

MENA Women News Brief

October 12, 2016-October 24, 2016

Bahrain

October 17: Visionary, Defiant and Resilient: Bahrain's Dissenting Women (Op-Ed by Semanur Karaman)

“Bahrain’s resilient and dissenting women advocate for justice and rights in Bahrain and the wider region at the cost of their own safety and wellbeing. What is of grave concern is they do this while being largely ignored by the international community. Let’s spell it out loud and clear: there is no long term peace and stability for the region if there is no direct and strategic support to its most socially conscious citizens.” ([Huffington Post](#))

Egypt

October 15: In Egypt, The High Cost Of Romance Is Crippling Hopes Of Marriage

“In the Shubra al-Kheima neighborhood of Cairo, Sharouk, 20, has had two engagements broken off by her prospective grooms' families. The reason: She couldn't afford to buy kitchen appliances. In Sharouk's working-class community, the groom is responsible for the apartment and furniture, while the bride provides a refrigerator, stove and washing machine. The engagement is sealed with a gift of gold jewelry from the groom to the bride.” ([NPR](#))

October 21: Female drummers find a beat in Cairo

“Two young Egyptian drummers are defying their country's social norms and taboos by taking part in an art form that has scarcely been practiced by women and is usually associated with belly dancing. Donia Sami and Rania Omar started the first female drumming band in Egypt to challenge Egyptian society's stereotypes and encourage more Egyptian women to take up their art. ‘Playing any instrument is a right of every woman on earth, especially if she is passionate about it,’ Donia said. ([Al-Monitor](#))

Iran

October 13: Only Woman Iran Allowed in Ironman Race: I Did ‘Toughest Endurance Challenge While Being Covered’ in Hijab

“In the heat and humidity of Hawaii, competing in an Ironman covered from head to toe in a hijab isn’t ideal, but it was the only way Iranian Shirin Gerami could race for her country. Gerami finished the Ironman World Championship in Kona, Hawaii—consisting of a 2.4-mile swim, a 112-mile bike ride, ending with a marathon—in 13 hours and 11 minutes.” ([People](#))

Iraq

October 22: Dozens of Yazidi women enslaved by ISIS moved from Mosul

“Dozens of Yazidi women captured and enslaved by ISIS in 2014 have been moved from the Iraqi city of Mosul to Syria, according to the UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. The monitoring group and US military officials have said ISIS militants are fleeing Mosul and heading for Raqqa, Syria, the de facto capital of ISIS, as Iraqi-led forces push to free the key Iraqi city from the terror group.” ([CNN](#))

Israel

October 19: These Israeli women marched from the Lebanese border to Jerusalem. Here's why.

“Two weeks ago, a small group of Israeli women set off on a protest march to Jerusalem from northern Israel to demand that the Israeli government restart a peace process with the Palestinians. On Wednesday, October 19 after reaching the Palestinian city of Jericho in the West Bank, the core group of 20 women were joined by more than 3,000 others, including about 1,000 Palestinian women.”

([Washington Post](#))

Jordan

October 15: Jordanian Ayat Amer ‘first Arab woman to win NASA competition’

“Hard work and determination led Jordanian Ayat Amer to become the first Arab woman to win a NASA competition, only at 22 years old. ‘Being accepted to NASA's training programme is indeed a huge step in my life... It is a dream that's come true,’ said Amer, at the Women's Economic Participation Conference in Amman last week. Amer was accepted by NASA six months ago, but has only recently passed the intense security checks required.” ([Jordan Times](#))

October 17: Jordan: Activists Seek Stiffer Sentences for Honor Killings

“Rights activists in Jordan called for stiffer punishment for violence in the family, after four women and a man were killed in ‘honor crimes’ in just over a week. Jordan has reformed its penal code, but loopholes allow judges to hand down lenient sentences, particularly if the family involved declines to press charges. In all, 26 people were killed this year in attacks by relatives who claimed they were protecting the family's honor.” ([ABC News](#))

October 20: Headscarves worn in first Middle East FIFA women's tourney

“A youth tournament in Jordan has quietly ushered in some advances in women's soccer. The U-17 Women's World Cup is not only the first international women's tournament to be held in the Middle East, but it also marks the first time Muslim players have worn headscarves during a FIFA event. Those things are significant in a culturally conservative and religious region where women aren't typically encouraged to play sports.” ([Yahoo News](#))

Kuwait

October 24: 23 percent of women in Kuwait diagnosed with breast cancer

“Early detection of breast cancer could help limit the number of deaths claimed by this lethal disease, a health official said, adding that around 23 percent of women in Kuwait suffer from the ailment. Breast cancer is amongst the world's most pervasive diseases, Deputy Director General of Kuwait Cancer Control Center (KCCC) Dr Khulood Al-Ali said on the sidelines of a ceremony marking ‘World Cancer Day,’ which falls on October of each year.” ([Kuwait Times](#))

Morocco

October 14: 13 Women Sworn in as Morocco's Ambassadors

“Thirteen women ambassadors were sworn in by King Mohammed VI of Morocco to transmit Moroccans' voice to the world. The swearing-in ceremony was held in the Royal Palace in Morocco's central-western city of Casablanca, one week after the upshots of the Friday, October 7 ballot votes were released. Sixty-five Moroccans, men and women, were appointed to the position as the kingdom's ambassadors to the world.” ([Morocco World News](#))

October 14: Proportion of Women in Moroccan Parliament Rises to 21 percent

“Following the Friday, October 7 general elections, women’s percentage at the House of Representatives slightly rose to account for 21 percent of seats compared to 17 percent in the 2011 elections. The number of seats occupied by women in the Moroccan parliament stands at 81 out the 395 total seats, of whom 71 made it to the House of Representatives thanks to a quota system that encourages women’s representation.” ([North Africa Post](#))

Oman

October 17: Oman Development Bank lends \$54mln to women's projects

“The total number of women’s projects funded by Oman Development Bank (ODB) in the last eight years (ending September 16, 2016) amounts to 6,000. Seizing 16 percent of the total number of loans approved for small-size projects is a good indicator for the attention and interest ODB attaches to the Omani women. The loans provided to women covered a variety of projects in the fields of industry, agriculture, tourism, health, social services, crafts and professional activities.” ([Zawya](#))

October 19: Omani women narrate their success stories on women’s day

“A forum to highlight the achievements of Omani women was held at Grand Hyatt Muscat on Monday, October 17. Abeer al Harthi, owner of Shmook Company for Design and Celebrations organized the event titled, 'I will narrate my story' and it coincided with Omani Women's Day. The forum was held under the patronage of H E Sheikh Khalid bin Omar bin Said al Marhoon, Minister of Civil Service.” ([Muscat Daily](#))

Palestinian Territories

October 18: New initiative aims to protect Palestinian working women

“The work environment in Palestine suffers from violations of labor rights in general and women’s rights specifically, as women are the weakest entity in their patriarchal society. Consequently, the Palestinian Ministry of Labor and the National Committee for Women’s Employment (NCWE) coordinated with the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU) to launch the first Guideline for Women’s Employment Rights on Tuesday, October 4 in Ramallah.” ([Al-Monitor](#))

Saudi Arabia

October 18: Saudi Women Vote for the First Time. What Did That Look Like?

“By royal decree, Saudi Arabia granted women the right to participate in a local election (by both voting and running for office). It is the first time ever. How did Saudi women experience their new right? Were they open to talking about it? Could a *Times* video journalist film in Saudi Arabia? And what broader questions might the election raise? ‘Ladies First,’ a 40-minute documentary, resulted from my attempts to find out.” ([New York Times](#))

Tunisia

October 12: Woman, the Law and Islam

“‘As a young woman in Tunisia I feel more afraid when I see a policeman out at night than any other man,’ said Yamina Thabet, head of the Tunisian Association for the Support of Minorities (ATSM). As modern day Tunisia gradually transitions into a contemporary democracy, the gap between the emerging country and the patriarchal policing of how women should behave, dress and even marry is growing wide.” ([Tunisia-Live](#))

October 24: Tunisian coalition party fights for women's rights with gender violence bill

“[T]his month Tunisia’s parliament is debating a bill to strengthen legislation on violence against women. Championed by [Ennahdha](#), a conservative reformist party with Islamic roots and a clutch of dynamic female MPs and officials, the bill is expected to be passed by the end of 2016. The proposed law, which would be incorporated into other legislation and government policies, would introduce sweeping definitions of gender-based violence, covering psychological and economic harm in both the public and domestic spheres.” ([The Guardian](#))

Turkey

October 24: Turkish women are seeking illegal ways for abortion

“According to a law that came into force in 1983, abortion was legalized in Turkey. Research conducted in 2013 by Ankara-based Hacettepe University revealed that 14 percent of the women in this country have had at least one abortion in their lives. Pregnancies until 10 weeks can be ended by abortion. Abortions in state hospitals are covered by the state’s health insurance, but this is only on paper because the law is not implemented.” ([Hurriyet Daily News](#))

UAE

October 24: New program aims to increase representation of female farmers in the Middle East

“Young Arab women studying agriculture will be offered a development program that will hopefully enable them to improve the region’s food security. Tamkeen, also known as the Young Arab Women Scientists Leadership program, will focus on mentoring women who are studying agriculture at university to deal with challenges faced by female farmers. It was developed by Dubai’s International Centre for Biosaline Agriculture.” ([The National](#))

General

October 15: Conference to highlight women as key contributors to peace

“The second edition of 'Investing in the Future' (IIFMENA) conference will feature four high level plenary sessions and eight roundtable discussions focusing on women's rights, education and employment, among other important topics, under the theme ‘Building the Resilience of Women and Girls in the Arab Region.’” ([Khaleej Times](#))

October 18: The Media’s Imaginary Veiling of Women in MENA (Op-Ed by Nahed Eltantawy)

“Western media perpetuates a stereotype of veiled women largely based on sexist views, not on facts. One of the striking images of the 2016 Rio Olympics was that of a beach volleyball game, with bikini-clad German player Kira Walkenhorst on one side of the net and Egyptian player Doaa Elghobashy on the other side, wearing a full body suit and a hijab. While many celebrated this image, other media outlets claimed that the image of veiled women was plain proof of these women’s oppression and imprisonment within the confines of a backward culture.” ([Fair Observer](#))

October 19: Malala urges Muslims to unite against wars

“Pakistan's Nobel Peace Prize winner Malala Yousafzai, giving a speech in the Emirates, urged Muslims to respect the "true message of Islam" and unite against wars in their countries. The 19-year-old, who was shot in the head by the Taliban in 2012 after she had publicly advocated education for girls, urged the world's Muslims to ‘come together... and follow the true message of Islam as they join hands in the struggle for peace.’” ([Middle East Online](#))

By Vanessa Sorrentino, Middle East Program

Additional MENA Women's News Briefs are available [here](#).

Follow the Middle East Program on Twitter @WilsonCenterMEP  and Facebook 

