

MENA Women's News Brief

October 6-20, 2014

October 12: Women's Sporting Rights Put Saudi Arabia and Iran on the Defensive

“The struggle for women's rights to engage in sports and attend sporting events has commanded increased attention with the hunger strike of Ghoncheh Ghavami, a British-Iranian national incarcerated in Tehran's notorious Evin prison, the expected arrival in Saudi Arabia of Australian women fans for the Asian Champions League final, and the rare appearance of Saudi women in an all-male stadium in Abu Dhabi.” ([Huffington Post](#))

Algeria

October 8: In Algeria, Women's Employment and Education Go Hand in Hand in Unexpected Ways

“The road to complete gender equality in North Africa remains long and dusty. Nevertheless, in Algeria, the idea that gender parity is a must have is gaining increasing traction, especially in the education sector. The Algerian education system is being used as a catalyst to ignite women's progress in the country, especially outside the main urban centers.” ([Muftah](#))

Bahrain

October 14: More women are entering business

“More women are setting up their own businesses in Bahrain than ever before, according to the latest statistics. Almost 24,000 women now have commercial registrations (CRs) with the Industry and Commerce Ministry, 41 per cent of the total number of CRs registered.” ([Gulf Daily News](#))

Egypt

October 14: Egypt's conservative society further burdens poor working women

Egypt's economy is faltering and prices are skyrocketing as people struggle to put food on the table. Up to 30 percent of homes have female breadwinners, and they are the most vulnerable economically. Mona Ezzat of The New Woman Foundation has done in-depth studies on working women in Egypt, mostly among the poor and middle-class. Ezzat said the women they studied were largely from poorer families where more conservative values still dominate and women are expected to stay at home. The study showed that many of the working women were single and worked in factories to support their families, but brothers and fathers still take the salaries and make all the decisions at home. There are other societal limits; women are often barred from overnight trips in factories for work purposes where more money can be made. ([NPR](#))

October 16: Egypt's salafists looking for 'good' women candidates

“Besides having a 'good reputation,' Egypt's Salafist Nour Party only accepts women who already wear the Islamic head veil as candidates for the country's upcoming parliamentary elections, its head [Youness Makhionun] told a local newspaper.” ([Al-Ahram](#))

October 16: Global civil society insists Egypt release activists

“The global civil society alliance (CIVICUS) called on Egyptian authorities to ‘end the judicial persecution of seven female human rights activists who are on trial for peacefully protesting a controversial assembly law,’ the group said in a statement.” ([Daily News Egypt](#))

Iran

October 14: Ghoncheh Ghavami awaits verdict in Iran trial

An Iranian court has staged a brief trial of Ghoncheh Ghavami, the British Iranian activist who arrested for breaking public segregation laws by attending a volleyball game, before she was remanded to prison for a further week. The 25-year-old law graduate of London’s School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) faces charges of “propaganda against the regime.” ([The Telegraph](#))

October 19: Iran bans human rights lawyer from practicing law

An Iranian court has banned a prominent human rights lawyer from practicing her profession for three years, the semi-official ISNA news agency reported Sunday, October 19. Nasrin Sotoudeh told ISNA that the Bar Association had been under pressure to cancel her license since she was released from jail last year. She said she had requested that the association delay any decision until the pressure diminished, without elaborating. ([al-Arabiya](#))

October 20: Iran arrest 4 over acid attack

Iranian authorities have arrested four people suspected of throwing acid on women, according to a report by the official IRNA news agency. A string of acid attacks against at least two women in the central city of Isfahan last week prompted a loud public outcry. According to Iranian law, the four suspects, if convicted, could face the death penalty. ([Associated Press](#))

Iraq

October 9: Kurdish peshmerga fighters: women on the frontline - in pictures

“Kurdish peshmerga fighters have been in training for many years. Here, Maryam Ashrafi photographs women learning to use guns and training in various parts of Kurdistan. The Kurds of Syria and Iraq have become a major focal point in the war against ISIS.” ([The Guardian](#))

October 11: Iraqi Yazidi girl tells of enslavement by Islamic State

“The 15-year-old is now with what is left of her family — two of her brothers and some more distant relatives — living in a makeshift roadside shelter in this tiny village in northern Iraq, along with other families shattered by the onslaught from the Islamic State militant group. Her two sisters remain in the militants' hands, and her father, other brothers and other male relatives have vanished, their fates unknown.” ([Haaretz](#))

October 12: Islamic State says it is buying and selling Yazidi women, using them as concubines

“The Islamic State extremist organization boasted Sunday, October 12 that it had enslaved women from an Iraqi minority group in order to use them as concubines, as a rights organization detailed teenagers being bought and sold by fighters for as little as \$1,000. An English-language propaganda magazine for the Islamic State said that Yazidi women and children were considered spoils of war after they were captured as the militants seized their towns and villages. It was the first confirmation from the group of widespread allegations of detention and sexual abuse against Yazidi women.” ([Washington Post](#))

October 14: Meet the Yazidi MP fighting to save women and girls from sex slavery at the hands of ISIL

“Vian Dakhil– who is Iraq’s only Yazidi MP (the government has 25 per cent women MPs in all) – drew the world’s attention to the massacre of her Yazidi brethren at the hands of ISIL when she collapsed in Parliament following an impassioned speech.” ([The Telegraph](#))

October 14: ISIS Says the Quran Allows Enslaving Women. Will Clerical Leaders Respond?

“In an article that appeared Sunday, October 12 in Dabiq, the group’s English-language online publication, Islamic State militants crossed a last possible boundary of decency by citing the Quran as authority for the barbarism they have been practicing against women. Equally disturbing, Arab leaders and the ulama, the clerical leaders of Islam, have been silent in the face of this effrontery. In the article, ISIS brags of its right to enslave, marry, sell, and buy the girls and women who fall under its control in conquered territories. They are the “spoils of war,” the group asserts. No apology for barbarity toward women, no hiding of atrocity, is necessary; the Quran allows it.” ([Wall Street Journal](#))

October 15: A portrait of Shirine, Kurdish female fighter

“She chose martyrdom over death, and confrontation over hiding. She left fear behind and chose courage as a way to write history for her people. Shirine never expected to join the Women’s Protection Units (YPJ). After obtaining her high-school degree, she enrolled in university.” ([Al-Monitor](#))

October 16: Islamic State Sex Slave Market Staged In London By Kurdish Activists

“A controversial stunt to shock Londoners into seeing the brutality of Islamic State (IS) brought the terrorist group's horrific actions vividly to life on the streets of London last night.” ([Huffington Post](#))

Israel

October 14: Poll: 2/3 of Israelis want women involved in peace talks

“Two-thirds of the Israeli public thinks women should be included in the peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians, a recent survey shows. Some 75% of women and 59% of men in Israel say that including women will contribute to the peace process.” ([Haaretz](#))

Kuwait

October 14: Kuwait ‘keen on achieving gender equality, female empowerment’

“Kuwait has reaffirmed its commitment to implementing the UN Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in attaining gender equality, protecting women, strengthening their rights and eliminating all forms of discrimination against them.” ([Gulf News](#))

Lebanon

October 9: A burgeoning culture of female DJs in Lebanon

“In the basement of Mohammed Ghibris’ DJ School in Hamra, Priscilla Bakalian smoothly bounces behind the boards as she waits for the perfect moment to mix together two tracks. Bakalian is part of a new trend at the DJ School as over the last year Ghibris has seen a dramatic rise in the number of female students signing up for his classes.” ([The Daily Star](#))

Oman

October 17: Omani Women's Day An Occasion To Celebrate Empowerment

“Omani women from all walks of life have expressed their happiness on the occasion of Omani Women's Day which is celebrated on October 17 every year.” ([Muscat Daily](#))

Qatar

October 16: Winners of Arab Woman Awards Qatar 2014 selected

“Fifteen winners of the Arab Woman Awards Qatar 2014 have been selected by the judges board. Judged by a panel of leading female executives, the winners span a wide range of sectors, including art, business, fashion, entrepreneurship and charity.” ([Gulf Times](#))

Saudi Arabia

October 10: New era for Saudi women

“In a country where women make up a small percentage of the workforce, a female engineer is showing her male colleagues a thing or two. Wearing a headscarf and science goggles, Jumana Almuzel is a rare sight on the shop floor of Saudi Arabia's GE gas turbine facility.” ([Arab News](#))

October 13: Women harassers face SR500,000 fine, 5 years

“Harassers may face up to five years in prison and incur a SR 500,000 fine [approximately \$140,000 USD] under a new draft law that is currently being studied by the Shoura Council's Social Affairs Committee.” ([Arab News](#))

October 14: Women 'allowed to enter' Saudi soccer stadium for match

“Female supporters of Western Sydney Wanderers Football Club will be allowed to enter King Fahd International Football Stadium (KFFS) in Riyadh. The spokesman said this is not the first time women have been in Saudi stadiums.” ([Al-Arabiya](#))

October 15: New taxi hailing service eases commuting for Saudi women

“A global taxi hailing service has enabled Saudi women to contribute to the Kingdom's economic future by being able to commute safely and securely. The introduction of Easy Taxi has come to the rescue of many.” ([Arab News](#))

Syria

October 5: Kurdish female fighter in suicide attack on ISIL amid fighting for key Syria town

“A female Kurdish fighter carried out a suicide bomb attack against Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (Isil) jihadists outside a key Syrian town, a monitoring group said. The woman, named on social media as Arin Mirkan, reportedly blew herself up at an ISIL position east of the border town of Kobane, killing a number of jihadists who have surrounded and are battling to seize it.” ([The Telegraph](#))

October 9: Syrian women's group paints for peace

“The Syrian Women's Forum for Peace has launched a new project to paint murals across Syrian cities, in an attempt to spread peace and life in the hearts of Syrians who are suffering from the effects of the war.” ([Al-Monitor](#))

October 13: Anti-IS war being led by a woman

“A Kurdish woman fighter is leading the battle against Islamic State militants in the Syrian battleground town of Kobani, a monitoring group and activists said. ‘Mayssa Abdo, known by the nom-de-guerre of Narin Afrin, is commanding the YPG in Kobani along with Mahmud Barkhodan,’ Syrian Observatory for Human Rights head Rami Abdel Rahman told AFP.” ([Arab News](#))

October 17: Syrian Women Know How to Defeat ISIS

To the Islamic State, Syrian women are slaves. To much of the rest of the world, they are victims. It’s time we expose their real identity: an untapped resource for creating lasting peace. Listening to and implementing the ideas of women still living in Syria is key to weakening ISIS and stabilizing the region at large because, in many ways, they have a better track record laying the foundations for peace and democracy than any other group. Over the last two years, we’ve worked side-by-side with Syrian women leaders as they propose concrete steps to end the war. Most recently, we brought several women representing large civil society networks to Washington, D.C., where they cautioned against the current approach of the international community – and proposed a very different blueprint for the region’s future. More arms and more bombs, they said, are not the answer. ([TIME](#))

October 17: Kurdish Women Fight on Front Lines Against Islamic State

As debate flares in Washington and other capitals about whether the battle against Islamic State can succeed without more boots—even U.S. ones—on the ground, Kurdish women have stepped up to defend their lands in Syria and Iraq. An estimated one-third of the Syrian Kurdish fighters in Kobani are women, fighters and residents say, a figure that mirrors their role in other significant battles across Kurdish territories this year. The overriding motivation that Kurds give for fighting the insurgents is to save their ancestral homeland from destruction. Yet many women combatants also cite a more personal crusade. Across the territory in Syria and Iraq that it now controls, Islamic State has reinstated slavery, prohibited women from working and threatened to kill those Muslims, including Kurds, who don’t adhere to their ideology. ([Wall Street Journal](#))

UAE

October 7: Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak Library provides a world of knowledge, for women

“Her vision is to have a public library in every institution. Another part of that vision was fulfilled last week with the opening of a women’s library in her name. The Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak Library, affiliated with the General Women’s Union (GWU), of which Sheikha Fatima is chairwoman, seeks to be a goldmine of specialist resources for women, children and UAE community issues.” ([The National](#))

October 12: Female Dubai Police cadets juggle family commitments with life in uniform

“There are 135 female recruits, aged between 18 and 35, enrolled in the Dubai Police Academy. They undergo an intense six-month training course involving daily 4.30am exercise sessions and lectures on the law and the role of the police, as well as how to handle firearms.” ([The National](#))

Yemen


October 6: Yemeni women play active role in fight against terrorism

“In September, the Yemeni Women Empowerment Foundation began sending women to army security posts and checkpoints to serve meals, cake and sweets they had prepared at the foundation's workshop as an expression of gratitude and support, the foundation said.” ([Al-Shorfa](#))

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