

MENA Women's News Brief

June 16, 2015-June 30, 2015

Egypt

June 16: A dragged, stripped, blamed victim in Egypt

“They dragged me, stripped me, beat me up and stepped on me as if I were an insect,’ Egyptian activist Henda Nafea said while in the hospital, describing what happened to her in 2011 when she took part in protests against military rule. Her testimony was not easy. In Egypt, it is common to blame women for being attacked, particularly when expressing their right to protest.” ([Al-Arabiya](#))

June 17: Egypt swears in 26 new female judges

“Egypt’s judiciary has sworn in 26 Egyptian women as presiding judges in the Courts of First Instance. This is the third batch of female judges to be appointed in Egypt’s judiciary, with 42 having been appointed over two earlier stages prior to 2008.” ([Egyptian Streets](#))

June 18: Egypt’s Quiet Social Revolution

“What’s happening now is much deeper than a so-called Arab spring or winter: Hidden from the public eye, a social revolution is transforming Egypt. For the first time in fifty years, women have started to take off their hijabs. Every Egyptian seems to know at least one woman in his or her family or circle of friends that has committed this small but significant act of revolt. And this is not the only secular act gaining currency among Egyptians. In private, more and more people are discussing taboos like atheism — or even sexual identity.” ([Foreign Policy](#))

June 25: Female genital mutilation: Why Egyptian girls fear the summer

“Summer days: They're what childhood memories are made of, glorious afternoons of unchecked freedom to frolic with friends in the sun, unshackled from the earthly obligations of a math class that never seemed further away. But for millions of schoolgirls in Egypt, this time of year represents something much darker: the start of the female genital mutilation (FGM) season.” ([CNN](#))

Iran

June 16: Nasrin Sotoudeh: One Woman Stands Against the Iranian Government

“Every weekday for the past seven months, from 9:30 to 12:00 p.m., Nasrin Sotoudeh, a former political prisoner, has been picketing the headquarters of the Iranian Bar Association in protest of its decision to ban her from practicing as a lawyer for three years. On this particular morning, she brought along several signs proclaiming, in English and Persian, the principles for which she fights: the right to work and the right to dissent.” ([Foreign Policy](#))

On June 26, Sotoudeh announced on her Facebook page that the sentence suspending her lawyer’s license was “reduced from 3 years to 9 months.” ([Nasrin Sotoudeh’s Official Facebook Page](#))

June 16: This potential spouse is brought to you by the Islamic Republic of Iran

“What’s a country to do when faced with declining birthrates and rising marriage ages? Start a government-run matchmaking Web site, apparently. That’s what Iranian officials did Monday, June 15 when launching a state-supported matchmaking Web site with the goal of producing 100,000 new marriages over the next year, Agence France-Presse reported. Authorities did a test run earlier this year.” ([Washington Post](#))

June 19: Video: Inside Iran: The women in Iran's notorious prisons

“Female detainees in Iran’s prisons face an uncertain future amid reports by human rights organizations of the systematic abuse women are subjected to in Iranian detention facilities.” ([Al-Arabiya](#))

June 20: Iranian vice-president addresses hardliners about volleyball ban for female fans

“One of Iran’s vice-presidents has condemned conservative hardliners who are blocking her attempt to let women watch volleyball matches. Shahindokht Molaverdi, vice president for Women and Family Affairs, denounced men whose violent threats prevented women getting into a match on Friday, June 19 as sanctimonious.” ([The Guardian](#))

June 24: Shirin Neshat translates Iranian political unrest through an artistic lens

“For Shirin Neshat, ‘art became a kind of an excuse to build a relationship, even from a distance,’ to her homeland and history. Neshat grew up in pre-revolutionary Iran, then came to the U.S. as a student in the 1970s and is now an internationally recognized artist.” ([PBS News Hour](#))

Iraq

June 18: Blood money marriage makes comeback in Iraq

“Women took to the streets of al-Mutanabbi Street in central Baghdad June 2, holding large banners denouncing fasliya marriage — the Arabic word for marriages arranged as compensation, through which tribal conflicts are resolved — which has surfaced in Iraq anew. The return of this type of marriage comes as a result of a frail state and the predominance of tribal values over social life, as well as the exacerbation of conflicts between Iraqi tribes in central and southern areas.” ([Al-Monitor](#))

Israel

June 18: El Al's high heel directive kicks up storm

“What is astounding about the high heels protest, which erupted this week and has since swept the country, is the fact that the new directive requiring El Al Israel Airlines’ female flight attendants to wear high heels until boarding — instead of just wearing them on the way to the aircraft — was issued by a female manager. What is even more astounding is that this manager is retired Brig. Gen. Yehudit Grisaro, who serves as the carrier’s vice president for customer service and was the military chief of staff’s adviser on women’s affairs in 2006.” ([Al-Monitor](#))

June 18: Ultra-Orthodox women open new businesses

“In some sectors of the ultra-Orthodox world, the internet is seen as a potentially corrupting influence, and many families do not have TV or internet at home. In many cases, the women are the primary breadwinners, as the husbands spend most of their time studying Jewish texts like the Talmud. While ultra-Orthodox women have always worked, they are now opening businesses in larger numbers, and becoming a market for business services.” ([Jewish Journal](#))

Lebanon

June 26: Lebanon's immigrant domestic workers remain vulnerable to abuse

“A formal proposal in late December for Lebanon’s government to form a union for domestic workers attracted international attention. But little has changed since then, including what the women who work in people’s homes — cooking, cleaning and looking after children — say is their need for protection from unscrupulous recruiters and abusive employers. Miryam Kessaya, 34-year-old from Ethiopia, said she wants a union because she has never felt she has any rights in Lebanon.” ([AlJazeera America](#))

Morocco

June 27: Moroccan Women Wear Mini-skirts in Protest Against Arrest of Two Women

“Several Moroccan women turned out for the protest against the arrest of two women in Inezgane, a suburb of the southern city of Agadir. The two women were arrested ‘gross indecency’ for wearing ‘tight and immoral’ clothes. Women participating in the virtual protest posted pictures of themselves on social media wearing miniskirts to support the two women—hairdressers aged 23 and 29— whose trial has been set for July 16. Three sit-ins are also expected to be held this week in Agadir, Rabat and Casablanca to denounce the trial of the two women.” ([Morocco World News](#))

Qatar

June 16: Qatar Airways found guilty of sexual discrimination by major UN body

“State-owned Qatar Airways is discriminating against its female employees, in breach of international labour laws, according to a ruling by a major UN body. The airline’s policy of reserving the right to terminate the employment of pregnant women and its banning of female employees from being allowed to be picked up or dropped off at the company premises by an unrelated male amounts to sexual discrimination, the International Labor Organization ruled on Tuesday, June 16.” ([Arabian Business](#))

Syria

June 19: Why Three British Sisters Took Their Children to Join Jihadists in Syria

“Zohra Dawood, along with her two sisters, Khadija, 29, and Sugra, 34, and their nine children first left the U.K. at the end of May for a pilgrimage to the Saudi city of Medina. They reportedly boarded a flight to Istanbul, Turkey on June 9 instead of flying back to Bradford as planned on June 11. According to a smuggler working for the Islamic State of Iraq and Greater Syria (ISIS) quoted in BBC reports on Friday, June 19 the family of 12 has already crossed into Syria in two separate groups.” ([TIME](#))
For an article by Deeyah Khan about why women in the United Kingdom move to ISIS controlled territory, read “[For Isis women, it’s not about ‘jihadi brides’: it’s about escape.](#)”

June 23: British woman held by al-Nusra Front freed in Syria

“A British woman who was captured in Syria by al-Qaida militants and held for seven months has been released after alerting lawyers in the UK to her plight by using the messaging service WhatsApp. The 31-year-old from east London was detained in territory controlled by the al-Nusra Front, al-Qaeda’s franchise in Syria. She was freed after negotiations with al-Nusra, who agreed to let her go because of her history of mental illness, those involved with the negotiations said.” ([The Guardian](#))

June 24: Frenchwoman describes her harrowing journey to ISIS

“Nadia (not her real name), a 21-year-old French woman, was recruited earlier this spring by Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) jihadists on Internet chatrooms and then travelled to the militants' self-declared capital of Raqqa, in Syria. During a tumultuous three months with ISIS in Raqqa, she married and then separated from a jihadist, was twice thrown in jail and then managed to cross into Turkey where she was detained by police.” ([AFP via Business Insider](#))

June 25: IS sells 42 Yazidi women to fighters in Syria: monitor

“The Islamic State group on Thursday, June 25 sold 42 Iraqi women it had abducted from the Yazidi religious minority to its fighters in eastern Syria, a monitor said. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the women were being treated as ‘slaves’ by the jihadists and were sold ‘for between \$500 (447 euros) and \$2,000 dollars (1,785 euros).’” ([AFP via Yahoo News](#))

United Arab Emirates

June 29: UAE sentences Emirati woman to death for killing U.S. teacher


“A United Arab Emirates court on Monday, June 29, sentenced a UAE woman to death for the Islamist-inspired killing of an American kindergarten teacher in December, the state news agency WAM said.”

[\(Reuters\)](#)

By Julia Craig Romano



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