

# **MENA Women News Brief**

**November 9-November 22, 2016**

## **Egypt**

### **November 10: Egypt's 50-year-old female triathlon athlete blazes a trail for women**

“Egypt's 50-year-old triathlon athlete Amany Helmi Khalil said that she had blazed a trail for both women and older people passionate about sports after becoming the first female from her country in such an age category to complete the Ironman Barcelona triathlon in Spain last month. Khalil, who is a mother of two, came in 21st in the 50-54 age category for women in the triathlon after competing with women and men from all over the world who were mostly in their 20s and 30s.” ([Al Monitor](#))

### **November 14: How Egyptian women are working to counter rising prices**

“Nilli Zaher, an Egyptian woman in her 30s who works as an accountant for one of the country's largest firms, did not wish to stand idly by amid what she describes as a massive price increase for basic goods, especially clothing. Although her job provides her with an income that meets her and her family's needs, with the support of her friends, Zaher launched a Facebook group where members can put up a basket of used clothes that they no longer need for barter or sale. The group goes by the name ‘Women Against Rising Prices.’” ([Al Monitor](#))

### **November 16: Cairo fest begins with an Egyptian women's lib film**

“The 38th edition of the Cairo International Film Festival began at the Opera House on Tuesday, November 15 with an Egyptian work, Kamla Abuzekri's *A Day for Women*. Exploring the social, emotional and psychological consequences of opening up a swimming pool exclusively for women every Sunday in a disadvantaged Egyptian neighborhood, Abuzekri takes us inside the psyche of a nation still steeped in male chauvinism. Seen through the eyes of three women—each fighting her own demons—the society seems like a harsh bargain for their sex.” ([Hindustan Times](#))

### **November 21: Egypt girls launch cycling equality campaign**

“Girls in northern Egypt have launched a bike-riding campaign in protest against widespread intolerance towards female cyclists. It's unusual to see women cycling in Egypt, and some of those who do so face harassment from passers-by. But five teenagers in the city of Port Said are trying to change that. They created a group called ‘There is no difference’ to promote cycling as an option for female travelers, prompted by steep rises in the cost of taxi and minibus rides since the government slashed fuel subsidies.” ([BBC](#))

## **Iran**

### **November 9: Why Iranian Women Spend Big on Cosmetics**

“Women in Iran spend an unusually large proportion of their incomes on makeup, according to a recent report, which found that 4.5 percent of annual wages in Iran go toward cosmetics. That rate is three times what women spend in France, Germany or the United Kingdom. It's news that has the potential to reinforce all sorts of stereotypes — about oppression of women in the Middle East and the use of cosmetics as a political statement.” ([Seeker](#))

## **Iraq**

### **November 14: All-female Yazidi militia launches operation for revenge on ISIS in northern Iraq**

“An all-female unit of Kurdish-trained Yazidi fighters has said it wants to be front and center of a new attack on ISIS in the north of Iraq, in order to avenge their fellow Yazidi women who have suffered at the hands of the jihadi group. ‘We have not forgotten those Yazidi women sold in the slave markets of Mosul or burnt alive,’ the Sinjar Women’s Units (YJS) commanders said in a statement.” ([Independent](#))

### **November 14: IS conflict: The women who came back home**

“Photographer Abbie Trayler-Smith travelled to Iraq with Oxfam to meet two women who have returned to their homes in the village of Bashir which was liberated from ISIS earlier this year. Here they describe what happened from the moment ISIS arrived.” ([BBC](#))

### **November 18: Iraq center brings specialized care to gender violence survivors**

“The town of Dohuk, in northern Iraq, is filled with survivors of conflict. More than 46,000 people are scattered across three displacement camps, and thousands more are living outside the camps, according to the UN Refugee Agency. All of them have endured terrible losses – and many have also endured horrific abuses. The threat of gender-based violence escalates in all humanitarian emergencies, but the brutality and sexual violence documented in the conflict with ISIS have shocked the international community.” ([Relief Web](#))

### **November 20: Fleeing Iraqi Women Tell of Harsh Treatment in Mosul**

“To earn extra income for her family, Iman Iraqi set up a home business doing wedding makeup for brides in the Islamic State-controlled city of Mosul. She lived to regret it. When the extremist group’s religious police found out, they stormed her house, confiscated her equipment and detained her and her brother. They made Ms. Iraqi sign a pledge she wouldn’t reopen the salon, or her brother would be lashed Ms. Iman Iraqi is among more than 50,000 civilians who have fled the city of over 1 million people in the weeks since Iraqi and Kurdish forces launched an offensive last month to retake the city. She and about two dozen other women recounted living like prisoners in their homes for more than two years under a system that made them invisible.” ([WSJ](#))

## **Israel**

### **November 20: Women increasingly join the fight in Israel’s army**

“Her face covered in mud, 18-year-old Smadar crawls beneath thorny brush, her automatic rifle around her neck. She smiles despite the intensity of the training, and her commander, also a woman, shouts encouragement. ‘I don’t regret choosing this unit,’ said Smadar, who was not allowed to provide her last name under Israeli army rules. ‘I wanted to do my military service in the most combative unit possible.’ Smadar is part of a discreet but profound change taking place within the Israeli military, with a growing number of women taking part in combat units.” ([Times of Israel](#))

## **Kuwait**

### **November 16: Kuwaiti women express optimism ahead of elections**

“With ten days left for the parliamentary elections in Kuwait, women are fiercely clinging to the thin hope that women candidates will overcome social challenges and win seats. ‘I predict that up to three women will be elected on Saturday, November 26,’ Iqbal Al Ahmad, the former editor-in-chief of Kuwait News Agency (Kuna), said. ‘Some of the candidates are really outstanding and have high levels of education, culture and sense of criticism. They have interesting visions. I just hope that women are not criticized simply because they are women,’ she said.” ([Gulf News](#))

### **November 20: Who are the women running in Kuwait's election?**

“Kuwait’s interior ministry said that there are 14 women out of 287 candidates running in the parliamentary elections scheduled on Saturday, November 26. The number of women is the second lowest figure since they were allowed to vote as well as run in parliamentary elections. While women had the right to vote when polling was first introduced in Kuwait in 1985, this right was later scrapped. But in 2005, Kuwaiti women were re-granted the right to vote.” ([Al Arabiya](#))

### **Libya**

#### **November 14: Libya calls for greater female role in government**

“Female MPs from the House of Representatives are demanding a 30 per cent increase in women’s participation in all parliamentary delegations. The United Nations Security Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) held a three-day meeting in Tunisia last week where some 31 women elected to the parliament in 2014 attended. Political notes were compared with female legislators from Algeria, Chad, Egypt, Niger, Sudan and Tunisia in gaining experience for their own government in Libya.” ([Middle East Monitor](#))

### **Morocco**

#### **November 16: Cracking the glass ceiling in Arab politics**

“The polls have just closed. In a room decorated with posters and leftist slogans, Nabila Mounib is surrounded by activists who take selfies with her and wish her luck. She's keenly aware of the stakes. Mounib, a 56-year-old endocrinology professor, is Morocco's most high-profile female politician, and this election marks her debut on the national stage as a party leader. After two weeks of campaigning across the country in a cramped mini-bus, she will find out the next day if she has succeeded in getting her party into parliament and winning a seat herself.” ([Associated Press](#))

### **Palestinian Territories**

#### **November 11: How Gaza's female filmmakers rebel against reality**

“For the second year in a row, the Women's Affairs Center in the Gaza Strip organized on Nov. 3 a women’s film festival headlined ‘Women for Change’ in which several drama films produced by the center and tackling bold topics were shown. Hanin Kullab, 32, produced a short film called ‘Lailat Farah’ (‘A Joyful Night’), which was shown at the festival held inside Rashad al-Shawwa hall in Gaza City. The film talks about early marriage for men and women, which is a rampant phenomenon in the Gaza Strip.” ([Al Monitor](#))

### **Saudi Arabia**

#### **November 16: Saudis welcome call to open more gyms for women**

“Saudis have welcomed remarks by Princess Reema Bint Bandar Bin Sultan, the undersecretary for women’s section at the General Authority for Sports, about the importance of encouraging women to attend public athletic facilities and promote a culture of health and wellness in a country that is struggling with dangerous levels of obesity and diabetes. ‘Obesity and diabetes are killing us. If women do not have venues to exercise, that’s a national shame,’ she said in remarks carried by US magazine *Fast Company*.” ([Zawya](#))

#### **November 19: Saudi women's rights advocate no stranger to adversity**

“Earlier this month, Qatar University administrators forced Dr. Hatoon Al Fassi, a leading Saudi scholar instrumental in helping women gain the vote in Saudi Arabia, to postpone a Debate Club discussion on women in Islam at the university where she teaches. University students launched an online petition demanding her sacking, alleging that her views on women’s rights in Islam are ‘contrary to the Qatari culture and values’ and she sought to ‘spread poison in students’ brains.’” ([Gulf News](#))

## Turkey

### **November 12: Turkish military allows headscarves for women**

“The ban on headscarves for female civilian personnel serving in the Turkish military has been lifted, according to a ruling released in the official gazette. The ruling issued on Friday, November 11 says that women working under the Turkish Armed Forces, Gendarmerie General Command and Coast Guard Command will now abide by the dress code of the other state institutions, which enables them to wear headscarves, Xinhua news agency reported.” ([Gulf News](#))

### **November 22: Controversial bill on sexual assault withdrawn**

Turkey's government has withdrawn a controversial bill that could have overturned men's convictions for child sex assault, following an angry public backlash. The controversial proposal sought to address whether all cases of marriage with people under the legal age of 18 should classify as "sexual assault." Critics feared the proposal could have legitimized the practice of men marrying girls under the age of 18, which is the age of consent in Turkey. ([AlJazeera](#))

## UAE

### **November 10: Women's sport given a boost in Sharjah**

“A decree setting up the Sharjah Foundation for Women Sports was issued Thursday, November 10 by His Highness Dr. Shaikh Sultan Bin Mohammad Al Qasimi, Supreme Council Member and Ruler of Sharjah. The foundation will focus on developing women's sports in the UAE in general, and in the emirate of Sharjah in particular. It will highlight the role of Emirati sportswomen in various regional and international arenas, as well as encouraging them to engage in different sports.” ([Gulf News](#))

### **November 14: Hurrah, The UAE Government Just Extended Its Paid Maternity Leave**

“In a huge win for women around the Emirates, the government has just made good on its promise to review the country's maternity laws. His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE, has reportedly issued a new law giving federal government employees three months of paid maternity leave. According to Article 53 of the amended Law 11, reports Khaleej Times, women will also be granted two hours a day to breastfeed their newborns until they're four months old.” ([Emirates Woman](#))

### **November 21: Women make up 20 per cent of UAE's nuclear workforce**


“Emirati women make up 20 per cent of the workforce in the country's nuclear energy industry, an official said. Speaking at the 24th Women in Nuclear Annual Global Conference in the capital, Hasna Yousuf Al Blooshi, director for nuclear performance at Nawah, a subsidiary of the Emirates Nuclear Energy Corporation, said the percentage was the highest of any nuclear industry in the world. ‘This strong presence of women in the nuclear sector reflects the high status [women] have achieved,’ said Ms Al Blooshi.” ([The National](#))

### **November 22: Case dropped against Dubai 'rape victim'**

“A British woman, who was charged with having extra-marital sex in Dubai after reporting she was raped, has had all charges against her dropped. The woman was arrested and had her passport confiscated after she claimed she was raped by two British men. The Dubai Public Prosecutor's office said it had closed the case after ‘careful examination of all evidence.’” ([BBC](#))

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