

MENA Women's News Brief

March 24, 2015-April 7, 2015

April 1: Istanbul authorities kill a bomb-wielding woman near police HQ

“In a second evening of violence in Istanbul, police on Wednesday, April 1 killed a woman carrying a bomb near the city's main police headquarters, a Turkish official said. Istanbul Governor Vasip Şahin also said that a second person escaped and that a policeman was slightly injured. It wasn't immediately clear who was behind the attack.” ([Al Jazeera America](#))

April 2: Two Women Arrested in New York for ISIS-Inspired Terror Plot

“Two women and self-declared citizens of the Islamic State’ were arrested Thursday, April 2 in connection to a plot to detonate homemade bombs in the United States. Noelle Velentzas and Asia Siddiqui, both of Queens, NY, were charged with conspiracy to use weapons of mass destruction against ‘persons or property’ in the United States, according to a news release from the Department of Justice.” ([TIME](#))

April 2: Women's human rights defenders under threat (Podcast)

“This edition of the Global Development Podcast looks at the challenges faced by women's rights defenders around the world. Maryam Abdulhadi al-Khawaja, co-director of the Gulf Centre for Human Rights, looks at the situation for women in Bahrain. Khoulood Mahdhaoui, a human rights activist in Tunisia, discusses LGBT attacks in her home country.” ([The Guardian](#))

Egypt

March 26: The Ministry Of Interior to investigate video of police sexually assaulting 2 women in Dakahlia

“After a video was leaked showing police forces beating and sexually assaulting two women in Dakahlia, on Thursday, March 26 the Interior Ministry said it would launch an investigation into the matter. Security sources claimed the women were accompanying a group of suspects arrested in a security raid in the northern governorate, the state-owned Middle East News Agency (MENA) reported.” ([Mada Masr](#))

March 29: Egypt interviews female judges for positions in different courts

“Egypt's Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) on Sunday, March 29 started interviews with female judges for jobs in different courts, the Ahram Arabic news website has reported. The female judges, who sat special law exams as part of the interview process two weeks ago, have previously worked in jobs that did not involve any dispute resolution at the State Litigation Authority and the Administrative Prosecution.” ([Ahram Online](#))

Iraq

April 1: From brides to battlefield, women taking up new roles with Islamic State

“Women traveling to join Islamic State militants are taking on new roles on the frontline in logistics and intelligence and as medics, according to military and expert sources. ‘We heard a woman giving order to men. She was saying move there or here, go left or right. She was obviously a commander,’ said Pareen Sevgeen, the commander of a Kurdish women militia in Iraq.” ([Reuters](#))

April 6: Fatima: Voices of Civil Society in Iraq (Video)

“Fatima tells the story of Fatima Al Bahadly, an Iraqi activist who provides alternatives to a challenging reality in the southern city of Basra. Despite numerous death threats, she is determined to work with youth, women, and leaders of the Provincial Council to rebuild her city.” ([World Democracy Movement](#))

Iran

March 27: Iran holds first ever fashion week

“Young Iranian designers presented a variety of up-to-date styles for men and women during Iran’s first ever fashion week, taking place February 7-9 at the Sam Center in north Tehran. Six of the seven designers who participated are women — among them Neda Sadeghi. She told Al-Monitor in an email interview that Iranian women are increasingly involved in the fashion industry not only as customers but as business owners and investors, both ‘visible or as silent partners [as well as] managers and sales people.’” ([Al-Monitor](#))

March 30: Iranian VP works for change from within

“Shahindokht Molaverdi, vice president for Women and Family Affairs, is perhaps the youngest member of Iranian President Hassan Rouhani’s administration at the age of 49. During the 20 years that she has been active in the field of women’s rights, she has gained a reputation as a smart activist who works step by step to achieve more rights for women. She neither presents a secular image of herself nor is she willing to back down when hard-liners criticize her.” ([Al-Monitor](#))

March 31: The Martyr’s Daughter (Video)

“This is the second episode of “Our Man in Tehran,” a seven-part video series on nytimes.com, produced with VPRO in the Netherlands. It is the first of two videos about issues facing women in Iran. Najiyeh Allahdad, the subject of this episode, and Thomas Erdbrink, Tehran Bureau Chief for the New York Times, answered readers’ questions below.” ([New York Times](#))

April 2: British-Iranian woman jailed over volleyball game sees charges dropped

“An appeals court in Tehran has dismissed charges against Ghoncheh Ghavami, an Iranian-British woman, who was jailed for trying to attend a men’s volleyball game, meaning that she will not have to return to prison. Despite this, Ghavami is still subject to a travel ban, according to her family.” ([The Guardian](#))

April 3: Prominent Iranian women weigh in on historic nuclear deal

“A landmark agreement was reached on Thursday, April 2 in Switzerland when diplomats from the United States, Iran and five other world powers announced that they had agreed upon a framework for Iran’s nuclear program. Women in the World spoke to a few prominent Iranian women about their reactions to the deal and their hopes for the country.” ([New York Times](#))

April 4: Iran eases ban on women attending sports matches

“Iran has partially lifted a ban on women attending men's sports matches, Abdolhamid Ahmadim, the deputy sports minister, said on Saturday, April 4. Ahmadi also said some matches would remain off-limits. ‘Of course, in some areas of sport families are not interested in attending nor is there a possibility for them to attend,’ he said.” ([Reuters](#))

Israel

April 6: Israel to detain female Palestinian lawmaker for 6 months

“The Israeli military has placed a female Palestinian legislator under detention for six months without trial, a lawyer for the lawmaker said Monday, April 6. Khalida Jarrar, a senior political leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a left-wing Palestinian militant group, is being held for alleged activities in a hostile organization, lawyer Mahmoud Hassan said.” ([Washington Post](#))

Kuwait

April 2: Women from Sierra Leone 'sold like slaves' into domestic work in Kuwait

“Women from Sierra Leone formerly employed as domestic workers in private Kuwaiti households said they had been ‘sold like slaves’ by recruitment agents to families in the Kuwaiti capital and then resold multiple times. Each said that they had paid about \$1,480 to recruitment agents in Sierra Leone on the promise of jobs as nurses in hospitals or in the hotel industry, only to find on arrival that they were to be offered to families as housemaids and expected to work for up to 22 hours a day.” ([The Guardian](#))

Libya

April 2: Female Parliamentarians Urge Washington To Return Attention To Libya

“Several female members of Libya's Parliament visited Washington, D.C. recently. They were here to draw attention to the erosion of women's rights in their home country. When revolution swept across Libya in 2011, many women were among those pushing for change. The United States was there, too. It led bombing raids that helped topple Libya's longtime ruler. But as NPR's Michele Kelemen reports, the female parliamentarians say that now Washington has turned away.” ([NPR](#))

Morocco

March 31: Morocco confronts abortion taboo with proposed reform

“An estimated 600 to 800 abortions are performed every day in Morocco, where the operation is illegal except in cases of threat to the mother's health. Although the procedure is widely practiced underground, the subject has long been taboo. Years of activism, however, have culminated this month in a new official move to reform the law to stem the tide of illegal abortions by making operations more accessible.” ([Daily Star Lebanon](#))

Palestinian Territories

March 24: Growing mushrooms in Gaza

“Growing mushrooms is one of the very few options women in Gaza have to face poverty and unemployment that has been prevalent ever since the imposition of the Israeli siege on Gaza in 2007. Doing such work to earn a living does not require much capital, and the production cycle is short, which contributes to a faster profit, according to economic expert Samir Hamattu. In addition, mushrooms are easy to plant and sell.” ([Al-Monitor](#))

Syria

March 25: Syria's women are part of the battles against rebels (Photos)

“They are known as the Commandos Battalion for Females, part of the Syrian Republican Guards. The battalion, which was created nearly a year ago, consists of 800 female soldiers who are positioned in the suburbs of the Syrian capital. The battalion monitors and secures the front lines with snipers, rockets and machine guns.” ([Washington Post](#))

March 29: With men out of work, Syrian women become sole providers

“Four years into the Syrian conflict, Jordan has become host to more than 620,000 refugees, of whom almost 80 percent are women and children. Single women head one in four of all Syrian refugee households. Many suffer psychological trauma, social marginalization, ongoing gender-based violence and little access to protection or information. Those who survive do so one day at a time, relying on female social networks for support. Women must reach out to one another, they say, because no one can survive this crisis alone.” ([Al-Monitor](#))

April 6: Syrian Islamists exchange 25 women and children prisoners for commander

“Islamist militants and fighters loyal to the Syrian government have made a rare prisoner swap, with insurgents releasing 25 women and children in exchange for one of their commanders the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said on Monday, April 6.” ([Reuters](#))

Tunisia

March 30: Rural women in Tunisia: ‘We have been silent for too long’

“Many women in rural Tunisia face long trips to access essential services, which are usually located in urban centers. But it’s not just better road networks and health systems these women want. They want to improve women’s rights at the national level and bring female leaders into their country’s politics.” ([The Guardian](#))

By **Julia Craig Romano**



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