

MENA Women's News Brief

May 19, 2015-June 2, 2015

Egypt

May 27: Egypt sees drop in female genital mutilation

“The occurrence of female genital mutilation (FGM) in Egypt has decreased by 13 percent since 2008 in the population of girls aged 15 to 17-years-old, according to the Egypt Demographic Health Survey of 2014.” ([Al Arabiya](#))

May 29: Acquittal of Ms. Azza Soliman

“Azza Soliman, human rights lawyer and founder of the Centre for Egyptian Women Legal Aid (CEWLA) has been acquitted of charges of ‘unauthorised protesting’ and ‘breach of security and public order.’ Ms. Soliman was charged after she went to the police to provide a testimony on the violent repression by the police of a protest commemorating the January 25 Revolution, which led to the death of Ms. Shaimaa El Sabbagh, political activist and women’s rights defender.” ([FIDH](#))

Iran

May 25: Video: Iranian women urge UN to halt Saudi-led airstrikes on Yemen

“A group of Iranian women have gathered in front of the United Nation’s mission in Tehran to protest against the killing of Yemeni people in Saudi airstrikes. Protesters held banners and chanted slogans against the Saudi government and its allies. They also called on the UN to take concrete measures to stop the bloodshed in Yemen.” ([Press TV](#))

May 26: ‘Shirin Neshat: Facing History’ Review

“The Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden is having a distinctly historic moment. In the first place, with ‘Facing History’ in the title, the new solo show dedicated to Shirin Neshat, the renowned Iranian-born female artist, is riddled with history: hers and Iran’s. It has opened when the U.S. and Iran are locked in delicate, potentially epoch-making negotiations over nuclear power.” ([Wall Street Journal](#))

May 27: Rouhani clashes with Iranian clergy over women arrested for 'bad hijab'

“President Hassan Rouhani, who came to office in 2013 partly on the votes of young, middle-class women, knows that in the summer, hundreds or even thousands will be arrested by the morality police for ‘bad hijab,’ a slack interpretation of the official dress code requiring women to cover their hair and figure even as temperatures push 40 degrees.” ([The Guardian](#))

May 28: Internet dating website launched by state

“With a high rate of divorce among a large, youthful population, authorities in Iran have stepped in to play Cupid with the launch of a state-run internet dating website. Some 22 percent of marriages among Iranians end in divorce - a rate which is even higher in the capital, Tehran. The vast majority occur between couples under 30 - the age group which makes up most of country's population. It is a statistic which is worrying officials.” ([BBC News](#))

May 29: Unlicensed cosmetic surgery on rise in Iran

“Until 10 years ago, cosmetic surgeries in Iran were limited to nose surgeries for women and hair implants for men. People used to hide the fact that they have gone through these procedures. After

surgery people would take a break from work or go on a trip, and would only return when the evidence of the surgery was no longer visible. Gradually, this attitude changed and most people no longer have any problem with demonstrating that they have gone through a procedure.” ([AI-Monitor](#))

June 1: Iranian artist Farghadani, who drew parliament as animals, sentenced to 12-plus years

“Atena Farghadani, 28-year-old Iranian artist and activist, has been sentenced to 12 years and nine months in an Iranian prison, according to the International Campaign for Human Rights and the Northern Virginia-based Cartoonists Rights Network International (CRNI). The artist’s crimes include ‘insulting members of parliament through paintings’ and ‘spreading propaganda against the system,’ according to Amnesty International.” ([Washington Post](#))

Iraq

May 28: Report: Western women are attracted to Islamic State for complex reasons

“Western women in the Islamic State are playing a crucial role in disseminating propaganda and are not simply flocking to the region to become ‘jihadi brides,’ according to a new British research report published Thursday, May 28 by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue and the International Center for the Study of Radicalization at King’s College London.” ([Washington Post](#))

Israel

May 21: Ultra-Orthodox Israeli Press Edits Out Female Lawmakers From Photograph

“Israel's newly appointed government features no female lawmakers — or rather that's what photographs in the country's ultra-Orthodox press would have you believe. The new cabinet of 23 ministers, headed by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, does in fact contain three women.” ([NBC News](#))

May 25: Trying To Organize A Marathon, An Arab-Israeli Woman Runs Into Opposition

“A few months ago, Haneen Radi decided to organize a marathon in Tira, her hometown in northern Israel. This is where some hundred people rallied two weeks ago to support Radi and her plans for a public race. Because not everyone in town liked the idea.” ([NPR](#))

Lebanon

May 30: Protesters demand greater protection for domestic violence victims

“Hundreds of protestors marched in Beirut Saturday, May 30 demanding greater protections for victims of domestic violence. Activists, civil society groups and media personnel rallied in front of the National Museum at 2 p.m., marching towards the Justice Ministry. The demonstration was organized almost two weeks after Sara al-Amin, the latest victim in an ongoing epidemic of violence against women, was shot dead by her husband.” ([Lebanon Daily Star](#))

Saudi Arabia

May 24: Saudi drafts law to allow women to vote for first time

“Saudi Arabia has drawn up the legislation required to allow women to vote in council elections for the first time. Saudi women will be able to vote and stand as candidates in the upcoming municipal elections from this December. The kingdom announced the groundbreaking constitutional reforms last year. Now, it has drawn up the legislation required to enact the changes.” ([Arabian Business](#))

May 27: This artist mapped the strange phenomenon of women dying on Saudi Arabian highways

“In 2009, Saudi Arabia was named the most dangerous place in the world to drive by the World Health Organization. And even though there’s a ban on women driving in the country, a disproportionate number of the road fatalities are female teachers. Last year, Saudi Arabia’s highest-grossing female artist Manal Al-Dowayan created Crash (2014), a visualization of the ongoing tragedy told through data.” ([Quartz](#))

May 30: Why are more and more Saudi women asking for divorce?

“Cases in Saudi Arabia involving ‘Khula,’ a divorce at the insistence of the wife in which she has to return her dowry and pay her husband a certain amount of money to cover anything he spent on her during the duration of the marriage, are on the rise, according to a report in Arabic daily Al-Riyadh.” ([Saudi Gazette via Al-Arabiya](#))

Syria

May 27: ISIS frees 2 Christian women held in Syria

“Syrian activists say ISIS has released two Christian women who had been held along with dozens others since February in northeastern Syria. ISIS kidnapped more than 220 Assyrian Christians in February, after overrunning several farming communities on the southern bank of the Khabur River in Hassakeh province.” ([Associated Press via the Daily Star](#))

May 28: No exit: For female jihadis, Syria is one-way journey

“Only two of the approximately 600 Western girls and young women who have joined extremists in Syria are known to have made it out of the war zone. By comparison, as many as 30 percent of the male foreign fighters have left or are on their way out, according to figures from European governments that monitor the returns.” ([Associated Press via the Washington Post](#))

Tunisia

May 28: Women in Tunisia Tell of Decades of Police Cruelty, Violence and Rape

“Tunisia has embarked on a bold and painful experiment, gathering testimony from victims of six decades of abuses under two dictatorships before its revolution four years ago led to a still-fledgling democracy. Already, thousands have arrived to lodge complaints at the country’s Truth and Dignity Commission, which is scheduled to begin public hearings in June with the goal of exposing the violations, making reparations and holding the abusers accountable in a search for national reconciliation.” ([The New York Times](#))

Yemen

June 1: American Held in Yemen Freed, French Hostage Pleas for Help

“Casey Coombs, a freelance journalist who was among several Americans held by Iranian-backed Shiite rebels in Yemen was set free Monday, June 1 as a French hostage abducted in Yemen by an unknown party appeared in a video pleading for help. A video meanwhile surfaced showing Frenchwoman Isabelle Prime, a World Bank consultant who was kidnapped in February, pleading for help.” ([Associated Press via ABC](#))

General

May 20: Op-Ed: Islam v feminism? (Huda Jawad, communities and equalities activist)

“I watch with a mix of utter fascination and revulsion at the apparently continuous trickle of young women from Britain making the journey to ISIS-controlled territory in Iraq and Syria. Why would intelligent, seemingly well integrated daughters with bright futures ahead of them, enjoying the liberties granted by modern democracy, want to travel back in time to the darkest of dark ages?” ([BBC Magazine](#))

May 26: French Muslims Say Veil Bans Give Cover to Bias

“More than 10 years after France passed its first anti-veil law restricting young girls from wearing veils in public schools, the head coverings of observant Muslim women, from colorful silk scarves to black chadors, have become one of the most potent flash points in the nation’s tense relations with its vibrant and growing Muslim population.” ([The New York Times](#))

May 26: The World’s 100 Most Powerful Women List

“Three women from the Middle East were cited on Forbes Magazine’s 2015 World’s Most Powerful Women List. Sheikha Lubna Al Qasimi, Minister of International Cooperation and Development, UAE; Olayan Lubna, CEO, Olayan Financing Company, Saudi Arabia; and Raja Easa Al Gurg, Managing Director, Easa Saleh Al Gurg Group, UAE were ranked 42nd, 67th, and 97th respectively. Additionally, Nemat Shafik, Deputy Governor, Bank of England, was born in Alexandria, Egypt.” ([Forbes](#))


June 1: Supreme Court rules in favor of Muslim woman in suit against Abercrombie and Fitch

“The Supreme Court ruled in favor of a Muslim woman who has sued retailer Abercrombie & Fitch when the store failed to hire her because she wore a head scarf in observance of her religion.” ([CNN](#))

By Julia Craig Romano



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