

MENA Women News Brief

September 26, 2016-October 12, 2016

Egypt

September 29: Egypt passes stricter prison sentence for FGM

“Anyone found to be performing female circumcisions in Egypt will now face up to seven years in prison under harsher penalties imposed on Wednesday, September 28 up from the previous maximum of two years in jail. The change is part of an ongoing drive by the government to end the practice, although the tightening of legislation has thus far not succeeded in rooting out female genital mutilation (FGM), which remains prevalent in Egypt.” ([Middle East Eye](#))

October 2: Egyptian Lawmaker's Call for Virginty Tests Draws Fire

“A women's rights group has filed a legal complaint against Ilhami Agha, an Egyptian lawmaker who called for mandatory virginity tests for women seeking university admission. Maya Morsi, head of the state-sanctioned National Council for Women, said the complaint demands the expulsion from parliament of Ilhami Agha and a criminal investigation into his actions. She said the lawmaker was harming the reputation of Egyptian women, men and the country itself.” ([Associated Press](#))

October 5: ‘You Are More Important’: Egypt Campaign Targets Better Quality of Life for Arab Women

“From the perspective that in order to reform society, there must be a focus on women, Misr Foundation for Health and Sustainable Development launched its latest initiative, ‘Enty El Aham,’ Arabic for ‘You are More Important.’ According to Dr. Hassan, the founder of the initiative and a lecturer and consultant of gynecology and obstetrics at Cairo University, the initiative differs from any other waves of feminism through an embedded role of men in encouraging and promoting its call.” ([Egyptian Streets](#))

October 7: Egyptian bill seeks gender equality for adultery

“A controversial bill in Egypt that would make the penalties for adultery the same for men and women faces many hurdles. Proposed by Margaret Azer, a Copt and leader of the Support Egypt coalition, the bill has aroused strong opposition among members of the parliament's Legislation and Religion committees. The Egyptian penal code states that a wife who is shown to have committed adultery must serve two years in prison. An adulterous husband, however, receives only six months, and then only if he commits adultery in the house he shares with his wife.” ([Al-Monitor](#))

October 9: The diaries of women living alone

“A young woman having her own apartment, in which she lives alone without any of her family members, is most likely to be translated into some people's minds that she has a tendency to act ‘inappropriately’ according to culture standards. These beliefs can be exemplified by the way Egyptian society deals with such women; the suspicious looks of neighbours if she happened to return home late, and their curiosity to understand the reasons of her decision to be independent.” ([Daily News Egypt](#))

Iran

September 28: Iranian Women's Rights Activist Is Given 16-Year Sentence

“An Iranian appeals court has confirmed a 16-year sentence for one of Iran's most prominent women's rights activists, Narges Mohammadi. Mohammadi, 44, a human rights lawyer, has been in and out of jail over the past 15 years and has had several confrontations with Iran's hard-line dominated judiciary. Her

arrest in 2015 and conviction a year later were severe blows to Iran's small and embattled community of women's rights activists, highlighting the severe pressures they face." ([New York Times](#))

September 30: Boycott of world chess championship 'would hurt women in Iran'

"One of Iran's most respected chess players, Mitra Hejazipour, has hit back at calls to boycott next year's women's world championship in Tehran over rules about the wearing of the hijab. A number of chess players, including the US women's champion, Nazi Paikidze, have called for a boycott of the February 2017 games over concerns about the Islamic republic's compulsory headscarf law. But Hejazipour, who won the 2015 Asian continental women's championship, said that a boycott could undermine hard-fought efforts to promote female sport in Iran." ([The Guardian](#))

October 6: Iranian judges sentence writer to jail for story about stoning to death

"Iranian judges have ordered a young female writer and activist to serve a six-year jail term for writing an unpublished fictional story about stoning to death in her country. Golrokh Ebrahimi Iraee received a phone call on Tuesday, October 4 from judicial officials ordering her to Evin prison in Tehran, where her husband, Arash Sadeghi, a prominent student activist, is serving a 19-year sentence. Stoning to death is one of Iran's most controversial punishments, often used against women accused of having an illicit relationship outside marriage." ([The Guardian](#))

October 11: Iran hanging: Fears for child bride Zeinab Sekaanvand

"Human rights activists say Zeinab Sekaanvand, a 22-year-old woman whose execution was delayed while she was pregnant, could be hanged within days in Iran. Sekaanvand was convicted of killing her husband, whom she says beat her for months. Her execution was postponed after she remarried in prison and conceived a child. Last month she gave birth to a stillborn baby, putting her at risk of death by hanging as soon as Thursday, October 13." ([BBC](#))

Iraq

September 29: Iraqi activist Yanar Mohammed wins Norway rights prize

"Norway's Rafto Prize for human rights was awarded to Yanar Mohammed of Iraq for her efforts to help minorities and women subjected to sexual abuse in the war-torn country, the jury said. Mohammed, 55, a journalist and feminist fighting for democratic principles and human rights, is the co-founder and head of the Organisation of Women's Freedom in Iraq, which provides protection to women victims of violence." ([Daily Star](#))

October 10: Nadia Murad, Yazidi Woman Who Survived ISIS Captivity, Wins Human Rights Prize

"Fighters for ISIS abducted a young Yazidi woman named Nadia Murad, her siblings and their mother from their village in northern Iraq more than two years ago. Barely in her 20s, Ms. Murad was separated from her family, beaten and sexually assaulted. Compared with thousands of other Yazidis, followers of a centuries-old religion whom the militant group considers heretical and has killed or enslaved by the thousands, she considers herself fortunate. Ms. Murad was awarded the Vaclav Havel Human Rights Prize on Monday, October 10 named in honor of the Czech writer and dissident who served as president of his country for 14 years after the fall of Communism." ([New York Times](#))

Israel

September 28: How activists are confronting contract killings of Israeli Arab women

“Another Israeli Arab woman was murdered in Israel Friday, September 23. A total of 13 women have been murdered in Israel since the beginning of 2016. Five of those women are Arabs. All five are suspected of being murdered by a relative or a contract killer hired by a family member. Salame leads a series of protest activities and demonstrations of women and men who have two goals: to raise public awareness and provoke a change of attitude of the issue within Arab society, and to spur the Israeli police to take firm action against the rising violence in Arab society.” ([Al-Monitor](#))

October 5: Hundreds of women march on Jerusalem for peace

“By the light of flaming torches, hundreds of women set off Tuesday, October 4 on a 200-kilometer march from the north of the country to Jerusalem, where they will assemble outside the Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s and President Reuven Rivlin’s residences during the upcoming Sukkot festival to demand a negotiated end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Liberian activist and Nobel Peace Prize winner Leymah Roberta Gbowee will join the March of Hope when it reaches the outskirts of the capital in two weeks’ time.” ([Times of Israel](#))

Jordan

September 26: Women In Jordan More Vulnerable To Effects Of Extremism: Report

“As Jordan struggles with rising extremism, a new U.N. report suggests women are much more vulnerable than men to the effects of radicalization, such as an increase in domestic violence and being blamed if their children join an extremist group. Since the war started in Syria in 2011, neighboring Jordan has shouldered the burden that comes with being one of the countries closest to the crisis. Over 635,000 Syrian refugees have settled in Jordan since the conflict started, putting enormous strain on its resources and infrastructure.” ([Huffington Post](#))

October 11: Women’s economic participation ‘key to higher GDP’

“Aside from social and personal benefits, enhancing women’s participation in the economy is key to a higher gross domestic product (GDP), experts said. Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs Jawad Anani said enhancing women’s participation improves the quality and the size of the GDP. The migration of more women from the household to the job market will enrich the economy, as women prove their efficiency and capabilities.” ([Jordan Times](#))

Kuwait

October 6: Challenges facing Kuwaiti female athletes

“Women athletes in the Gulf face a range of discrimination. This year during the Olympics in Rio, one female athlete was branded a ‘loser’ in an Arabic newspaper after she failed to bring home a medal. Others were derided on social media, insulted or simply excluded from the news altogether. Arab female athletes also receive less funding and less attention from sponsors, government and society for their sports.” ([Kuwait Times](#))

Morocco

October 10: The Moroccan women fighting daily sexual harassment

“In Morocco, it’s not easy for women to walk the streets unmolested. Morgan Meaker hears from some who want to put an end to endemic harassment. For Ghizlane Ahblain, the word ‘whore’ is a constant refrain in the soundtrack of her home city, Marrakesh. Her tactic is to make a scene, making it harder for men who harass women on the street, both physically and orally.” ([BBC](#))

Oman

September 30: National Museum honours Omani women with special showcase

“Oman’s National Museum has created a special showcase to spotlight some of the varied achievements of Omani women. According to Her Highness Sayyida Nada Al Said, head of External Relations and curator at the museum, the idea behind the showcase is to show the representation of Omani female personalities that have played a key role in the progress and development of Oman’s history.

‘All these women have changed Omani history by being the firsts of many—an ambassador, author, first to receive a PhD and many more.’” ([Times of Oman](#))

Qatar

October 9: Qatar women launch fundraising appeal for modest sportswear line

“Tired of searching for functional but modest sportswear, two women in Qatar are working to design their own collection. And this morning, they have launched a crowd-funding campaign to support their work. Oola Sports is one of Qatar’s first homegrown companies to specialize in clothing for women who want to cover up while working out. It is the brainchild Haya Al Ghanim and Amina Ahmadi, who grew frustrated with finding the proper sports attire.” ([Doha News](#))

Syria

October 6: The Women Leading a Social Revolution in Syria’s Rojava

“Details have emerged of how women in towns and villages across northern Syria have defied the fierce oppression of President Bashar Al-Assad’s Ba’ath regime to come together and create a women’s movement. The Committee of Diplomacy of Kongreya Star—a confederation of women’s organizations in Rojava, Syria—has released a 33-page report explaining how the Rojava Revolution has developed since it was founded (under the name Yekîtiya Star) in 2005.” ([Newsweek](#))

Tunisia

October 9: Women in Tunisia fighting to preserve their rights by becoming skilled politicians

“Tunisia’s 2011 revolution ended a 22-year dictatorship and kicked off a wave of popular uprisings throughout the Middle East that became known as the Arab Spring. Within Tunisia, the overthrow of President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali spurred a jubilant sense of unity. But for women, that jubilation was soon replaced by a sense of dread over what might happen to their civil rights as a post-revolution Islamist conservatism began to take hold.” ([CBC](#))

UAE

October 12: Women take centrestage as UAE maternity leave law comes under review

“The changes in the new human resources law issued recently in Abu Dhabi, was commended by Sheikha Manal bint Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, President of the UAE Gender Balance Council, President of Dubai Women Establishment and wife of Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Presidential Affairs. The amended law allows working women to take three months of fully-paid maternity leave instead of two.” ([Emirates 24/7](#))

General


September 30: Finding new ways to fight gender-based violence in the Arab world (Op-Ed by Lina Abirafeh)

“It should now be beyond dispute that gender-based violence is a critical human rights issue – possibly the most important human rights challenge of our time. There is a great deal of research and action on this issue, and also a great deal of terminology that might be unclear. Terms such as ‘violence against women’, ‘gender-based violence’, ‘violence against women and girls’, ‘sexual and gender-based

violence’ and ‘conflict-related sexual violence’ and there are important distinctions between.” ([Your Middle East](#))

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