



# MENA WOMEN NEWS BRIEF



MAY 11<sup>TH</sup> – MAY 18<sup>TH</sup>, 2018

## EGYPT

### **May 17: How #MeToo and #TimesUp Are Helping Egyptian Women Break the Silence around Sexual Violence**

“Movements like Me Too and Time’s up have put women’s rights firmly back on the agenda. But away from the spotlight, there are many other girls and women who are risking their lives to demand an end to sexual violence, harassment and inequality. Just recently, Egyptian activist Amal Fathy was arrested for posting a Facebook video in which she shared her experiences of sexual harassment. But women in Egypt refuse to be silenced. One of these unsung heroes is lawyer and founder of the Center for Egyptian Women’s Legal Assistance Azza Soliman. Azza risks her own safety and freedom to defend survivors of sexual violence in Egypt”. [\(TIME\)](#)

### **May 17: Women Ready to Run for Office in Egypt**

Egypt has yet to pass a law needed to hold local elections, but hundreds of women will not be wallflowers waiting for an invitation to run for office. Thanks to an initiative dubbed “The Councils Are Ours,” potential candidates will be prepared when the elections are finally held for the first time in eight year [...] So far, the project has groomed 320 women in seven of Egypt’s 27 governorates. That might seem like a drop in the bucket – considering the Egyptian Constitution allots a quarter of local councils’ roughly 64,000 seats to women – but the impetus could increase exponentially. [\(AI Monitor\)](#)

## IRAN

### **May 12: Shaparak Shajarizadeh Twice Arrested For Allegedly Removing Her Headscarf in Public in Iran**

[Shaparak Shajarizadeh](#) has been arrested again for allegedly allowing her hair to show in public in Iran. Her lawyer, prominent human rights attorney Nasrin Sotoudeh, called the ongoing arrests of Iranian women for allegedly violating the country’s compulsory hijab rule a “manifestation of violence against women.” “I don’t know if she removed her hijab or not but my question is, how come women get immediately arrested for not observing the hijab or having an inappropriate hijab, or wearing tight or short dresses, or wearing lipstick but in cases dealing with theft and murder, suspects never get arrested so fast?” Sotoudeh said. [\(Iran Human Rights Organization\)](#)

### **May 12: Turkish Women’s Festival Screening Iranian Movies**

A lineup of movies by Iranian filmmakers are being screened at the 21st Flying Broom International Women’s Film Festival underway in the Turkish capital Ankara. “Mother of the Earth” by Mahnaz Afzali and “Poets of Life” by Shirin Barqnavard, two films from “Karestan”, a documentary series on Iranian entrepreneurs, are seen in the screening program. “Karestan” depicts the successful lives of Iranian entrepreneurs and gives a new definition of careers in Iran. Each part has been directed by a different filmmaker under the supervision of the filmmakers Rakhshan Bani-Etemad and Mojtaba Mirtahmasb. [\(Tehran Times\)](#)



**May 17: Boris Johnson to Raise Zaghari-Ratcliffe Case with Iran Counterpart**

The foreign minister, Boris Johnson, is expected to raise the case of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, a British-Iranian woman being held in an Iranian jail, when he meets his Iranian counterpart, Mohammad Javad Zarif, for talks in Brussels, Downing Street has said. The confirmation came after her husband, Richard Ratcliffe, urged Johnson to discuss the case with Zarif. The two foreign ministers were due to meet later on Tuesday in Brussels to discuss ways to shore up the Iran nuclear deal, from which the US has now withdrawn. [\(The Guardian\)](#)

**IRAQ**

**May 13: Forget Inglorious Basterds: Feminist War Movie Features Iraqi Women Fighting Back Against ISIS**

"When they hear our female voices, they tremble with fear," says the heroine of "Girls of the Sun", a feminist war movie that captured the zeitgeist at a Cannes Film Festival dominated by the issue of women's rights. Based on the true story of Iraqi women who took up arms against Islamic State after escaping enslavement, a female battalion leads an attack on the jihadists while their brothers in arms prefer to wait for U.S. air strikes. [\(Reuters\)](#)

**May 16: First Female Communist Elected in Iraq's Holiest City Calls for 'Social Justice'**

Khateeb, who is a teacher, anti-poverty activist and women's rights activist, had not considered running in previous parliamentary elections. "I didn't run in the [2014] election, but I was part of a group that visited people all over the Najaf," she told Middle East Eye. "We visited them to listen to their problems and help them, in the slums of Najaf and the poor neighborhoods. I had not thought about running in elections." However, she was motivated to run on the Sairoun Alliance ticket this time around after garnering support from her colleagues and students. [\(Middle East Eye\)](#)

**LEBANON**

**May 16: Lebanese Actress Denounces Gaza Killings at Cannes**

French-Lebanese actress Manal Issa drew attention to Israel's slaughter this week of dozens of Gaza civilians, holding up a sign on the Cannes international film festival's red carpet that read "Stop the attack on Gaza." Issa was attending the premier of the film "Solo: A Star Wars Story" when she hoisted her protest sign Tuesday. Cannes has a worldwide following as one of the largest and most influential international festivals for premiering new films. [\(The Daily Star\)](#)

**OMAN**

**May 3: Omantel Hosts First Omani Woman to Ski North Pole**

A 34 years old enthusiast has made history by becoming the first Omani woman to ski the Geographic North Pole. With a major support from Omantel, Anisa Al Raisi joined the 'Women's Euro-Arabian North Pole Expedition 2018' and set off for a challenging expedition last month, where they managed to ski just over 80km on the treacherous terrain at the top of the world and reached the North Pole in 8 days. [\(Times of Oman\)](#)

**SAUDI ARABIA**

**May 17: Saudi Women Troll Men Telling Them 'You Won't Drive'**

It is a matter of weeks until the ban on women driving in Saudi Arabia will be lifted. Some men have taken to social media to vent their dissatisfaction with the change in the law, using an Arabic hashtag that translates as: "You won't drive." However, the hashtag went viral when Saudi women began hitting back at the sexist remarks. "You won't drive" has been used on Twitter over 65,000 times since Monday. Lots of women posted funny pictures and videos to accompany their response to the hashtag. [\(BBC\)](#)



**May 17: Dina Shihabi: The Actress Blazing a Trail for Saudi Women**

After officially reintroducing movie theaters last month, and establishing an opera house and national orchestra, along with the now frequent staging of musical and sporting events, Saudi Arabia is in the midst of an entertainment overhaul. But long before any of these reforms began taking place in the Kingdom, a young Saudi actress by the name of Dina Shihabi was already blazing a trail for Saudi women in cinema as she began her own film journey in the face of regional and cultural obstacles. She was motivated to pursue an acting career and persist despite the challenges she faced along the way, and is now delighted to be witnessing the incredible, rapid changes for women, and the film industry, in Saudi Arabia. ([Arab News](#))

**May 15: Riyadh Hosts First Women’s Car Exhibition**

Dubbed “Pinkish”, the three-day exhibition allowed women to see the high-end cars on display, interact with dealers and insurance company representatives, and learn about special offers. Organizers reported women enthusiastically discussed with their relatives and companions what cars would suit them best as they spent time on simulators to get a feel for the experience they expect to have starting June 24, when they will be allowed to drive. Riyadh hosts first women’s car exhibition ([Gulf News](#))

**TUNISIA**

**May 12: ‘I Can Finally Dream’: Tunisia Expands Protection for Battered Women**

In 2016, 60 percent of Tunisian women were victims of domestic violence, according to the Ministry of Women, Family and Children, with studies from nongovernmental groups suggesting the figure may even be higher. And 50 percent of women said they had experienced aggression in a public area at least once in their lives. Legislators and women’s activists say they are hoping to reduce those numbers with the new law and the shelters that opened at the recommendation of the legislation. ([The New York Times](#))

**TURKEY**

**May 16: Turkey Launches Mobile App to Respond Faster to Cases of Violence against Women**

Turkey has launched a mobile application called “Women Support” (KADES) for victims of violence with the joint cooperation of the Family and Social Policies Ministry and Interior Ministry. “This application seeks to ensure women reach our police forces and receive help when under any threat, with just one touch,” Interior Minister Süleyman Soylu said on May 16 during a meeting to promote the application. ([Hurriyet Daily News](#))

**OPINION/ANALYSIS**

**May 15: All Hail MS Marvel, a Young, Female Muslim Superhero for Our Times**

For far too long Muslims have been portrayed with suspicion, a threat, much-maligned and misunderstood. Now, finally, a Muslim is the heroine in a mainstream, going-to-be-watched-by-millions blockbuster. And a Muslim girl for that matter, a demographic often silenced; spoken about and not spoken to, and battling not only Islamophobia, but misogyny from outside their community and within. ([The Guardian](#))

**May 17: Arab Cinema Back with a Bang: Bringing Lepers, Lust and Class Conflict to Cannes**

A boy who takes his parents to court for having him is one of a wave of Arab films making people sit up and take notice at the Cannes film festival. Not since 1970 have two Arab films been in the running for the Palme d’Or top prize and female Arab directors are particularly making a splash this year. Lebanese filmmaker Nadine Labaki’s highly-anticipated third film “Capernaum” – about a 12-year-old boy with an axe to grind about being born into a miserable, loveless existence – has racked up a string of distribution deals ahead of its premiere late Thursday. ([Arab News](#))



**May 15: Palestinian Women's Struggle Hasn't Translated to Political Power**

Palestinian women have been in the forefront of Palestinian national activism and sacrifice since the spark of the Palestinian revolution. Despite this well-documented fact, Palestinian men in political power, like men in society itself, will not easily give up power. The change will only occur as a result of consistent and united efforts by both Palestinian women and men. [\(Al Monitor\)](#)

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~ ~ ~ By May Baaklini ~ ~ ~