

MENA Women's News Brief

November 18-December 1, 2014

November 24: IPU calls on parliaments to urgently step up efforts to protect girls from violence

“Efforts to protect girls from all types of violence need to be dramatically scaled up if one of the most vulnerable groups in society is to have a future free from abuse and bright with potential, says the Inter-Parliamentary Union. The Organization is calling for parliaments and parliamentarians everywhere to urgently take the necessary legislative action to help end violence against girls as it marks the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women on 25 November.” ([Inter-Parliamentary Union](#))

Bahrain

November 20: Women entrepreneurs are more successful than men

“Women entrepreneurs have become more successful than men in the last seven years in Bahrain, according to United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO). The success rate of women entrepreneurs currently stands at 70 percent compared with 40 percent seven years ago,' UNIDO investment and technology promotion office head Dr. Hashim Hussein said. Dr. Hussein revealed this statistic to the Gulf Daily News on the sidelines of a Women Entrepreneurship and Innovation Forum held at the Elite Resort and Spa in Muharraq yesterday.” ([Gulf Daily News](#))

November 29: Women's rights defender Ghada Jamsheer released and immediately re-arrested

The Bahrain Centre for Human Rights (BCHR) and the Gulf Center for Human Rights (GCHR) express serious concern over the re-arrest of women's rights defender Ghada Jamsheer in Bahrain, hours after she was released from 10 weeks imprisonment. She was returned to jail just days before International Women Human Rights Defenders Day on 29 November. On 27 November 2014, Jamsheer was released after two and a half months in jail, only to be re-arrested on charges of 'assaulting a police officer' within hours of her return home. The police officer claims that the alleged assault by Jamsheer was during her stay in prison within the month of September. Jamsheer was not informed of such a case and no investigations were done based on such a charge before. ([Gulf Center for Human Rights](#))

November 30: Six women voted to power in Bahrain polls

“They include three female MPs and three municipal councilors. Fatima Al Asfoor, Ruwa'a Al Hayki and Jameela Al Sammak, all from the Northern Governorate, secured seats in the 40-seat parliament for a four-year term, while Bodoor Bin Rajab (Northern), Sabah Al Dossary (Muharraq) and Fatima Mohammed (Northern) landed three of 30 available municipal council posts. Only one of them won during the first round of voting on November 22, while the remaining five were voted in yesterday, November 29 through a second round run-off.” ([Trade Arabia](#))

Egypt

November 20: Egypt's first FGM trial ends in not guilty verdicts for doctor, father

“Months-long trial followed death of 13-year-old Soheir al-Batea after undergoing banned procedure.” ([Al-Jazeera](#))

November 24: Health ministry launches medical protocol for victims of gender-based violence

“The Egyptian Ministry of Health has launched a Medical Protocol for Management of Victims of Gender Based Violence. The protocol was prepared in cooperation with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Regional Center for Training in Family Planning and Reproductive Health (RCT). The protocol will be applied in Greater Cairo, Assiut and Sohag by the end 2014, said UNFPA representative Jaime Nadal. All Egyptian cities will follow in 2015. In addition to legal procedures to support victims of gender based violence, such as finding proof for forensic reports, the protocol discusses medical and psychological aspects of the problem.” ([Daily News Egypt](#))

November 24: Sexual harassment still pervasive in Egypt, despite new law

“Egypt’s interim cabinet amended the harassment law and included it in the Egyptian penal code in June. The new amendments escalated the penalties for any form of verbal or nonverbal sexual harassment or abuse in public or private areas, to at least six months imprisonment and a fine of between EGP 3,000 and EGP 5,000. ‘The new law brought about a notable increase in awareness about the sexual harassment issue and has encouraged people to report harassment incidents,’ said Azza Kamel, the director of civil society initiative I Saw Harassment. ‘However, we still cannot affirm that the law can actually end sexual harassment in Egypt.’” ([Daily News Egypt](#))

Iran

November 24: (Op-Ed) The Women Of Iran Can Bring About Change – If Not Suppressed

“In Iran, a recent spate of acid attacks against women and the execution of a young woman charged with murdering her alleged rapist have turned the spotlight on the issue of women’s rights in the country. Although the events show a spike in human rights abuses against women in Iran, the discrimination against and suppression of Iranian women is nothing new and has been institutionalized in the very foundations and constitution of the clerical regime ruling the country.” ([Forbes](#))

November 25: British-Iranian volleyball woman released on bail

“A British-Iranian woman controversially jailed months ago in Tehran after trying to attend a men’s volleyball match was released on bail Sunday, November 23 pending an appeal court verdict, her family said.” ([Arab News](#))

November 25: No Justice for Survivors of Acid Attacks in Iran

(Trigger warning: abuse, explicit images) “There were four confirmed cases of acid attacks by authorities in Iran but according to confirmed community sources and social media the incidents of these serial attacks are at least 13 cases and perhaps even more. These women were all drivers and were attacked while in their car. They were accused of being ‘bad hijab,’ claiming they were ‘sullyng’ their family ‘honor’ by committing ‘indecent’ behavior. Families don’t want to come forward and hold the government, state, and non-state actors causing these crimes accountable because they fear more violent acts against them and their loved ones.” ([Payvand](#))

Iraq

November 24: Why the Kurdish Fight for Women's Rights Is Revolutionary

“While the courage, audacity, and resistance of Kurdish women fighting Islamic State jihadists in Kobane have made headlines in the last few months, Kurdish women have marked another revolutionary step by passing an equality decree that could guarantee their own rights within family and society. Their active involvement in fighting has not only seriously challenged gender roles, but also altered traditional views of revolution and politics as male enterprises. The equality decree is another

form of resistance by Kurdish women against the Islamic State, which is known for abusing women's rights in areas under its control.” ([Huffington Post](#))

November 28: Militants Execute Two Female Parliamentary Candidates in Mosul

“Members of terror group Islamic State (ISIS) have allegedly executed two female parliamentary candidates in the besieged city of Mosul, Kurdish media network Rudaw reported. It is believed that the women were killed in the Faisalya area in central Mosul. ‘IS gunmen executed two former female candidates in Mosul after the Sharia Court issued death sentence on them,’ said Saad Mamuzin, the head of the Kurdistan Democratic Party KDP's Mosul branch. ‘One of the candidates was Ibtisam Ali Jarjis on the Watanya list, and the second one was Miran Ghazi a candidate for Arab List,’ he added, and then explained that the two women had repented in one of IS's mosques to spare their lives.” ([International Business Times](#))

Israel

November 26: Israeli activists call for peace talks, women’s participation

“Roughly 1,000 women from around Israel Tuesday, November 25 boarded a train to the Gaza border town of Sderot to call on Israel and the Palestinians to restart peace talks immediately and ensure women are present at the negotiating table.” ([Al-Arabiya](#))

November 27: IDF Appoints First Female Navy Captain

“Captain Or Cohen will be transferred to a warship as a deputy commander, and later Cohen will be given her own ship.” ([Arutz Sheva](#))

December 1: The fare sex? Israeli government looks to train Arab women as bus drivers

“Transportation Ministry seeking to address shortfall of drivers, estimated at about 1,500.” ([Haaretz](#))

Jordan

November 26: Activists voice outrage over appointment of only three women as university board members

“Women's groups on Wednesday, November 26 voiced outrage over the appointment of only three women among the 130 board members of 10 public universities.” ([Zawya](#))

Lebanon

November 20: Lebanese women look to play bigger role in politics

“With each new parliamentary election many questions arise about the reason for the women's poor participation and the factors that lead a very small number of women to the parliament. But the study prepared by Olwa entitled ‘Organizational Needs to Promote Women’s Participation in Political Parties and Trade Unions in Lebanon’ revealed the weaknesses. Among the Lebanese political parties, only one stated that 25 percent of its constituent assembly members are women, another party reported the presence of two women, and a third acknowledged that there are no women in its constituent assembly, but that women are confined to the roles of wives and friends. The female electoral base ranges between 16 percent and 50 percent in five parties, which means that women have an important popular base presence that has yet to be reflected in the decision-making positions.” ([Al-Monitor](#))

November 28: Nusra to kill captive unless female terror suspect freed

“The Nusra Front threatened Thursday, November 27 to execute one of the 26 Lebanese captives being held by jihadis on the northeast border unless Lebanon releases a female terror suspect within 24 hours.” ([Daily Star](#))

Libya

November 26: Libyan women struggle to join the workforce

“Above all else, one thing is clear: Libyan women are highly educated. The majority of college graduates in the country are women, with 77 percent pursuing higher education courses, compared to 63 percent of men, according to a September 2013 report by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES). However, the problems seem to arise after graduation, with only 43 percent of women gaining official employment. ‘The issue is not education, it’s that following on from education, we have this drastic decrease where a lot of women are not entering the formal workforce,’ said Alaa Murabit, the founder of the Voice for Libyan Women, from her home in Zawiyah, a city in northwest Libya.” ([Al-Jazeera](#))

Morocco

November 18: Women Represent 39.40 percent of Public Servants in Morocco

“In the private sector, women represent 45 percent of employees, he noted, adding that women’s representation in some productive sectors is estimated between 69 and 87 percent.” ([Morocco World News](#))

November 19: Global summit in Morocco celebrates women entrepreneurs

“The fifth Global Entrepreneurship Summit kicked off in Morocco’s resort city of Marrakech on Wednesday, November 19 with a celebration of ‘Women Entrepreneurship Day,’ discussing the role of women in free enterprise, economic growth and job creation.” ([Al-Arabiya](#))

November 29: Women’s Salaries Are 25% Lower Than Men’s in Private Sector

“The report, cited by Akhbar Al Yaoum daily newspaper in its weekend issue (November 29), said that according to international estimates on the issue of wage disparity between men and women Morocco is ranked 130 far behind Arab and African countries.” ([Morocco World News](#))

Palestinian Territories

November 30: Gaza's pregnant women suffer

“With the high number of wounded individuals during the last Israeli offensive against Gaza, doctors were often unable to attend to pregnant women giving birth or experiencing complications before and after deliveries.” ([Al-Monitor](#))

Saudi Arabia

November 21: Male colleagues? 47 percent Saudi women have no problem

“About 47 percent of Saudi women say they have no problem in working with male colleagues, while 44 percent of Saudi men would not prevent their female relatives from working with male colleagues and customers, a recent survey conducted by Khadeeja bint Khuwailed Center has revealed.” ([Arab News](#))

November 23: Saudi women fight to save mangrove forests

“Local communities have jumped into action to protect the environment in Saudi Arabia’s al-Qatif governorate.” ([Al-Monitor](#))

November 24: Birth control emphasized

“Experts have emphasized the need for population control to preserve the economic resources and urged the Council of Senior Islamic Scholars and the Shoura Council to express their opinion on the sensitive issue.” ([Arab News](#))

November 26: New law fails to curb domestic violence in Saudi Arabia

“There were 1,049 cases of domestic violence and child abuse last year despite new family protection laws that were implemented after they were approved by the Cabinet, according to the Social Affairs Ministry.” ([Al-Arabiya](#))

Syria

November 18: In Syria, struggling to shine a light on victims of sexual violence

“Documenting sexual violence has been the biggest challenge, because of Syrian cultural norms that regard rape as a source of shame and dishonor. Terrified women and unwilling families are more concerned about not tarnishing familial honor than in seeking legal justice, especially since there is no foreseeable avenue for prosecutions while the conflict rages on.” ([LA Times](#))

November 18: Marriage and Martyrdom: How ISIS is Winning Women

“ISIS has persuaded hundreds of young Western women to travel to Syria. That marks its battle as distinctly different from al-Qaeda’s campaigns of the last decade, and demonstrates that ISIS seeks to colonize the areas it has conquered with its soldiers, civil servants and women to breed a new generation of fighters.” ([TIME](#))

December 1: A French Town Reels After Teenage Girl Vanishes, Apparently to Join Jihadists

French intelligence officials got in touch with the parents of a shy, 15-year-old Muslim girl in this depressed town in eastern France last May to convey some shocking news: Their daughter had become a frequent visitor to websites preaching jihad. The parents asked the French authorities to take steps to block their child from leaving the country and took possession of her passport, according to local officials. In the months that followed, the girl showed no sign that she intended to head for Syria or Iraq. She took off her veil to go to school, as French law requires, and she spent her days close to her mother. Then last month, she disappeared. The surveillance cameras in the Mulhouse airport, 50 miles from her home, showed her moving confidently and alone as she used her older sister’s passport to fly to Istanbul and then on to Gaziantep, a Turkish city known as the gateway to Syria for jihadists. ([New York Times](#))

Tunisia

November 20: (Op-Ed) Tunisia’s only female presidential candidate takes on 22 male contenders

“Outspoken, long-time judge Kalthoum Kannou is Tunisia’s first female presidential candidate. On 23 November, she will compete against 22 other contenders in the country’s first round of presidential elections since the Arab Spring’s protest wave overthrew the long-lasting regime of former President Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali.” ([Middle East Eye](#))

November 20: Tunisia police rape: 'Meriem' attackers' sentences doubled

“Two Tunisian policeman convicted of raping a woman in a police car have had their sentences more than doubled in a high-profile court case.” ([BBC News](#))

UAE

November 19: More should follow UAE's lead in granting citizenship

“A prominent women’s rights activist says the UAE’s decision to grant citizenship to the children of national woman and foreign men was an example to other countries.” ([The National](#))

November 20: UAE Mulls More Reforms To Increase Female Members On Boards

“The country’s minister of economy said that the UAE is looking at regulations that will help increase the presence of women on boards of public share-holding firms.” ([Gulf Business](#))

November 21: FNC highlights UAE women’s empowerment

“The Ministry is keen on empowering Emirati women according to the rights and freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution and the duties of citizenship. The Ministry is also working to provide women with the knowledge required to enhance their participation in the country’s parliamentary activities.” ([Gulf Today](#))

November 26: 'Men alone cannot run the country'

“If all women were kept behind closed doors at homes and deprived of the opportunity to get educated, what would their role be in society? How can a nation be built by men only while women — who constitute almost half of the population — are not participating in the building of the future?” Dr. Mubarak Sa’ad Al Ahababi, chairman of the Department of the President’s Affairs, believes that the UAE has answered these questions satisfactorily during the past 43 years by achieving women’s empowerment and gender equality as some of its major successes. These views of Emirati men have been inspired by the examples set by Shaikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the founding father of the UAE, Dr. Al Ahababi told Gulf News.” ([Gulf News](#))

November 27: Rabab Al Tajir and Jameela Al Za’abi, women pioneers of the UAE

“They preferred to fight the challenges and blaze new trails so that others could follow.” ([Gulf News](#))

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