

# **MENA Women News Brief**

## **September 13, 2016-September 26, 2016**

### **Algeria**

#### **September 14: Algerian women protest against violence**

“Dozens of women took part in a sit-in against violence and disappearances in the Algerian city of Constantine to pay tribute to Amira Merabet who died earlier this month after being set on fire by a man she refused. In the statement read by Amel Hadjadj, one of the organizers of the sit-in, the group condemned the crime and the ‘patriarchal and unjust system suffered by women in Algeria.’” ([Middle East Monitor](#))

### **Egypt**

#### **September 18: Egypt's divorced women demand their fair share of assets**

“Sabah, a divorced Egyptian woman in her 40s, like thousands of other divorced women in Egypt, faces significant difficulties due to the Personal Status Law, which requires divorced women wait at least one year from the date of filing for alimony to receive payment. In addition, the court’s procedures to determine the husband’s income often take a long time, and women frequently complain that the court relies on an income less than the actual amount due to efforts by the husband to hide his true earnings.” ([Al-Monitor](#))

#### **September 20: Egypt's communication ministry launches 'ICT for Women' website**

“Egypt's communication and information technology ministry launched a website on information and communications technology (ICT) to support and empower women in the field and in other aspects of life. The website, entitled ‘ICT for Women,’ provides various services for women's employment such as online learning of entrepreneurship and advertising of job opportunities, training and ICT events for women in Egypt. Women make up less than a quarter of the country's labour force.” ([Ahram Online](#))

#### **September 21: To get subsidized baby formula, Egyptian women need breast examinations**

“Add this to the reasons that Egyptian women might require a breast examination: to get government-subsidized formula milk for their babies. That’s what a spokesman for Egypt’s Health Ministry recently told a Kuwaiti newspaper. The news took social media by storm. And the regulation, of course, was deemed ‘degrading’ by many people. It was the latest sign of the country's economic woes, with rising prices, especially of government-subsidized goods and services.” ([Washington Post](#))

### **Iran**

#### **September 21: Women in Iran defy fatwa by riding bikes in public**

“Women in Iran have been posting photos on social media of themselves riding bicycles, defying a fatwa forbidding them from cycling in public. It had been understood that women could cycle as long as religious concerns were respected. But Iran's Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, said women were not allowed to cycle in public or in the presence of strangers. The issue came into focus when campaigners in Iran began marking ‘car-free Tuesdays’ to encourage people to leave their cars at home.” ([BBC](#))

#### **September 26: Iran Releases Canadian-Iranian Professor Held Since June**

“A Canadian-Iranian professor who was arrested by Iranian intelligence officers in June was released on Monday, the government news agency IRNA reported. The professor, Homa Hoodfar, was released on the same day that Iran announced talks with Canada about reopening embassies in each other’s

countries, which have been closed since 2012. Professor Hoodfar conducts research into the role of women in the Middle East.” ([The News York Times](#))

## **Iraq**

### **September 16: Nadia Murad, Survivor of ISIS Atrocities, Named U.N. Goodwill Ambassador**

“Nadia Murad Basee Taha, who survived captivity by ISIS in Iraq to become an activist for her Yazidi people, has been appointed as a Goodwill Ambassador for the United Nations. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) said that Murad’s appointment as an Ambassador for the Dignity of Survivors of Human Trafficking marks the first time that a survivor of atrocities has been awarded this distinction.” ([Time](#))

### **September 17: Breaking up in Baghdad**

“Between 2004 and 2014 there was one divorce for every five Iraqi marriages. This is low by Western standards, but many Iraqis call it a crisis. Cases have been growing steadily since the compilation of proper statistics began in the year after the country’s invasion by American-led forces and the overthrow of Saddam Hussein. Some blame the spread of a stricter Islam over the past decade. Sex outside marriage has become even more taboo than it was.” ([Economist](#))

## **Jordan**

### **September 20: Queen calls for greater support for girls' education in conflict zones**

“The Queen spoke at an event organised by ‘Let Girls Learn,’ a global initiative launched by US First Lady Michelle Obama to help give girls everywhere greater access to education. Recognising that education is a major casualty of armed conflict, Queen Rania called for efforts to turn the tides of tragedy and desperation in war-torn regions. ‘Today, more than 13 million children—half of them girls—are shut out of schools,’ the Queen warned.” ([Jordan Times](#))

### **September 22: Women gain ground in Jordan election despite yawning gender gap**

“Women’s rights campaigners in Jordan believe the country is slowly moving towards more progressive political representation after female MPs won 20 of 130 seats in parliamentary elections on Tuesday, September 20 compared with 18 out of 150 in the previous parliament. The growing relevance of women in Jordanian politics, evident in campaign posters clustered at roundabouts and lining roadsides countrywide in the buildup to polling, was reflected in a contest that featured 252 female candidates.” ([The Guardian](#))

## **Kuwait**

### **September 14: UN expert urges Kuwait to redouble efforts to stop trafficking, exploiting domestic workers**

“While welcoming Kuwait’s commitment to fight trafficking in persons, a UN human rights expert urged the Government to further strengthen its assistance and support measures for trafficked and exploited domestic workers, adopt prevention measures, and fully protect their rights. An International Labor Organization expert noted that victims of trafficking in Kuwait are foreigners who are, for the most, trafficked for forced labour including domestic servitude.” ([UN News Center](#))

## **Palestinian Territories**

### **September 20: On its way to break Gaza siege, women’s boat arrives in France**

“The fourth Freedom Flotilla boat Zaytouna arrived in the French seaport of Ajaccio following a voyage from Barcelona heading to the Gaza Strip, the Anadolu Agency reported. The boat is due to leave

Ajaccio and ‘then continue its journey to Messina, Italy, the final departure point before sailing to the shores of Gaza in late September.’” ([Middle East Monitor](#))

## **Saudi Arabia**

### **September 15: At the Hajj, Facing Islam’s Inconsistent Embrace of Women**

“Each day in Mecca provided powerful reminders of a religion that seems to simultaneously embrace women and push them away. Another day at the Grand Mosque, I met Saraya, a middle-aged woman who is from South Africa but lives in Australia, where I grew up. She had longed to make the hajj for years but was unable because she lacked a mahram, or male guardian—usually a husband, brother, or father—to accompany her; male pilgrims can come alone.” ([New York Times](#))

### **September 26: Saudi women file petition to end male guardianship system**

“A petition signed by more than 14,000 Saudi women calling for an end to the country's male guardianship system is being handed to the government. Women must have the consent of a male guardian to travel abroad, and often need permission to work or study. Support for the first large-scale campaign on the issue grew online in response to a trending Twitter hashtag. Activist Aziza Al-Yousef told the BBC she felt ‘very proud’ of the campaign, but now needed a response.” ([BBC](#))

## **Syria**

### **September 19: When Women Lead the Revolution**

“The Syrian civil war has produced a catalogue of horrors—cities bombed into rubble, the rise of ISIS, refugees fleeing across open seas on makeshift rafts—that have been widely covered in the Western media. During this same time, the dissolution of the Syrian state has opened the doors in one corner of the country for a social revolution that is at odds with the political norms not only of the rest of the Middle East but of the wider world beyond.” ([Independent](#))

## **Tunisia**

### **September 14: Sufi women break norms by leading sacred song rituals in Tunisia**

“Once a week, over the summer, a group of women gather at the Sidi Belhassen Zawiya (shrine) in Tunis to participate in the Hadra, a Sufi ritual that involves the performance of songs accompanied by sacred rhythms. The Tijaniya (female musicians) prepare for the ritual by leaving their drums sitting out in the sunlight for 10 to 15 minutes. In the meantime, one of the caretakers of the shrine walks around carrying an enormous bowl of couscous that is to be eaten by the ritual attendees.” ([Middle East Eye](#))

## **Turkey**

### **September 20: Turkey arrests man who kicked woman for wearing shorts**

“A Turkish court has remanded in custody Abdullah Cakiroglu, who kicked a young woman in the face because she was wearing shorts, after his initial release sparked a furore among activists. In a case which galvanised public opinion, Cakiroglu was first detained but then freed despite confessing to kicking nurse Aysegul Terzi in the face on a public bus. After protests, an Istanbul court placed Cakiroglu, 35, under arrest ahead of trial on charges of ‘inciting hatred and hostility.’” ([Gulf News](#))

## **General**

### **September 19: We’re Failing to Provide Protection to Female Refugees**

“In the current and unprecedented global refugee crisis, women face unique challenges that are often hidden or ignored. Those forced to flee their homes to escape violence often face grim options. Resolving to leave their war-torn homelands, and leaving everything and everyone they know behind, is

hard enough. The prospect of entrusting their lives and that of their loved ones to smugglers or embarking on perilous voyages to strange countries is terrifying.” ([Time](#))

### **September 22: Mapping FGM: Building A Global Picture Of Female Circumcision**

“The practice of female genital mutilation is declining in 14 countries, according to a new report by the Population Council, which offers fresh insights into the way FGM is carried out and provides hope for activists campaigning for the procedure to be banned. At least 200 million women and girls living today around the world have undergone female genital mutilation (FGM), the ritual cutting or removal of female genitalia. And yet, information on the procedure has long been patchy.” ([Huffington Post](#))

**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 

