 117th overall, followed by the UAE, Qatar, Bahrain and

Tunisia. Yemen is the lowest-ranked country in the index, which at 145th, has remained at the bottom of the index since 2006 but has significantly improved relative to its own past scores.” ([Al Bawaba](#))


**November 30: What's Really Behind The Low Rate Of Women's Entrepreneurship In The Middle East (Op-ed by Elizabeth MacBride)**

“As in 2012, it was found that women in the Middle East have high intentions to become entrepreneurs, but among the lowest regional averages for actually becoming entrepreneurs – and among the largest regional gender gaps.” ([Forbes](#))

**By Nishaat Shaik**



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