# MENA Women News Brief

## October 20, 2015 - November 3, 2015

### Bahrain

**October 21: Year in Prison for Protester Who Tore Up Photo of Bahrain's King**

"An appeals court in Bahrain upheld the conviction of a prominent opposition activist on Wednesday, October 21, sentencing her to one year in prison for insulting the nation's king by tearing up a photograph of him last year in front of a judge while on trial for the very same act. The activist, Zainab al-Khawaja, ripped up a picture of King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa during a court hearing related to charges that she insulted the monarch in exactly the same way in 2012." (New York Times)

### Egypt

**October 20: Two women qualified for runoffs in Egypt parliament elections**

"Two female candidates, among the 112 contested in Egypt's 2015 parliamentary elections, have qualified for runoffs so far. Nermin Badrawi, a parliament candidate who ran for office in the Al Hawamdya and Abu El-Nomros constituency in Giza governorate obtained 8,737 votes." (The Cairo Post)

**October 22: Thirty Egyptian Women Become Members of Parliament After First Phase of Elections**

"Egyptian women won 30 seats in the House of Representatives according to preliminary results of the first phase of parliamentary elections, which saw a turnout of 26.56 percent in 14 provinces including the capital's twin governorate of Giza. While it was good news that the winning women were all participating on the leading coalition list Fi Hob Misr (For the love of Egypt), the down side was that not a single one of the woman candidates competing over an individual seat made it in the race." (Egyptian Streets)

**October 30: Egyptian TV show suspended after anchor's sexual harassment comments, advertisers' boycott**

"Egyptian television programme Sabaya Al-Kheir was suspended on Friday, October 30 after advertisers began to pull their adverts in response to the female presenter's criticisms of a woman who was sexually harassed. Egyptian anchor Reham Saeed's broadcasting of private photos of the victim, and her conclusion that women should dress more appropriately to avoid sexual assault, provoked an outcry on social media." (Ahram Online)

### Iran

**October 20: Exiled activist reveals how her fight for equality is attracting male support**

"Masih Alinejad's new initiative, 'It's Men's Turn,' urges men to join in the campaign against oppressive laws in Iran. She had the idea after it emerged last month that the captain of Iran's indoor women's football team, Niloufar Ardalan, had been unable to attend a match in Malaysia as her husband had not permitted her to leave the country. Since Iranian husbands can waive the provisions of the marriage contract, Ms. Alinejad invited men to take photos of themselves holding statements affirming their commitment to gender equality and handing their wives' rights back to them." (The Independent)

### Iraq

**October 21: ISIS executes six women for allowing sons to join Iraqi army**

"Extremists of the Islamic State (ISIS) have executed six Iraqi women in Anbar province, local sources reported. Eyewitnesses confirmed that the victims have been executed on charges of having sons fighting in the ranks of the Iraqi army – which is in conflict with ISIS." (ARA News)

**October 21: Eight out of ten women sexually harassed in Iraq**

"A recent survey published by the Iraqi Women's Journalists Forum (IWJF) found that eight in ten women in Iraq have suffered some form of sexual harassment. The report says harassment is increasing due to failure of laws to recognize phenomenon and punish perpetrators." (Al Jazeera)

## Israel

**October 27: Women Rule the Top of Israeli Finance, but Not the Job Market**

"High-profile appointments of women in recent years have created the impression that the gender gap is rapidly closing. This is particularly the case in the financial sector. Three of Israel's five largest banks are run by women and these well-paying, powerful jobs are a key step in reducing wage inequality between men and women in Israel. But last week the Central Bureau of Statistics published numbers that put a damper on the excitement over the narrowing of gaps. The most basic figure is the very large gap between women's and men's wages—women earn one-third less than men." (Haaretz)

**November 1: President of Israel Meets Women Leaders in Jerusalem**

"The President of Israel Reuven Rivlin and his wife, Mrs. Rivlin, met with the participants of the 29th International Conference for Women Leaders. At the conference, President Rivlin said, 'I'm a feminist. I am a feminist because I believe in social, political, and economic gender equality. I believe in equality of rights and opportunities.'" (Mashav)

## Morocco

**October 27: Growing Controversy over Women's Inheritance Rights**

"In Morocco, the issue of gender equality nonetheless often makes the headlines and sometimes fuels political debates. And this is exactly what's currently taking place in the North African country. This time, the debate is about the equality between men and women in matters of inheritance rights." (The North Africa Post)

## Oman

**October 26: One woman elected in Oman's Shura council elections**

"Slightly more than half of Oman's voters turned out to take part in Shura council elections, significantly less than the previous polls in 2011. Only one woman was elected to the council in the nationwide vote on Sunday, October 25, that all Omanis over the age of 21 were allowed to participate in." (The National)

## Palestinian Territories

**October 23: Women of the Intifadas**

"Three generations of Palestinian women reflect on how female fighters have always been a part of the resistance." (Al Jazeera)

**November 1: Why Gaza's brides are getting married via Skype**

"In light of the ongoing closure of the Rafah crossing, Palestinian couples find themselves forced to get married via Skype in proxy weddings. Because of the deteriorating security situation in north Sinai, Egyptian authorities open the crossing only sporadically, and then mostly for urgent humanitarian cases." (Al Monitor)

**November 3: Palestinian women's rights overlooked in favor of national liberation**

"In Palestine, women's rights are negatively affected by the interlocking forces of political and social oppression. These forces are inseparable, and they work together to reinforce and protract one another and create new forms of oppression. Instead of finding a balance between national and social liberation, however, 'people give more attention to the liberation of the land at the expense of the liberation of women,' Rawda Basir, Director of the Nablus branch of the Women's Studies Centre (WSC), told MEE." (Middle East Eye)

## Saudi Arabia

**October 31: Finally, Saudi women have their own ID cards**

"On Tuesday, October 13, members of the Saudi Shura Council voted 96-28 to amend the Civil Status Law as proposed by three female Shura members and one male Shura member. The proposal calls for enhancing women's citizenship and eliminating any form of discrimination against women as stipulated in the Kingdom's laws which are based on the Shariah, especially the right of women to have their own ID cards." (Saudi Gazette)

**November 2: How phone apps are helping women travel in Saudi Arabia**

"Women usually face transport difficulties Saudi Arabia because their family providers are usually busy and they spend most of their time outside home. Thus, the availability of modern and safe solutions, such as an application that could be downloaded on different smart phones, such as Uber, is of an utmost importance. Uber pointed out to the fact that 80 percent of the application users in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia are women." (Al Arabiya)

**November 2: In Saudi Arabia, Where Women's Suffrage Is a New Idea (Op-ed by Carol Giacomo)**

"In December, women in Saudi Arabia will run for public office and vote for the first time. In theory, that should count as an advance for female empowerment in this ultraconservative country, but the reality is more ambiguous." (New York Times)

## Syria

**October 20: Victory is all for Kurdish women fighters**

"In the Syrian village of Skero, two groups of Kurdish fighters face off with ISIL, which occupies the villages and compounds beyond the deep trench that demarcates the Kurdish frontline. One is a People's Protection Units (YPG) platoon, men of the armed wing of the PYD. The other is a platoon of fighters from the Women's Protection Units (YPJ), the YPG's female counterpart. Inspired by the ideology of Turkey's Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), the female fighters of Rojava have broken with the region's conservative social norms to fight on equal terms alongside the men." (The National)

**October 30: ISIS Shuts Down Women's Clinics in Raqqa to Prevent Male Gynecologists Treating Female Patients**

"ISIS is believed to have ordered the closure of all women's clinics supervised by male doctors in its Syrian heartlands in its latest assault on the rights of women. According to activists, ISIS has drastically

restricted the work of male gynecologists in accordance with its leaders' belief that men and women should be kept apart at all costs." (The Independent)

**November 2: Syrian women work their magic at local culinary school**
"The İzmit Municipality will soon launch its 'Damascus Cuisine Project' which aims to teach Syrian refugees how to make and sell traditional Middle Eastern cuisine. The project will employ Syrian women as instructors and provide them with an income to help support their family. In İzmit, where many Syrian refugees have taken shelter, the municipality has already launched various projects to help Syrian refugees make a livelihood and ease their assimilation into Turkish society." (Daily Sabah)

## Turkey

**October 29: The most important woman in Turkey**
"As co-chair of the party which unexpectedly robbed the Justice and Development Party (AKP) of its ruling majority in June, Figen Yuksekdağ is one of the most important politicians in Turkey today. She is also the embodiment of the leftist Peoples' Democratic Party's (HDP) commitment to gender equality, in a country that ranks 120 of 136 on the Global Gender Gap Index." (Politico)

**October 30: Erdoğan always favored women's rights (Op-ed by Hilal Kaplan)**
"President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's struggle for women's rights is insistently ignored. The most important project in this field is the W20 Summit, which was initiated under the aegis of Turkey as this year's G20 president. The importance that Erdoğan places on women's rights is head and shoulders above the one attached by not only conservative segments, but also Turkey's mainstream perspective." (Daily Sabah)

**November 2: Individual seats for women installed in parks**
"A district in Istanbul has installed 600 individual park seats designed to be used by women who feel uncomfortable sharing a bench with strangers. Mayor Handan Toprak says she thought of the idea after noticing a woman in conservative dress, visibly tired, who didn't want to sit on a bench alongside an unfamiliar man." (BBC)

**November 2: Turkish equality campaigners condemn sharp fall in female MPs**
"The number of women in Turkey's parliament has declined precipitously, according to unofficial tallies in the aftermath of the Justice and Development party's (AKP) sweeping victory in snap elections. Unofficial results published in Turkish media showed that the number of female deputies had dropped from 95 after the June parliamentary elections to 81." (The Guardian)

## United Arab Emirates

**October 26: UAE imprisoning rape victims under extramarital sex laws – investigation**
"Hundreds of women, some of them pregnant or domestic servants who are victims of rape, are being imprisoned in the United Arab Emirates every year under laws that outlaw consensual sex outside marriage, according to a BBC Arabic investigation." (The Guardian)

## Yemen

**October 27: Yemeni women call for their inclusion in peace efforts**
"When the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Yemen, Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, briefed the UN Security Council on Friday, October 23, he outlined the specific impact the civil conflict is having

on women and mentioned UN Women's efforts in the region. He also presented a letter prepared by Yemeni women, in which they call for an end to the violence and the inclusion of women voices in all peace efforts." (UN Women)

**November 2: As Yemen conflict grows, women's vulnerability grows**

"Conditions for Yemeni women and girls are deteriorating as the conflict in Yemen drags on. The stress and chaos of the crisis, coupled with entrenched gender inequality, have left women and girls extremely vulnerable to violence, abuse and exploitation, humanitarian experts say." (UN Population Fund)

## General

**October 29: Female leadership in the GCC needs our support (Op-ed by Najat Benchiba-Savenius)**

"Despite an encouraging uptrend in education, research has shown that there is a significant disconnect in terms of educational success and lack of reaching senior management roles for women in the GCC. Organisations also need to explore how adopting flexible office hour approaches can generate greater revenue, bolster local economies and foster the retention and development of female human capital, while also retaining important national identities and values." (The National)

**October 30: Women are vital to building peace and their role can no longer be ignored (Op-ed by Shelby Quast)**

"Although a global issue, violence against human rights defenders and civil society organisations continues to pose great danger in Libya and the rest of the Middle East and north Africa. However, a recent report by UN Women recommends that protecting women's rights and leadership should be at the forefront of ensuring peace and security." (The Guardian)

**By Nishaat Shaik**

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