

# **MENA Women's News Brief**

**June 30, 2015-July 14, 2015**

## **Egypt**

### **July 14: Egypt: Country of remarkable, yet jailed, women (Op-Ed by Semanur Karaman and Sara Katrine Brandt)**

“No country in the world is safe for women human rights defenders, yet Egypt is particularly dangerous for women who want to contribute to democracy and assert their presence in the public-political sphere. This article profiles a few examples of defenders who have been punished, attacked, who have experienced others attempting to silence them, and threatened for merely being socially conscious women.” ([Daily News Egypt](#))

## **Iran**

### **July 1: Zarif's Wife Adds a New Twist to the Talks**

“As this week's final nuclear talks got underway, there was one uninvited guest: Maryam Imanieh, the wife of Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif. Imanieh chairs the Iranian Association of Women Diplomats of the Foreign Ministry, which organizes charity events to raise money for disadvantaged groups in Iran and plans entertainment and tours for visiting wives of foreign diplomats living in the country. The post is routinely held by foreign ministers' wives. In the past, Zahra Rad and Zohreh Nazari, the wives of former foreign ministers Ali Akbar Salehi and Manuchehr Mottaki respectively, held similar positions in the foreign ministry.” ([Iran Wire](#))

### **July 12: Women now comprise one-third of homeless**

“The Iranian president's advisor for Women and Family Affairs Shahindokht Molaverdi says one third of Iran's homeless are women. Molaverdi called on the 13 government organizations that could address the problem of homeless women to 'speed up' their efforts to remedy the situation. She added that her office is making every effort to coordinate the action of those 13 government bodies.” ([Radio Zamaneh](#))

## **Iraq**

### **July 5: The Women Who Secretly Keep ISIS Running**

“U.S. military personnel captured Umm Sayyaf during a May raid targeting her husband, who was also ISIS's chief financier who went by the nom de guerre Abu Sayyaf. Umm Sayyaf is now the top female ISIS captive in U.S. custody, being held in Iraq and providing loads of intelligence beyond what American analysts found on the computers and cellphones seized during the raid that killed her husband, who ran ISIS's oil and gas operations.” ([The Daily Beast](#))

## **Israel**

### **July 12: Israeli-Canadian woman returns from fighting with Kurds in Syria**

“Gill Rosenberg, an Israeli-Canadian woman who joined Kurdish forces fighting the Islamic State, returned to Israel Sunday, July 12, after more than six months in Syria and Iraq. Rosenberg told Israel Radio at the time that she wanted to do her part for the Kurdish national struggle, and that she was hopeful her experience in the IDF would be useful to the Kurds.” ([Times of Israel](#))

## **Kuwait**

### **July 2: Maid rights: GCC states called on to follow Kuwait**

“Kuwait’s first-ever legislation on the rights of domestic helpers is a ‘major step’ that other Gulf states should follow, Human Rights Watch said Wednesday, July 1. Kuwaiti authorities should rigorously implement the law, passed last week, and address remaining legal and policy gaps that discriminate against domestic workers and put them at risk, the New York-based rights group said.” ([Arab News](#))

## **Lebanon**

### **June 30: Turning women into entrepreneurs in Shatila**

“Mushfa is a product of a program at Basmeh and Zeitooneh, a grassroots community-based organization set up by Syrians. It has a large community center in the Palestinian refugee camp of Shatila that teaches women entrepreneurial skills and provides participants with a grant to launch their own business ideas. The program aims to empower women financially and provide psychological support in order to help them gain more independence.” ([Lebanon Daily Star](#))

## **Morocco**

### **July 6: Moroccan women 'freed' over wearing skirts in Inezgane**

“Two Moroccan women have been acquitted of indecency charges after they went on trial for wearing short skirts, their lawyer says. They were arrested on June 16 in a market in Inezgane, near Agadir, after being heckled by market traders. Their case sparked a national outcry and an internet petition calling the arrest an attack on personal freedom attracted thousands of signatures.” ([BBC News](#))

### **July 8: 38 percent of Moroccans Who Joined ISIS Are Women**

“Over 38 percent of Moroccan jihadists who joined the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in 2015 were women, while 62 percent of them were men, according to a report from Tetouan-based North Observatory of Human Rights. The report noted that ISIS is aware of the significant role women play, if convinced to join, to lure their husbands or sons to leave the country and join the terror group.” ([Morocco World News](#))

## **Palestinian Territories**

### **July 6: West Bank women look to divorce marital status from IDs**

“Following the case of Abu Taima and dozens of similar cases, activists in the West Bank launched a campaign, titled ‘Together we remove marital status from ID cards,’ and demanded that Palestinian Authority (PA) officials remove ‘marital status’ from ID cards, as Palestinian society looks negatively at divorced women. Campaign founder Mona Hawash told Al-Monitor, ‘the campaign was launched in April [2015] and is receiving wide popularity among feminist activists and institutions as it aims to stop harassment of women.’” ([Al-Monitor](#))

## **Saudi Arabia**

### **July 1: Saudi artists explore the public and private spheres of women**

“In a vast basement area of the University of Westminster in Central London is a small piece of Saudi Arabia. The underground space houses Ambika P3 art gallery which recently showcased the degree work of final year art students. Among the graduates was Wejdan Reda, who curated an exhibit called ‘Exclusion’ featuring the work of four contemporary Saudi female artists. Their work is shown within a representation of a traditional, segregated, Saudi house, typical of those found in the Hejaz region; an

important element is the focus within this structure on the separate spaces for men and women.” ([Arab News](#))

## **Syria**

### **June 30: ISIL 'beheads women for the first time in Syria'**

“The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) has beheaded two women and their husbands in eastern Syria's Deir Ezzor province, a monitoring group said. The UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said on Tuesday, June 30, that ISIL beheaded the couples after accusing them of using ‘magic for medicine.’ It is not known what non-traditional health remedy the two couples had sought. ‘It is the first time that the beheading of women, by the use of sword in public, has taken place in Syria,’ the Observatory's chief, Rami Abdel Rahman, told [Al Jazeera](#).” ([Al Jazeera](#))

### **July 7: Spanish Woman Arrested for Recruiting Girls, Teens for IS**

“Spanish police on Tuesday, July 7, arrested a woman suspected of recruiting pre-teen girls and teenagers to send to areas controlled by the Islamic State armed group in Syria.” ([AP via ABC News](#))

### **July 13: How ISIS Is Using Women To Police Other Women**

“Umm Abaid was once a member of the group’s all-female police force, the Al-Khansaa Brigade, which is responsible for policing women’s attire. If a woman is found in violation of the dress code, ‘The first thing we’d do is take her and whip her,’ Abaid says in the video below. ‘Then we’d take her clothes and replace them with clothes required by sharia law. Then we’d take her husband’s money to pay for the clothes.’ But the ordeal doesn’t end there. The last step she describes is whipping the woman’s husband as well.” ([PBS](#))

### **July 14: 43 British women and girls in Syria say police**

“UK counter-terrorism chiefs say 43 UK women and girls are believed to have travelled to Syria in the past year. The Metropolitan Police figures are the first official count of British women thought to be in the warzone. Security officials believe up to 700 people have gone to Syria to become involved in jihadist groups and about half have returned.” ([BBC News](#))

## **Turkey**

### **June 30: In Turkey, women's issues gain visibility**

“On an ice-cold January morning in Turkey’s monochrome capital, Aylin Nazliaka marched into the city’s boxy concrete courthouse in a burst of graceful rage. A crowd of cameras descended on her — a reception more fit for a pop star than a Turkish parliamentarian. But Nazliaka, a parliamentarian for Turkey’s main opposition party, the Republican People’s Party (CHP), was not just there for a flip-of-the-hair photo opportunity. She was about to wage the latest battle in her protracted war against Turkey’s patriarchy.” ([Al Jazeera America](#))

### **July 1: Ocalan niece's swearing-in ceremony marks milestone for Kurds**

“Dilek Ocalan — the niece of Abdullah Ocalan, the jailed leader of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) — was among 80 members of the Kurdish-dominated Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP) who assumed their seats in the new parliament. Ocalan’s sheer presence in the legislature comes as a striking illustration of how far the Kurdish struggle has progressed and transformed Turkey since the days Kurdish activist Leyla Zana was booed for simply speaking in Kurdish.” ([Al-Monitor](#))

## **United Arab Emirates**

### **July 11: Women of the UAE: A trailblazer who loves challenge**

“As far as impressive women are concerned, Dr Eman Al Jaber is right up there. The lieutenant colonel – the first woman to receive this rank – started her career as a police investigator and was the first female investigator at Abu Dhabi Police. She then became the first female instructor at the Police College before turning her hand to being a lawyer. ‘I took the theoretical approach while teaching law and now the practical as a lawyer,’ says Dr Al Jaber.” ([The National](#))

### **July 13: UAE woman executed over killing of American teacher in Abu Dhabi**

“The United Arab Emirates has executed a UAE woman convicted of terrorism after the militant-inspired killing of an American kindergarten teacher in December 2014, the state news agency WAM has reported. Ala’a Badr Abdullah al-Hashemi was also convicted of setting up a social media account to spread militant ideology with the intention of undermining the government and of giving money to militant organisations for attacks, WAM reported.” ([The Guardian](#))

## **General**

### **July 8: Breaking Through Western Media’s Monolithic Image of Female Kurdish Fighters (op-ed by Alvina Hoffman)**


“Many of the articles about these women fighters have, however, reflected distorted, Western biases about Middle Eastern women. While there is nothing wrong with standing in solidarity with the Kurds in their struggle against ISIS, it is important to critically reflect upon the monolithic and reductionist images of female Kurdish fighters found in the Western press, and the ways these depictions distort how we understand these women’s beliefs and ideologies.” ([Muftah](#))

### **July 8: Soccer Is Still Out of Reach for Half the World’s Women**

“Across the Middle East, Africa, Latin America and Asia, millions of women face legal, cultural, and religious barriers that forbid them from entering the soccer pitch. Even in countries where there are no formal restrictions, women often face death threats, accusations of unfeminine behavior, and heckling and catcalling from strangers on the sidelines. In some countries, women are even forbidden from entering soccer stadiums just to watch.” ([TIME](#))

By Julia Craig Romano

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