

# **MENA Women News Brief**

**September 22, 2015-October 7, 2015**

## **Algeria**

### **September 28: Algeria's Progress in Terms of Women's Rights Highlighted in New York**

“The Minister of National Solidarity, Family and Women Affairs, Mounia Si Meslem Amer, highlighted in New York the ‘huge’ progress made by Algeria in the field of rights of women and the girl, the ministry said Monday, September 28, in a statement.” ([All Africa](#))

## **Bahrain**

### **September 28: Bahrain minister’s UN speech supports women’s rights**

“Bahrain’s Social Development Minister has said the country is keen to improve the status of women in all aspects, and support their role [in] the comprehensive development under the reform project of King Hamad. Faeqa Al Saleh, the Social Development Minister, was speaking at the UN headquarters in New York during a discussion session on combating inequalities and the empowerment of women and girls, held as part of the UN summit adopting a developmental plan post-2015.” ([Arabian Business](#))

## **Egypt**

### **September 30: Egypt's Morality Crackdown Targets Female Dancers**

“Human rights researchers say Egypt's morality police have been working in overdrive for the past two years. Hundreds of gay and transgender people had been targeted and arrested by the state before the campaign recently widened to include dancers, accused of inciting debauchery or prostitution.” ([NPR](#))

### **October 2: Egypt's Cairo University has banned teachers from wearing full face veil, sparking complaints**

“Cairo University has banned women wearing the niqab from teaching and lecturing at the university. Islamic clerics and students have denounced the move as discriminatory, but Gaber Nassar, head of the university, said he has the backing of the Grand Mufti, Egypt's top religious authority. The niqab, Nassar said, is especially problematic in language courses, where the cloth barrier of the veil hinders student-teacher communications—producing low grades and graduates incapable of enunciation.” ([U.S. News](#))

### **October 5: Egyptian women take to streets to fight stereotypes by directing traffic**

“A new phenomenon is catching the attention of passersby in the streets of Giza: young women directing traffic. In an experiment that began in early September, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, in collaboration with the Interior Ministry and Giza governorate, are turning to women ages 18-25 to direct traffic. If the program succeeds, authorities will consider implementing the same experiment in all Egyptian governorates.” ([Al-Monitor](#))

### **October 5: Women Rake Ground-Breaking 44 Percent Seats On Egyptian Democratic Party's Top Positions**

“In an unprecedented outcome for Egyptian political parties, women raked 19 of 43 seats in the Egyptian Democratic Party’s high committee elections on Friday, October 2, exceeding the 33 percent women's quota by 10 percentage points.” ([All Africa](#))

## **Iran**

### **September 22: Beyond glass ceiling, Iranian women face iron fence**

“Iranian authorities have moved to introduce gender quotas that shut out women in its exams for those seeking government and public sector jobs. Coupled with reports of high rates of unemployment among women, this has sparked serious doubts about the administration of President Hassan Rouhani’s approach toward increasing women’s presence in society. The exact date for the announcement of the results of its nationwide exam for new job applicants is unclear. But what is clear is that no matter what score female applicants may obtain, they will make up only 10 percent of those who will be employed.” ([Al-Monitor](#))

### **October 1: Women in Iran Are Ready to Show They Mean Business**

“As companies expand into Iran with investment from the United States and Europe after the nuclear accord, women are ready to make gains in a way few of their peers can in the Gulf Arab world and narrow the gap with western nations. While women have been legally obliged to cover their hair and observe Islamic rules of modesty in clothing since the Islamic Revolution in 1979, they have never faced limitations when it comes to driving, voting and access to education. They also occupy some top political jobs – three of President Hassan Rouhani’s vice presidents are women.” ([Bloomberg](#))

## **Iraq**

### **September 26: ISIS: The 'Central' Role of Women in Forming the Next Jihadist Generation**

“With an unprecedented number of women joining IS, the role they play has morphed into one more complex than simply being a ‘jihadist bride.’ Women are assumed to be passive agents in their involvement, but they play a key role in the formation of the ‘state’ – from the dissemination of propaganda and the recruitment of female support. While it is one thing to send out fighters to destabilize an area, it is another to create the next jihadist generation.” ([International Business Times](#))

### **October 5: Yazidi woman tells of captivity at Baghdadi's house**

“A young Kurdish Yazidi woman who was held as a hostage at the home of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the top leader of the so-called Islamic State, has told her story. The 21-year-old woman, whose name has been changed to Aveen for this report, is originally from Shingal. She said she was abducted when ISIS attacked the area. Later, she was taken to Baghdadi's house where she was held for 20 days.” ([Rudaw](#))

### **October 6: 'Hundreds' of Yazidi women killing themselves in ISIS captivity**

“Islamic militants captured thousands of Yazidi women and children, and killed the men. ISIS claims the Quran justifies taking non-Muslim women and girls captive, and permits their rape. Many women, repeatedly raped and abused by their captors, have taken their own lives rather than wait to be saved.” ([CNN](#))

### **October 6: ISIS 'forced pregnant Yazidi women to have abortions'**

“ISIS militants forced pregnant women they had sold into slavery to have abortions, according to three young Yazidis who escaped from the Islamic militants' brutal clutches. The terror group was so intent on using rape as a weapon of war that they brought in their own doctors and gynecologists, to determine which of the women they had captured were virgins.” ([CNN](#))

## **Israel**

### **September 25: The Military “Coup” of Orthodox Israeli Women**

“Far from the headlines, and outside public discussion about the ‘religionizing’ of the IDF, one of the most amazing and surprising stories concerning the people’s army in this decade is unfolding, embodied by the women of the military. Year after year, the number of religiously observant women who enlist – although they are not obliged to serve by law – is breaking records. The army is making great efforts to ensure that they are able to both serve their country and to continue to observe religious precepts.”

([Haaretz](#))

## **Libya**

### **September 27: English-speaking female jihadis in Libya issue Islamic State call to arms**

“English-speaking female jihadis have been using social media to try to lure western Muslims to join them with Islamic State in Libya, a new front in the war on terror just 400 miles from Europe’s shores.”

([The Guardian](#))

## **Palestinian Territories**

### **September 22: Palestinian Woman Is First to Oversee Muslim Wedding Vows**

“Tahrir Hammad thinks women, including herself, are too emotional to serve as judges, and accepts without question an Islamic legal dictate that sees two women as equivalent to one male witness for official ceremonies. Yet Ms. Hammad, 36, is a pioneer, having recently become the first woman to be permitted to perform Muslim marriages in the Palestinian territories.” ([New York Times](#))

### **September 23: Dispute arises over circumstances of death of woman at Israeli checkpoint**

“Contradictory accounts have emerged over the fatal shooting of an 18-year-old Palestinian student, Hadeel al-Hashlamon, by Israeli forces at a checkpoint in the West Bank city of Hebron on Tuesday, September 22, after she allegedly pulled a knife on the soldiers.” ([The Guardian](#))

## **Saudi Arabia**

### **September 30: Saudi women hiring in private sector surges by 76 percent**

“There has been a significant increase in the number of Saudi women being employed in the private sector during the current Hijri year, according to the latest report of the Ministry of Labor. The number of Saudi women who secured jobs in the private sector in the year jumped to 76.08 percent compared to 23.92 percent expatriate women. By this, the total number of Saudi women working in this sector rose to 466,000 against 146,765 expatriate women, the Saudi Press Agency reported.” ([Al-Arabiya](#))

## **Syria**

### **September 29: Quarter of civilians killed in Syrian War are children, women**

“Women and children are most often the fatal victims of air bombardments and other explosive weapons in the four-year Syrian war that has killed roughly 80,000 civilians, according to study results. Knowing whether women and children have been targeted, or how civilians have died, can clarify whether human rights have been violated. But such a protracted conflict as the Syrian war makes it difficult to track fatalities, and epidemiologists say that detailed breakdowns of the weapons used to kill people during war aren’t often studied.” ([Al Jazeera](#))

**October 1: Life in the ‘Islamic State’: Women – ‘Till martyrdom do us part’ (Stories by Kevin Sullivan)**

“In Islamic State propaganda, life for women in the self-declared caliphate is filled with love, children and the joys of domestic life, such as an Oreo dessert. But the reality is often far more harsh for women who have moved there from the Arab world, Europe or the United States, according to specialists who monitor Islamic State social media postings.” ([The Washington Post](#))

**Turkey**

**September 25: Turkish women earning far less than men in equal jobs**

“A wide gap remains between the annual average principal occupation income of men and women in Turkey, according to figures from the Turkish Statistics Institution (TÜİK), which show that the difference remains wide even among university graduates and company executives. Income inequality is also alarmingly high in sectors where female workforce participation is high. The average principal occupation income, which refers to the basic job that a person earns most from, remained at 20,084 liras for Turkish men and 15,681 liras for women in 2014.” ([Hurriyet](#))

**October 5: Court ruling a victory for maiden name usage in Turkey**

“The Supreme Court of Appeals ruled that a married woman can use her maiden name without the addition of her husband's last name in a victory for women. In a landmark verdict, the highest judiciary authority in the Turkish legal system put an end to a long-standing debate whether women should be allowed to use their maiden names while married.” ([Daily Sabah](#))

**October 6: The social impact of Syrian women as second wives in Turkey**

“Turkish men taking Syrian refugee women as second wives is one of the main reasons for this increase in divorce rates in Kilis. Members of the Kilis Bar Association Center for Women’s and Children’s Rights state that there is a growing number of Turkish women who want to divorce their husbands because they have brought Syrian women into the home as their second wives.” ([Turkish Weekly](#))

**United Arab Emirates**

**September 22: First Emirati woman appointed to position at the UN in New York**

“Hind Abdulaziz Alowais became the first Emirati woman to be appointed to the United Nations Headquarters in New York since the UAE became a member of the United Nations in 1971. Alowais was selected for the post of senior advisor in the office of the Deputy Executive Director, on September 7 by Lakshmi Puri, assistant secretary-general for Intergovernmental Support and Strategic Partnerships, at the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women).” ([Arabian Business](#))

**September 28: Emirati women swarm polling stations in Dubai**

“A remarkable number of Emirati women swarmed polling stations in Dubai on Monday, September 28 to vote for candidates who aim to empower women. The voters turned up at polling stations out of strong sense of duty and on issues that affect them.” ([Gulf News](#))

**October 4: Emirati women disappointed in lack of female representation in FNC**

“Emirati women have expressed their disappointment that only one female candidate was elected to the Federal National Council. Naama Al Sharhan, from Ras Al Khaimah, was the only women out of 78 candidates to succeed by picking up 1,004 votes.” ([The National](#))

## **Yemen**

### **September 22: Violence, inequality plague women in conflict-ravaged Yemen**

“Gender-based violence and gender inequality are grave problems throughout Yemen. Some 92 percent of women say that violence against women commonly occurs in the home, the country’s 2013 demographic and health survey revealed. Yemen’s deadly conflict is worsening conditions for women.” ([UN Population Fund](#))

### **September 30: Al Houthi violations of women’s rights condemned**

“Arab and Yemeni human rights defenders and activists have condemned in the strongest possible terms the brutal atrocities, crimes and violations committed by Al Houthi militia and group of deposed president Ali Abdullah Saleh against the women in Yemen. Speakers condemned these human rights abuses terming them as ‘bereft of human sense’ and said the perpetrators had no regard for the sanctity of women in Yemen.” ([Gulf News](#))

### **October 5: Yemeni women protest Saudi-led aerial campaign**

“On Sunday, October 4 a group of Yemeni women gathered in front of the United Nations office in the capital of Sana’a and held a rally to condemn the ongoing Saudi military aggression against their country, calling on the international body to take serious action to put an end to it.” ([Al Bawaba](#))

## **General**

### **September 24: Gender equality to yield \$2.7 trillion in economic gains for the region**

“Were women in the Middle East and North Africa to enjoy the same economic opportunities as men, the region would be US\$2.7 trillion better off between now and 2025, according to a new study by the McKinsey Global Institute. That is equivalent to a 4 percentage point boost to regional economic growth every year—in a region that has grown at or below 3 per cent on average since 2011.” ([The National](#))


### **September 28: New move by Islamic countries to improve women’s health – but more needs to be done**

“Islamic countries committed to strengthen women’s health—a key component of it being sexual and reproductive health and rights of adolescent girls and young women—during a meeting at the United Nations headquarters on Saturday, September 26. Improving girls and women’s health is a crucial issue in a region—Middle East and North Africa—where about one in three people is aged 15 to 29—or more than 100 million people, according to recent research by the Brookings Institution.” ([Your Middle East](#))

**By Nishaat Shaik**



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