

# **MENA Women News Brief**

**November 21-December 5 , 2016**

## **Algeria**

### **December 4: Algerian minister says married women should 'give up salaries'**

“Working married women in Algeria should give up their salaries to the national treasury to help their country out of its current cash problem, Algeria's minister of national solidarity, family and women affairs Mounia Meslem has proposed. She said that women who hold senior positions should donate to the cash-strapped Algerian government and live off their husband’s wages. It came after Meslem was asked whether latest austerity measures will affect senior political leaders, after months of low oil prices have dried up Algiers' coffers.” ([Al Araby](#))

## **Egypt**

### **November 27: Making #HerStory Matter: Promoting Gender Equality on Arabic Wikipedia**

“Wikipedia, the sixth most visited website in the world, is a hub for many hoping to find information about their favourite movie stars, historical locations, sports and more. With more than 40 million articles in 293 languages, it is therefore not surprising that a new campaign was launched to promote greater representation of women on Wikipedia. #HerStory aims to double the number of female editors on Arabic Wikipedia while increasing awareness of women’s contributions online and increasing knowledge about gender concepts.” ([Egyptian Streets](#))

### **November 30: Egypt women earn historic victory**

“Egypt achieved their first win in women's Africa Cup of Nations history by beating Zimbabwe 1-0 on Tuesday, November 29. Salma Ahmed was the hero for Egypt, scoring the winning goal from close range with only eight minutes of the match remaining. It ended Egypt's four-match losing streak at the finals - they lost all three of their games in 1998 and were also beaten by Cameroon on Saturday, November 26. The win has now given them a chance of reaching the 2016 semi-finals.” ([BBC](#))

### **December 4: Egypt Sexual Harassment Documentary Wins Award at San Francisco Arab Film Festival**

“‘The People’s Girls,’ a short documentary that explores sexual harassment in Egypt through a series of interviews and social experiments, won the ‘Best Documentary Short’ award at the San Francisco Arab Film Festival 2016. ‘We feel so grateful receiving the Best Documentary Short award. The international support to tackle this epidemic has been astounding, and the way men and women in Egypt are fighting back serves as an inspiration for audiences globally,’ said Colette Ghunim, one of the two directors of the documentary, to Egyptian Streets following the announcement.” ([Egyptian Streets](#))

### **December 4: Egypt’s Women Make Squash History Taking Top Three Spots in World Ranking**

“Egyptian squash players continue to make history, with Egypt becoming the first country in 20 years to hold the top three spots on the PSA Women’s World Rankings, reported the PSA’s website. The December women’s world rankings currently places Egypt’s Raneem El Welily, Nour El Sherbini, and Nouran Gohar in the top three spots. Also in the top ten is Omneya Abdel Kawy, who is currently number eight in the rankings.” ([Egyptian Streets](#))

## **Iran**

### **December 2: Iranian women demand inclusion in Rouhani's Cabinet**

“The resignations of three Cabinet ministers in October had raised hope among many women’s rights activists in Iran that President Hassan Rouhani would nominate at least one woman to one of the vacant positions. While Rouhani pledged to incorporate more women into his government during his 2013 presidential campaign, he has yet to fulfill this promise. Upon taking office, Rouhani named three women as vice presidents and also tried to place more women as senior state officials.” ([Al Monitor](#))

#### **December 5: Iran fashion workers jailed for 'spreading prostitution'**

“Twelve people involved in the fashion industry in Iran are reported to have been jailed for ‘spreading prostitution’ via images posted online. The eight women and four men were handed sentences of between five months and six years by a court in Shiraz, a lawyer told the Inna news agency. They were also banned from working in fashion and travelling abroad for two years afterwards, Mahmoud Taravat said. He added that his clients had denied the charges and planned to appeal.” ([BBC](#))

### **Iraq**

#### **November 30: Iraqi Family's Search for 'Lost Girl' Taken by Islamic State**

“In a camp near Mosul a picture of a three-year-old girl, snatched from her mother's breast by ISIS militants when they overran her Christian town two years ago, is taped to a wall along with a desperate plea from her parents. ‘Lost Girl,’ reads the poster in the displaced people's camp, urging anyone with information about Christina Ezzo Abada to call the number provided. Almost nothing is known about what happened to Christina since her abduction, but her family assumes she was taken to Mosul and is praying she will be found among the tens of thousands of people now fleeing the city.” ([Reuters](#))

#### **December 5: Baghdad woman on bicycle sticks to vow, brings on more female cyclists**

“A Baghdad woman, who became the face of defiance when she posted solo pictures of her riding her bicycle in late November in different locations in the Iraqi capital, is no longer alone in breaking the social taboo. The 25-year-old Marina Jaber, who told Al Arabiya English recently that Iraqis need to get used to seeing women riding bicycles, has kept her promise when she brought on more female cyclists to Baghdad’s Abu Nuwas Street.” ([Al Arabiya](#))

### **Israel**

#### **November 21: Dalia Fadila teaches Israeli-Arab students girl power**

“Dalia Fadila, the first female dean of an Arab college in Israel and the founder of a growing network of schools, is not one to understate her ambitions. Through lessons taught in English in her private Q Schools programme in Israel and Jordan, she wants to nurture a generation of Israeli Arabs able to operate as global citizens. The mission, she explains during a visit to London, is to ‘transform the idea of young Arabs about themselves.’” ([Financial Times](#))

### **Jordan**

#### **November 22: 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence to call for end to murders of women, girls**

“‘Stop the killing of women and girls’ will be the theme of an ongoing campaign that will kick-start the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence in Jordan, which officially start on Friday, November 25. ‘We have witnessed a rise in the number of murders against women and that is why this year’s campaign is calling for the right to life for women in Jordan,’ said Jordanian National Commission for Women (JNCW) Secretary General Salma Nims.” ([Jordan Times](#))

#### **November 26: ‘In Jordan Valley, women turn culture into a source of resilience’**

“A project that utilizes the colorful soil and natural plants of Jordan to produce hand-dyed textiles in the Jordan Valley is testament to the ambition of the Kingdom to place culture and creative economy on its development agenda, according to a UN official. Speaking at the opening ceremony on Thursday, November 24 of an exhibition that showcased handcrafted and naturally dyed fabrics created by rural women from the Jordan Valley as part of an empowerment program, UNESCO Representative to Jordan Costanza Farina said ‘no society can flourish without culture.’” ([Jordan Times](#))

### **December 2: Jordanians stage sit-in in front of parliament to protest gender-based killings**

“Around 200 people staged a sit-in front of Parliament on Thursday, December 1 to demand an end to killing women in Jordan. ‘We are witnessing an increase in women’s murders in Jordan, many at the hands of their relatives, so we decided to come here to demand an end to such barbaric practices,’ Jordanian Women’s Union (JWU) President Tahani Shakhshir said. ‘We want the Cabinet and the Parliament to take concrete actions to amend legislation and ensure better protection for women in Jordan,’ Shakhshir told The Jordan Times.” ([Al Bawaba](#))

### **December 3: New projected shelter to house women under threat over ‘family honour’**

“Jordan will open a shelter for women whose lives are in danger for reasons related to ‘family honour’ by the end of the year, official sources said. ‘The legislation pertaining to the shelter was published in the Official Gazette last week. Hopefully by the end of the year, a building will be designated and will begin operation,’ said Mohammad Ensour, the director of the Human Rights and Family Affairs Department at the Ministry of Justice.” ([Jordan Times](#))

## **Lebanon**

### **December 2: Lebanese campaign urges abolishment of law that protects rapists**

“Article 522 of the Lebanese Penal Code shields rapists from prosecution on the condition that they marry their victim, a phenomenon that is still practiced in the country, especially among conservative families whose chief aim is to preserve the family’s so-called ‘honor.’ Activists say that such ‘protection’ is, more often than not, a second trauma for victims — something that parliament’s Administration and Justice Committee met to discuss a few days ago.” ([Gulf News](#))

## **Morocco**

### **November 27: Moroccan state TV shows women how to hide domestic violence**

“Women in Morocco have reacted in horror after a program on state television demonstrated how they could use makeup to cover up evidence of domestic violence. The segment in the daily program Sabahiyat, on Channel 2M, showed a smiling makeup artist demonstrating how to mask marks of beating, on a woman with her face made up to appear swollen and covered with fake black and blue bruises. The response was immediate, and outraged.” ([The Guardian](#))

## **Palestinian Territories**

### **November 30: Meet Gaza's female geeks**

“Joumana Sroor learned how to code at the age of 12. By 15, she and a team of three other girls in Gaza had built a prototype for a web application called Early Alert, which notifies users of traffic, crowds, accidents or crimes happening near them. Although Sroor says she does not always find encouragement for her technological pursuits in Gaza, there is one place where she feels at home: A seed accelerator and workspace in Gaza City's bustling al-Rimal neighbourhood called Gaza Sky Geeks.” ([Aljazeera](#))

## **Saudi Arabia**

### **November 23: Trial begins of 13 women who staged protests in Buraidah**

“The Specialized Criminal Court in Riyadh on Tuesday, November 22 began the first session to put on trial 13 Saudi women accused of incitement and participating in rallies and riots in Buraidah, in addition to burning the photo of a senior state official. The session was held in the presence of the public prosecutor, two of some of the defendants’ proxies, representative of the Saudi Human Rights Commission, and the media. The 13 accused women on trial were all absent as they are at large and not in detention.” ([Zawya](#))

### **November 30: A billionaire Saudi prince says it’s ‘high time’ for Saudi women to start driving**

“A billionaire Saudi prince has taken a striking stance against one of his country’s long-held codes: prohibiting women to drive. Prince Alwaleed bin Talal, a member of the Saudi royal family, posted a four-page-long opinion piece on his website and linked to Twitter, declaring his belief that it is ‘high time’ that Saudi women start driving cars. The country’s ban, the prince wrote, is ‘fundamentally an infringement on a woman’s rights.’” ([Washington Post](#))

### **December 2: Your lawyer on your smartphone!**

“Created by the lawyer Nesreen Al-Eissa, the app covers a whole set of issues women might face including divorce, custody, financial rights. The app aims to raise awareness among women in knowing how to deal with legal and Shariah issues and how to independently file in court. The app not only features information in text but also visual content such as video. An animated video explains the steps to make a legal charge and sue in court using the ministry of interior’s official website.” ([Saudi Gazette](#))

## **Syria**

### **November 24: Seven-year-old Syrian girl takes to Twitter to depict life in Aleppo**

“Her hair tied into pigtails by matching pink ribbons, seven-year-old Bana Alabed inspects the rubble in her home town of Aleppo, before walking to face the camera. ‘I am sad. It’s so bad,’ she tells her audience in English in a clip posted on Twitter. She is later seen holding a banner reading: ‘Stand with Aleppo. Please stop the bombing and end the siege.’ On her Twitter account, which is managed by her mother, Alabed shares pictures of the city’s bombed buildings and of herself at home.” ([Al Arabiya](#))

### **December 5: Aleppo: 7-year-old girl's Twitter account goes silent**

Bana Alabed, a 7-year-old Syrian girl who captured the world’s attention with heartbreaking Twitter posts about the bombing of Aleppo, disappeared from social media on Sunday, December 4. The last message sent on the Twitter account Bana shares with her mother, Fatemah, was foreboding: “We are sure the army is capturing us now. We will see each other another day dear world. Bye.- Fatemah #Aleppo”. Her Twitter account was deleted and nobody knows why. ([CNN](#))

## **Turkey**

### **November 28: Turkey detains ‘wanted Kurdish female militant’ at Istanbul airport**

“Turkish police on Sunday, November 27 detained a woman accused of being a wanted Kurdish militant at Istanbul’s main airport, state media said. Sara Aktas was detained at Ataturk International Airport while seeking to travel to Germany, the state-run Anadolu news agency said. It said she is accused of being a key figure in the Kurdistan Communities Union (KCK), which the authorities regard as the urban wing of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK). She faces up to 15 years in jail on charges of membership of an armed ‘terror’ group, it said.” ([Al Arabiya](#))

## **United Arab Emirates**

### **November 25: UAE maternity leave laws helping working women**

“Helping career-oriented women find a work-life balance is an important aspect of societal progress and the emerging revisions in maternity leave laws in the UAE are a welcome step in strengthening that balance for the female workforce. Recently, Abu Dhabi increased its maternity leave allowance for its government employees from 45 days to three months of fully-paid leave and two hours of daily leave for the first year after delivery to enable new mothers to avail of an extended period of care for their newborns.” ([Gulf News](#))

### **November 29: UAE can be regional pioneer for women’s rugby**

“The UAE can be a regional leader in women’s rugby after selecting an historic first all-Emirati women’s team for this weekend’s Dubai Rugby Sevens, according to Qais Al Dhalai, general secretary of Asia Rugby and the UAE Rugby Federation. The UAE women’s side will play in the inaugural six-team Under-18’s Girls International Sevens Tournament alongside Hong Kong, India, Kazakhstan, Sri Lanka and Uzbekistan from Wednesday. Two teams progress from a round robin to play in Friday’s final.” ([Gulf News](#))

### **General**

### **November 22: Women increasingly joining the fight in army**

“More and more women are joining military service in Middle East countries. Fighter pilot Major Mariam Al-Mansouri led a combat mission for the United Arab Emirates against Daesh in 2014, recalled Dalia Ghanem-Yazbeck of the Carnegie Middle East Center. Algeria has a number of women generals, while women also serve in Jordan, Lebanon and Tunisia, she said. Within combat units in the region, women often ‘continue to be in traditional gendered positions such as translators or data-entry personnel or social workers and so on.’” ([Saudi Gazette](#))

### **November 24: Islam cannot be blamed for the Middle East women’s rights record (Op-Ed by Diana Alghoul)**

“Women’s rights in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region have been a long standing issue of debate. Many have attempted to use this index to wrongfully correlate Islam with the absence of women’s rights. To say that Islam is the reason behind women’s oppression is a naïve statement and offers only a shallow analysis while allowing for Western stereotypes of a religion to take precedence over substantial analysis of the domestic socio-political situation in the region.” ([Middle East Monitor](#))

### **November 28: 100 Women 2016: Female Arab cartoonists challenge authority**

“In some Arab countries women still have to ask permission from a male relative to get a passport, marry or leave the country. Although the practice of ‘male guardianship’ is not always enshrined in law, it persists in everyday life within many families. As part of the 100 Women season, the BBC asked three female cartoonists from North Africa to take up their pens and illustrate how the custom continues to affect women's lives in their countries.” ([BBC](#))

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