

MENA Women's News Brief

August 27-September 8, 2014

Bahrain

September 2: (Op-Ed) Maryam al-Khawaja's arrest shows Bahrain at its worst

"On 30 August, the prominent Bahraini human rights defender Maryam al-Khawaja, was detained upon her arrival in Manama, the country's capital. She risked arrest for the chance to see her ailing father, dissident Abdulhadi al-Khawaja, who is serving a life sentence, and has been on hunger strike since 26 August." ([The Guardian](#)) Maryam al-Khawaja spoke at the Wilson Center on October 4, 2011 on "Bahrain: the Forgotten Uprising." ([Wilson Center](#))

September 5: Bahrain minister's anti-abaya decision annulled

Shaikha Mai Bint Mohammad Al Khalifa, "Bahrain culture minister started firestorm by banning the abaya in her ministry." ([Gulf News](#))

Egypt

August 25: NGOs condemn minister's intention to exclude women from governor reshuffle

"A coalition of groups advocating for women's rights said Monday it is necessary to include women in the upcoming governor reshuffle after a minister said women would only be appointed as 'deputies and assistants.'" ([Daily News Egypt](#))

August 26: Women on wheels, breaking taboo

"All-female scooter clubs set to challenge social norms and encourage independence." ([Daily News Egypt](#))

September 7: Egyptians take to Twitter to trash 'chat is sinful' ruling

"The edict came in response to what Dar al-Ifta said was one of the most common questions it had received: 'What is the ruling regarding chatting between the sexes on the Internet?' Dar al-Ifta responded to the question by saying that 'electronic conversations between a man and woman who are strangers are not permitted, except when necessary.'" ([Al-Monitor](#))

Iran

August 28: Iranian official: employing women 'not a priority'

"Fahimeh Farahmandpour, recently appointed adviser of women's affairs at the Ministry of Interior, has voiced concern about "the correlation between women's education with less satisfaction in life and higher expectations." This is why, she said, "Our priority is not trying to put educated unemployed women to work." Farahmandpour further explained, "The prioritizing is done based on the supreme leader's priorities, which he has announced." ([Al-Monitor](#))

September 1: Iran-Iraq conflict remembered through the lives of widows

"A commemorative literary series pays tribute to fallen soldiers and the war wives who grappled with loss and grief long after the conflict came to an end." ([The Guardian](#))

September 3: Iranian Café Work Ban to Leave Women Jobless, Official Says

“Banning Iranian women from working as waitresses to preserve their modesty would only deepen female unemployment, an Iran vice-president said of the latest effort to make women less visible in the workplace.” ([Bloomberg](#))

September 3: All-female pop band to perform in Tehran

“Setareye Qotbi (Polaris), an all-female Iranian pop band, will appear again to perform concerts at Tehran's Vahdat Hall on September 4 and 5.” ([Payvand](#))

September 5: Iran's supreme leader slams Western views on feminism

“Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei slammed Thursday Western values which he said, unlike those in the Islamic Republic, undermine feminism.” ([Daily Star](#))

September 5: Iranian women's magazine editor accused of promoting feminist views

“Shahla Sherkat, prominent journalist who launched the monthly title Zanan-e Emruz in May, has been called to appear before Iran's press court.” ([The Guardian](#))

September 5: Gender Segregation Violates the Rights of Women in Iran

“The recent sharp exchange during a press conference between Morteza Talai, Deputy Chairperson of the Tehran City Council, and a female journalist from Sharq newspapers over Talai's support of a recent gender-segregation initiative in the Municipality of Tehran, reflects the intensifying struggle between hardliners intent on controlling the domestic sphere and more moderate elements of Iranian society who resist relinquishing their basic rights.” ([Payvand](#))

September 5: British woman, 25, held in notorious Iranian prison after being arrested during rights protest

“Ghonche Ghavami was detained outside the city's Azadi Stadium after she and fellow campaigners tried to enter the men-only arena to watch an Iran-Italy volleyball match.” ([The Telegraph](#))

September 7: Gender Segregation Gains Momentum in Iran: Women Prohibited from More Jobs

“The accelerated efforts to restrict women's access to jobs, professions, and public venues continue in Iran. In the latest announcement, Colonel Khalil Helali, Head of the Public Buildings Office of the Iranian Police, said on August 30, 2014, that henceforth women are not allowed employment in coffee shops, coffee houses, and traditional Iranian restaurants. No laws or reasons were cited as the basis for the decision to bar women from having such jobs.” ([Payvand](#))

Iraq

September 2: ISIS's Cruelty Toward Women Gets Scant Attention

“Tucked away in a recent New York Times story on military operations against ISIS by Iraqi special forces and the Kurdish Peshmerga was a brief description of what these troops discovered when they entered a village in Iraq that had been occupied by ISIS fighters. A naked woman, tied to a tree, who had been repeatedly raped by ISIS fighters. Another woman was discovered in a second village, similarly naked, tied down and repeatedly raped. The fighters, it appears, are ‘rewarded’ by being allowed to have their way with captured women.” ([Wall Street Journal](#))

September 2: Underage and trapped: female Iraqi factory workers need help

“A tougher framework is needed to protect Iraqi girls who are working illegally in factories, as many are being exploited, harassed and sexually abused.” ([Al-Monitor](#))

September 4: Meet the Female Recruiters of ISIS

“Umm Ubaydah doesn’t have a blue checkmark verifying her as a muhajirah on Twitter. And yet, she’s become, along with a group of other young Western Muslim women, an active online surrogate for the terrorist group ISIS.” ([New York Magazine](#))

September 5: The Kurdish female fighters bringing the fight to IS

“Around a third of the Syrian Kurdish force is made up of women. On the front lines they fight alongside the men, taking the same risks and facing the same dangers.” ([BBC](#))

September 6: How ISIS Is Recruiting Women From Around the World

“How the Islamic State of Iraq and Greater Syria recruits female converts, and why.” ([TIME](#))

Israel

September 1: Israeli army opens more combat roles to women

“Six female recruits inducted into special unit in the artillery corps are already undergoing basic training.” ([Haaretz](#))

Jordan

August 25: Jordanian initiative seeks political participation of women with disabilities

“The initiative, funded by the UN Women’s Fund for Gender Equality, also will monitor laws and policies that concern women with disabilities and will track how government institutions are implementing the provisions of the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the articles of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities act issued in 2007.” ([Al-Shorfa](#))

September 5: Women urged to fight breast cancer stigma

“Medical experts say awareness is key to overcoming shame and silence surrounding the disease in Jordan and Lebanon.” ([Al-Jazeera](#))

Lebanon

August 28: Lebanon plans law to stem growing child marriage trend

“There are no official statistics on child marriage in Lebanon, but it takes place in several rural areas in the country and has risen with the influx of Syrian refugees, experts say.” ([Al-Ahram](#))

Morocco

August 28: Morocco-born women in French Cabinet

“Two women of Moroccan origins were assigned ministerial posts in the newly formed French government announced on Tuesday evening by President Francois Hollande.” ([Saudi Gazette](#))

Oman

September 2: Omani underprivileged women receive training as silversmiths

“As part of its efforts to support Omani nationals in finding employment, the Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) sponsored the training of 20 low-income women to become silversmiths.” ([Times of Oman](#))

Saudi Arabia

September 1: No plans to drop maternity benefits in Saudi Arabia

“Spokesperson sacked over wrong statement attributed to education minister.” ([Gulf News](#))

September 3: How To Improve Educational Opportunities For Saudi Women

“Public separation of women and men is one of the most vexing issues facing Saudi colleges for girls. According to Article 155 of the Educational Policy of Saudi Arabia, mixing the sexes is forbidden at all levels of education, except in pre-school education. For over 40 years, the “studio” system has torn nearly 22 universities apart. Only medical colleges and universities are exempted from this educational system. This has allowed women studying medicine to realize great success worldwide, according to a 2010 report on Saudi women’s achievements by the Saudi Ministry of Higher Education.” ([Forbes](#))

September 8: Experts seek greater role for Arab women in oil industry

“Greater unified effort from the energy sector is needed to encourage women to pursue careers in the oil and gas industry, which statistics show continues to be a male-dominated field, experts said on Sunday during a VIP panel discussion.” ([Al-Arabiya](#))

September 8: Zain KSA begins operations for women’s direct sales team

“Zain KSA’s women’s direct sales team started their operations to provide the company services for female subscribers with total privacy at their locations. The direct sales staff team works to facilitate the access of services for ladies of different sectors such as universities as well as providing services in events where ladies are present.” ([Arab News](#))

Syria

August 27: Syrian women help traumatized children smile again

“Kindergarten teachers in the Syrian flashpoint city of Zabadani established a center to provide much-needed psychological support for local children.” ([Al-Monitor](#))

September 8: 60 British women now in Syria in all-female Islamic State brigade

“British Daily *The Independent* reported Monday that up to 60 British women have gone to Syria and joined Islamic State's al-Khansaa brigade, an all-female police unit that administers strict shari'a law and punishes those who don't follow the extreme interpretation of Islamic law imposed by the terror group.” ([Jerusalem Post](#))

UAE

August 25: Citizenship granted to 106 sons of Emirati women

“The Ministry of Interior’s Department of Naturalisation, Residency and Borders Affairs has granted Emirati citizenship to 106 individuals who are sons of Emirati women.” ([Gulf News](#))

August 31: First national service recruits in UAE start training

“For women, the voluntary training will last for nine months, regardless of their qualifications.” ([Gulf News](#))

September 6: Female police officers console women drivers during accidents

“Abu Dhabi police launch initiative to help female drivers cope with psychological trauma related to accidents.” ([Gulf News](#))

September 7: Dubai shelter’s caseload of abuse victims doubles

“The Dubai Foundation for Women and Children dealt with 452 new cases from January to June, compared with 232 cases in the same period last year.” ([The Nation](#))

Yemen


September 2: Yemeni women fight for greater representation

“Despite a precarious 30 percent quota for women in government, Yemeni activists say women's rights have been sidelined.” ([Al-Jazeera](#))

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