

# **MENA Women News Brief**

## **September 8, 2015-September 22, 2015**

### **Egypt**

#### **September 11: Female-only taxis, Egypt's way to curb harassment**

“A new project, undertaken by a private firm, Pink Taxi Egypt, is promising to reduce sexual harassment in transportation across big cities in Egypt. The ‘pink taxis’ — women-only transportation — will be rolling soon in the streets of Cairo and other cities in the country to make the ride more secure, safe and comfortable for women. The taxis will have women drivers and allow men passengers only if they are in the company of a woman. The positive reaction to the project reflected women’s desperation to curb sexual harassment.” ([The Arab Weekly](#))

#### **September 17: How feminist groups are taking on post-revolution Egypt**

“The Egyptian revolution, from 2011 to 2014, seems to have brought together and strengthened civil initiatives against sexual harassment and for gender equality. The feminist group called Nazra has existed since 2005, and was working mainly on helping women to represent themselves in the 2010 parliamentary elections. ‘We started a program based on human rights, gender and feminism, as well as coordinating with other anti-harassment groups to provide medical and legal assistance to the women who have been raped during protests,’ Mahy Hassan, head of the Women Human Rights Defender Program in Nazra, said.” ([Al-Monitor](#))

#### **September 21: Analyzing Egypt's long relationship with underage marriage (Op-ed by Sonia Farid)**

“Images of a party to mark the engagement of a 10-year old girl and her teenage cousin prompted angry reactions among activists and rights organizations – but were just the latest in a long line of cases of underage unions in Egypt.” ([Al Arabiya](#))

### **Iran**

#### **September 15: New Female Ambassador Sparks Controversy**

“Iranian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Marzieh Afkham will soon take on a challenging job: She is set to become Iranian ambassador to Malaysia. As a woman, this is a first for the Islamic Republic and in fact, only the second time in Iranian history. It is a nomination that has aroused a great deal of media attention in recent weeks.” ([Iran Wire](#))

#### **September 16: Iran women's soccer team captain to miss tournament after husband refuses to let her travel**

“The Iranian women’s soccer team will be short one player when it travels to Malaysia to compete in an indoor soccer championship next week. That’s because, according to local reports, the team captain doesn’t have a passport — her husband refused to sign papers to allow his wife to renew it.” ([Washington Post](#))

#### **September 17: Iranian women fined \$260 for 'bad hijabs'**

“A Tehran court has fined two women \$260 for violating the Islamic dress code by not wearing their mandatory hijabs (headscarves) properly in the street, a judicial official was quoted on Wednesday,

September 16, as saying. No details were given on what the women had done wrong to warrant the fine, which is equivalent to the monthly minimum wage.” ([Middle East Eye](#))

## **Iraq**

### **September 8: Senior ISIS Commander Abu Anas Killed By Iraqi Woman For Forcing Her Into Sex Slavery**

“An Iraqi woman killed a senior commander of the Islamic State group for having forced her into sex slavery. The incident took place Saturday, September 5, in the Tal Roman district, west of Mosul. The commander was known as Abu Anas, who had forced the woman to get married to a number of men under his command. It is unclear how the woman killed the commander and what happened to her after committing the murder.” ([International Business Times](#))

## **Jordan**

### **September 16: SheCab debate heats up in Jordan**

“While Jordanians accept female police officers directing traffic, the idea of women sitting behind the wheel of a taxi is still a step too far for many in this conservative kingdom. Four young Jordanian woman — Rahmeh Abu Shweimeh, Sura Al Mahasis, Maha Al Amad and Salam Abu Khadra — are intent on breaking that taboo. Next year the women will launch a company called SheCab, a taxi service exclusively for female passengers, despite the venture already having sparked uproar on social media.” ([The National](#))

## **Oman**

### **September 11: Omani women making inroads into private sector for career growth**

“Omani women represent just 2.6 per cent of the private sector workforce in the Sultanate, but they are steadily making gains as more of them opt for careers in which they can flourish. While the numbers of Omani women are still comparatively low, they have been growing. In 2003 there were 13,385; in 2012 there were 35,248. But those who opt for the private sector find that it’s a means to achieve more in their careers.” ([Times of Oman](#))

### **September 13: Omani women shine in the challenging field of health and safety**

“Omani women have proved that they are capable of becoming great health and safety experts and serve the country in one of the most honorable professions, say experts. Their gender has also not stopped them from undergoing vocational training in some of the challenging courses offered by the college, which include airport and aviation, fire and rescue, industrial fire and oil and gas.” ([Times of Oman](#))

## **Palestinian Territories**

### **September 21: Female athletes keep ball rolling in Palestine**

“At the age of 18, Mariam Hamdan already has overcome intense pressure and stigma in order to become an advocate for women’s soccer in the West Bank.” ([Al-Monitor](#))

## **Saudi Arabia**

### **September 8: The Princess Making Big Strides for Women In Saudi Arabia**

In an interview with Princess Reema Bint Bandar Al Saud, a member of the Saudi royal family, entrepreneur, and women's health advocate: “Step one is getting women into government, which is happening in the next three months. December is when our election happens. It will be the first time our voices are heard, and I think that that’s wonderful. I think that if people from the outside could have a

little bit of faith and patience, they would see that we're developing our system as we go. It's not strict, it's not canonized, and it's not structured yet, but it's getting there. We're sticking our toes in the water, and it's a fascinating moment to be in." ([Refinery 29](#))

### **September 8: Easy Taxi Empowering Women in Saudi Arabia**

"In the spirit of women empowerment during the 2015 municipal elections in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Easy Taxi is currently on a mission to make the process of voting for women much easier, in a country where women are not allowed to drive. On Thursday, September 10, Easy Taxi has announced that they will be giving out free ride tickets to all the women headed for the voting centers in the capital, Riyadh, as well as Jeddah, Dammam and Khobar." ([Eye of Riyadh](#))

### **September 14: Why Saudi women's participation in elections gets my vote (Op-ed by Samar Fatany)**

"Finally the time has come for Saudi women to be part of the political process. As elected representatives they can now have a say in shaping public policy. The concept of involving all members of society in nation-building efforts could influence change and accelerate reforms. The participation of women in municipal elections on an equal footing with men can have a great impact on the country's future. Women represent half of society, and they have been contributing in most sectors. They continue to play an effective role in nation-building." ([Al-Arabiya](#))

## **Turkey**

### **September 14: Ayşe won't stay a housewife: Turkey takes on gender roles**

"A new campaign by the Turkish government seeks to challenge traditional gender roles assigned to men and women through education and eliminate gender discrimination in textbooks. The Promoting Gender Equality in Education Project (ETCEP) uses Ayşe and Ali, two imaginary characters—female and male respectively—which were once commonly used in flash cards in the education system. Teachers will be trained on how to educate children against confinement to gender roles in the country where a patriarchal society sometimes dictates girls get married at an early age, not attend school and become a housewife." ([Daily Sabah](#))

### **September 15: Güler Sabancı ranked fourth-most powerful woman in EMEA region**

"Prominent businesswoman Güler Sabancı, chairman of Sabancı Holding, was ranked fourth on a recently released list of the most powerful women in the Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA) region prepared by Fortune magazine. Fortune said that while Sabancı had a less-than-desirable 2014 amid regional crises and a weakened Eurozone, the powerful businesswoman still retained a formidable position in the region as a business leader and voice of gender equality in the workplace." ([Today's Zaman](#))

### **September 17: Overpriced childcare services hinder women's labor force participation in Turkey**

"The World Bank has published a report titled 'Supply and demand for childcare services in Turkey' and found that for most women with low levels of education the difference between earnings and the cost of care is too low to justify joining the labor force and their willingness to pay for care does not cover the current median prices for childcare and pre-school education institutions. Comprehensive policies that target both the supply and availability of childcare while making it more affordable on the demand side particularly for women who have the potential to join the labor market, are expected and

likely to have a high employment impact as well as benefit from the early development of Turkish children.” ([Daily Sabah](#))

### **September 18: In Turkey, Rolling Back Protections for Women**

“Tens of thousands of women, angry at what they say is the government's latest step to ‘Islamify’ Turkey, recently signed a petition against the rise of religious marriages in lieu of civil unions. The petition, which has 100,000 signatures so far, responds to the Constitutional Court’s May ruling removing the requirement that religious marriage first be formalized in court. Half a million Turkish women have been married in unregistered religious ceremonies, and among low-income families, as many as one in seven.” ([Middle East Institute](#))

### **United Arab Emirates**

#### **September 9: Passivity at work holding back women in the UAE**

“Victoria Tomlinson, chief executive of Northern Lights PR, conducted an enlightening report on what senior Emirati business women feel that they would need to enhance their careers. After speaking to about 1,000 women, Tomlinson says the overriding message from her report, Women Leaders – Stepping out of the Shadows, is that women want to make more of an impact at work. But while they want a presence in meetings, they do not want to be considered too aggressive or self-important.” ([The National](#))

### **General**

#### **September 12: World Bank praises women empowerment in Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, and Egypt**

“The World Bank has praised the efforts of Saudi Arabia, Lebanon and Egypt for introducing reforms to empower women socially and economically. The report issued Wednesday, September 9, stated that Saudi Arabia and Lebanon had passed laws to protect women from domestic violence, which meant that four countries in the region had legislation in place for this purpose.” ([Arab News](#))

#### **September 15: 1st Women's Forum Enhances Understanding, Cooperation Between China, Arab States**

“A women's forum between China and countries in the Middle East kicked off in Yinchuan, capital city of northwest China's Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, on Saturday, September 12, to promote bilateral economic exchanges and cooperation among Chinese and Arab women. Women representatives from Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Sudan and Tunisia, and more than 20 China's provincial-level women's federations, as well as outstanding Chinese women entrepreneurs, attended the forum. During the event, they exchanged opinions and ideas, communicated and transferred mutual friendship.” ([Women of China](#))

#### **September 18: Forbes Middle East Ranks Most Powerful Arab Women in Government for 2015**

Forbes Middle East has listed three categories celebrating the successes of Arab women: The 100 Most Powerful Arab Business Women; the World’s 10 Most Powerful Arab Women; and the 10 Most Powerful Women in Government. Nemat (Minouche) Shafik, the Deputy Governor of the Bank of England came in the first place of The World’s 10 Most Powerful Arab Women. Forbes ranked Egypt second, with 18 percent of entries across followed by Lebanon and UAE, both with 14 percent entries. ([Daily News Egypt](#))


**September 21: UN Women, EU Commission launch ‘Khadija’ network for women’s economic empowerment**

“As part of the EU Commission-UN Women Spring Forward for Women Programme for the Southern Mediterranean region, ‘Khadija’ is the new programme launched by the Arab Network for Economic Empowerment of Women. The programme, supported by the Arab League’s women and family sector, and governments at the bilateral level, aims at supporting women in the Arab region. The EU cooperation policy is aligned with international commitments to gender equality and the protection of women’s rights, according to Diego Escalona Paturel, EU Head of Cooperation in Egypt.” ([Daily News Egypt](#))

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