

MENA Women News Brief

July 5, 2016-July 19, 2016

Algeria

July 11: The refugee who fled civil war and became a multi-millionaire

“Daniele Henkel decided she had to flee Algeria because she felt her children were no longer safe. ‘Islamists were starting to attack girls in the street,’ she says. ‘I had to think about my daughters, so I decided to move to Canada.’ This was back in 1990, and Algeria was about to descend into more than a decade of civil war between a secular government and various Islamist groups.” ([BBC](#))

Egypt

July 10: Egypt nominates Moushira Khattab for next UNESCO Director-General

“A few months prior the UNESCO elections for the post of Director-General, Egypt decided to nominate the Egyptian ambassador and diplomat, Moushira Khattab to the post. The elections for a leader to fill the shoes of Irina Bokova (who has set her sights on the position of UN Secretary-General) will take place at the beginning of 2017.” ([Egypt Independent](#))

July 11: Egyptian Women Use Social Media to Test Roles

“A rapidly growing private Facebook forum in Egypt with over 45,000 members allows women in one of the Arab world’s most restrictive societies to open up about topics that remain taboo. The invitation-only group, ‘Confessions of a Married Woman,’ provides an outlet to ask sensitive questions about sex and vent about the everyday challenges Egyptian women face.” ([Wall Street Journal](#))

July 11: Inheritance plan could be game-changer for Egyptian women (Op-Ed by Walaa Hussein)

“The Egyptian parliament is considering a move to ensure rightful heirs — including women — get their inheritances. Six months after Egypt’s government amended the inheritance law to punish anyone who deliberately denies an inheritance to those entitled to it, parliament is discussing additional amendments. A draft law would create a judicial body specifically tasked with actually restituting inheritances to their rightful heirs.” ([Al Monitor](#))

July 12: Egyptian newspaper apologizes for a cartoon that made light of sexual harassment

“Al-Masry al-Youm, the most widely circulated privately owned newspaper in Egypt, sparked outrage when it published a cartoon that many viewed as condoning sexual harassment. The cartoon depicted a man meeting with a woman’s father to ask for her hand in marriage. He told the father that he should feel grateful that he is asking to marry his daughter after ‘half the young men in the neighborhood sexually harassed her during’ the Muslim holiday of Eid, which ended over the weekend.” ([The Washington Post](#))

July 12: Women’s rights group slams MP for remarks on female genital mutilation

“The Centre for Egyptian Women’s Legal Assistance (CEWLA) has slammed MP Ahmed al-Tahawy, member of the parliamentary health committee, for saying that it is not appropriate to halt the practice of female genital mutilation (FGM), which he describes as an Islamic issue rather than a medical one.”

([Egypt Independent](#))

July 15: How these Egyptian women want to break the taboo over divorce (Op-Ed by Safiaa Mounir)

“Increasing divorce rates in Egypt are accompanied by an increase in issues faced by divorced women, especially young divorcees. In this context, Nooun, a women’s magazine focused on social and humanitarian concerns as well as supporting Egyptian women, announced that it was holding the first session of a program to help divorced women in the first year following their separation.” ([Al Monitor](#))

Iran

July 6: Iran’s imprisonment of Homa Hoodfar is outrageous and worrisome (Op-Ed by Genevieve Rail)

“On June 6, my colleague, Concordia University professor emerita Homa Hoodfar, was arrested by the Iranian Revolutionary Guards. She has since been detained at the notoriously dangerous Evin Prison in Tehran. Her lawyer and family have not been allowed to see her.” ([Montreal Gazette](#))

July 11: UK-Iranian charity worker faces trial in Iran

“A British-Iranian woman is among three dual nationals who will go on trial in Iran, Tehran's prosecutor has said. Abbas Jafari-Dolatabadi said charity worker Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe had been ‘referred to the court’ along with a US-Iranian and a Canadian-Iranian. The charges were not specified, but officials have previously accused Mrs Zaghari-Ratcliffe of leading a ‘foreign-linked hostile network.’” ([BBC](#))

July 14: New Law Reduces Employment Prospects for Women in Iran

“Iran’s Parliament has ratified an amended law that reduces the working hours of female employees with certain family obligations by eight hours per week. Although the law requires employers to pay these women full-time wages, rights advocates say the law will harm the employment prospects of women entering the job market and reduce the job security of those already employed, as employers balk at the costs the legislation will incur upon them.” ([International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran](#))

Iraq

July 5: Islamic State tightens grip on captives held as sex slaves

“The advertisement on the Telegram app is as chilling as it is incongruous: A girl for sale is ‘Virgin. Beautiful. 12 years old... Her price has reached \$12,500 and she will be sold soon.’ The posting in Arabic appeared on an encrypted conversation along with ads for kittens, weapons and tactical gear. It was shared with The Associated Press by an activist with the minority Yazidi community, whose women and children are being held as sex slaves by the extremists.” ([Associated Press](#))

July 6: How this young Yazidi is bringing hope to IS victims (Op-Ed by Brenda Stoter)

“Pari Ibrahim, a young Yazidi women living in the Netherlands, established the Free Yezidi Foundation to highlight the stories of victims of this Iraqi community at the hands of the Islamic State. The Free Yezidi Foundation is one of the two leading foundations (the other is called Yazda) founded by the Yazidi diaspora.” ([Al Monitor](#))

July 13: Dutch woman escapes ISIS-held, northern Iraqi city of Mosul

“A Dutch woman has surrendered to Kurdish Peshmerga fighters near the ISIS-held city of Mosul in northern Iraq, saying she had been trying to escape the ‘hell’ she was living in ‘all the time.’ Laura Angela Hansen told Kurdistan 24 television that her father helped her escape with her two children - four-year-old Iman and Abdullah, one. She gave no details.” ([Al Arabiya](#))

Israel

July 6: Israel's Surrogacy Law Is Discriminatory Toward Women, Attorney General Says

"Israel's law on surrogacy is discriminatory and needs to be changed, said Attorney General Avichai Mendelblit. Currently, only a man and woman in a relationship may have a child through a surrogate in Israel. Mendelblit, writing in response to a petition to the High Court of Justice, called for amending the law to allow women without a male partner to apply for surrogacy, too." ([Haaretz](#))

July 7: Women at the helm of Israel's financial institutions

"From the Governor of the Bank of Israel to three bank CEOs, women dominate the top echelons of Israel's financial system. People familiar with Israel's banks and financial institutions can only look on in wonder at the number of women at the top in this country. The Governor of the Bank of Israel is Dr. Karnit Flug, the Deputy Governor is Dr. Nadine Baudot-Trajtenberg and the Supervisor of Banks is Dr. Hedva Ber." ([Globes](#))

July 12: The ultra-Orthodox Jewish Women's Revolution (Op-Ed by Tzvia Greenfield)

"As long as they were confined exclusively to Haredi society, women were not capable of bringing about change. But today they are forced to encounter the world, and are becoming aware of other alternatives." ([Haaretz](#))

July 12: Israeli army rabbi-to-be in hot water over 'pro-rape' remarks

"The Israeli military's chief rabbi-nominate has come under fire for past remarks that seem to imply that soldiers are allowed to rape non-Jewish women in times of war. Controversial remarks made 14 years ago by Rabbi Colonel Eyal Karim, 59, who is set to replace the Israeli Defense Forces' outgoing main religious teacher, suggested that Israeli soldiers could 'breach' standards of modesty 'satisfy the evil inclination by lying with attractive Gentile women against their will, out of consideration for the difficulties faced by the soldiers and for overall success.'" ([Al Arabiya](#))

Morocco

July 7: Najlae & Rajae, Two Female Moroccan Mechanics Breaking Barriers (Op-Ed by Myriam Ait Balk)

"Whoever said Muslim women are afraid to get their hands dirty is swimming in a sea of stereotypes. Rajae and Najlae, two young women from Tetouan, have proven to Morocco (and the world) that when veiled Muslim women have a dream, they persevere to make it happen." ([Morocco World News](#))

July 12: Why Girls' Education in Morocco Needs More than Money (Op-Ed by Juliet S. Sorensen)

"The White House announcement, to great fanfare, of nearly \$100 million in U.S. aid via the Millennium Challenge Corporation to support school attendance by Moroccan girls is a necessary but insufficient step. In southeastern Morocco, where I served from 1995 until 1997 as a Peace Corps volunteer, it was estimated at the time that 85 percent of school-age girls were not in school. That figure was echoed by the first lady's aides. Only 36 percent of girls in rural Morocco enroll in secondary school. The female adult literacy rate in Morocco is a mere 58 percent, according to the World Bank." ([Women's eNews](#))

Oman

July 12: Horror and Heartbreak in Oman: Plight of Migrant Domestic Workers Revealed

"More than 130,000 women have left their home countries to work in Oman as migrant domestic workers, cooking, cleaning and caring for children while living in their employers' homes. But behind closed doors, many of these women are beaten, starved, and forced to work up to 21 hours in a day.

Rothna Begum speaks to Stephanie Hancock about her report, 'I Was Sold,' and about the horrors taking place in this quiet, beautiful country that has, until now, escaped scrutiny on this issue." ([Human Rights Watch](#))

July 16: Omani women playing a larger role in public and private sector

"Omani women accounted for 38.7 per cent of the total number of women in the Sultanate in civil service units and the private sector at the end of 2015, indicate official statistics. The number of women in the Sultanate in civil service units and the private sector, as of the end of December 2015 was pegged at 318,286, including 123,301 Omani women and 194,985 expat women, according to data from the Ministry of Civil Service and the Royal Oman Police (ROP)." ([Times of Oman](#))

Palestinian Territories

July 11: Khalida Jarrar: A lifelong quest to heal Palestine

"The morning after Palestinian parliamentarian Khalida Jarrar, 53, was released after 15 months in Israeli prison, she had an important meeting to attend. The Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) was meeting to discuss a number of laws, and Jarrar refused to miss it, even though her months in detention had taken a toll." ([Al Jazeera](#))

Saudi Arabia

July 8: Nearly six million Saudi women 'do not participate' in workforce

"More than 5.8 million Saudi women are not participating in the labor force, despite the fact that most of them are over 15 years old, according to the General Authority for Statistics' report for the second half of 2015, Al-Watan daily reported. The report indicated that the number of Saudi women participating in the workforce in 2015 was 1.2 million compared to 4.4 million Saudi men." ([Al Arabiya](#))

July 11: In conservative Saudi Arabia, 2012 Olympian Sarah Attar sees rumblings of change (Op-Ed by Chuck Culpepper)

"With Saudi Arabia and Qatar among the last countries to add female athletes to their Olympics contingents, Sarah Attar and Wojdan Shaherkani, a judoka, broke the ground and ignored the odd social-media denigration as best they could. In turn, on repeated visits to Saudi Arabia, the Attar family has noticed some rumblings of change in that most conservative of Middle Eastern lands." ([The Washington Post](#))

July 17: Saudi Arabia Will Send Four Women to the Olympics

"The Saudi Olympic Committee has approved four female athletes to compete as part of Saudi Arabia's team at the Rio de Janeiro Olympics, a spokesman said Sunday, July 17. Sara al-Attar, Lubna al-Omar, Cariman Abu al-Jadail and Wujud Fahmi will be only the second group of female Olympians to represent Saudi Arabia, a conservative kingdom where women are barred from driving and are subject to a restrictive male guardianship system." ([The New York Times](#))

Syria

July 5: 'We want to change things': Syrian women begin UK theater tour

"For Sham, who fled Syria with her family, life in Damascus before the war was idyllic, in stark contrast to their desperate existence in Amman, Jordan. For the next three weeks, Sham and a dozen other Syrian women will weave their personal tales into an adaptation of Euripides' antiwar tragedy The Trojan Women in theatres around the UK, starting with a sold-out run at the Young Vic in London." ([The Guardian](#))

July 6: In Syria's Broken Society, Brides Are Celebrating Without the Groom

“The bride walked into the wedding hall as her family and friends clapped and danced to the blaring Middle Eastern music. Giant sparklers erupted on either side of the red carpet. Amid all the celebrations, the woman’s bright red lips were pursed in a strained half-smile. There would be no wedding kiss, no wedding night. And no groom. Her betrothed was 2,500 miles away in the Netherlands, trying to get through on a bad cellphone connection.” ([The Wall Street Journal](#))

July 10: Queens of Syria review- the most urgent work on the London Stage (Op-Ed by Susannah Clapp)

“It is not only irrelevant but impudent to give a star rating to Queens of Syria. This is the most urgent work on the London stage. It is spoken by 13 Syrian refugees, all women, none of them professional actors. They are also the authors, together with Shereen Zoumot and director Zoe Lafferty. Their words are anguished. Their delivery is calm.” ([The Guardian](#))

Turkey

July 7: Turkish women turn their hands to Instagram, become entrepreneurs

“More Turkish women are running their own businesses through Instagram, advertising and selling their handmade or atelier work on their accounts. Social media has led to a boom in the e-trade industry over the last few years with the arrival of new business fields.” ([Daily Sabah](#))

July 15: UN women's rights committee reviews status of women in Turkey

“Turkey’s performance in implementing the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was reviewed by a United Nations committee on Wednesday, July 13, as a Turkish delegation provided official figures and answered the committee’s questions on a wide range of women’s issues in the country.” ([Hurriyet Daily News](#))

United Arab Emirates

July 5: Call for more mentors to help female entrepreneurs in the UAE

“Women entrepreneurs in the UAE need more female role models and mentors, says an Australian professor who is comparing the start-up environments in these countries. Brian Yecies, a senior lecturer in media and communications at Wollongong University, along with colleagues Greg Kerr and Richard Howson, is conducting a study into the growth of women entrepreneurs and innovation hubs on behalf of the Council for Australian-Arab Relations (CAAR).” ([The National](#))

July 7: Portrait of a Nation: The teenager flying flag for women in male industry

“Bubbly teenager Leila Al Bashr is something of a trailblazer – the 19-year-old Emirati is the only female quay crane operator at Khalifa Port container terminal. When the high school graduate told her family she wanted to embark on a career in the predominantly male industry, they were apprehensive.” ([The National](#))

July 13: Employers ‘should do more to retain female Emirati staff’, study finds

“Employers must work harder to retain female Emirati staff and allow them more room for career progression, according to new research. Turnover and staff retention is a sticking point when it comes to women in the workplace, said Dr Fauzia Jabeen, associate professor of management at Abu Dhabi University College of Business.” ([The National](#))

Yemen

July 6: The story of a girl married at 11 tracks the horrors of Yemen's war

“Inside a ramshackle tent, seven days after she was married, Fayrouz Ahmed Haider softly recounted how she ran away from her 25-year-old husband when he tried to force her to have sex. ‘It would have been better if my marriage had been delayed,’ she said. Fayrouz is 11. Child marriages have long been woven into Yemen’s social fabric, driven largely by poverty and ancient traditions, as in many parts of the world.” ([The Washington Post](#))

General

July 8: Photographer Depicts The Ways Hijab And Niqab Can Empower Women

“Photographer Yumna Al-Arashi was born and raised in Washington, D.C., yet Yemen still feels like home. After a recent trip there — on assignment as a photojournalist traveling through the country’s small towns and mountain roads — she became peeved by a question she was asked over and over again by outsiders: How are women treated in the Middle East? She felt as though the question framed the women she knew as strong leaders within their families and communities as victims who needed protecting.” ([The Huffington Post](#))

July 11: Middle Eastern women were once discouraged from sport. A new generation now chases Olympic glory

“In London four years ago, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Brunei became the last three countries to send female athletes to the Olympics. Sixteen Muslim countries from the Middle East sent a total of 158 women to the London Games, according to nation-by-nation figures compiled by the British Broadcasting Corp., with Egypt sending its largest contingent of female competitors — 37 — since it began participating in the Olympics in 1912.” ([The Washington Post](#))

By Elena Scott-Kakures, Middle East Program

Additional MENA Women’s News Briefs are available [here](#).

Follow the Middle East Program on Twitter @WilsonCenterMEP  and Facebook 

