

MENA Women News Brief

October 7, 2015-October 20, 2015

Egypt

October 7: Egypt's Cairo University Niqab Ban Backlash: Lawsuit Planned By Nearly 80 Women For Controversial Policy Forbidding Face Covering

“Seventy-seven Egyptian women are prepared to file a lawsuit against the president of Cairo University over a recent decision to ban faculty members from covering their faces for religious purposes. The university's controversial announcement has sparked a debate over the last week, as rights activists argued women should have the right to choose their dress in the Muslim-majority country.”

([International Business Times](#))

October 11: Nawal El Saadawi: ‘Do you feel you are liberated? I feel I am not’

“Nawal El Saadawi’s story has an epic quality, as if it were one of her own novels or one of those old and overblown Egyptian films. The formidable Nawal El Saadawi, medical doctor, author, campaigner against female genital mutilation and for 45 years the voice of Egyptian feminism, is as combative as ever at age 83.” ([The Guardian](#))

October 12: Banks launch program to empower Egyptian businesswomen

“The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development teamed up with the National Bank of Egypt (NBE), the country's largest commercial bank, to set up a Women in Business program, with the aim of strengthening the role of female entrepreneurs in the Egyptian economy. Women account for just 11 percent of entrepreneurs in Egypt, according to a recent report by the DC based think-tank Global Entrepreneurship Development Institute.” ([International Business Times](#))

October 15: Why some in Egypt are banning campaign photos of female candidates

“The Nour Party sparked controversy among voters in 2012 during the run-up to parliamentary elections, when it refused to put photos of female candidates on its campaign banners. Most of the female candidates were members of the party, and therefore they did not object. The same scenario is playing out in the elections scheduled for Oct. 18-19, but this time the party’s decision to ban the photos of female candidates has raised the ire of Copts, who are running on Nour's list, as well as others.” ([Al-Monitor](#))

Iran

October 9: Imprisoned cartoonist subjected to forced ‘virginity test’

“A recent revelation by satirical cartoonist Atena Farghadani that she was forced to undergo a ‘virginity and pregnancy test,’ prior to her trial for a charge of ‘illegitimate sexual relations’ for shaking hands with her lawyer, has added another stain on Iran’s record of violence against women.” ([Amnesty International](#))

October 13: Juvenile Offender Fatemeh Salbehi Hanged in Iran

“Iranian authorities have executed the juvenile offender Fatemeh Salbehi, according to Iran Human Rights' sources. Fatemeh was convicted of murdering her husband in 2008, when she was 17 years old. She was 23 year old when she was hanged in the Adelabad prison of Shiraz (Southern Iran) early this morning.” ([Iran Human Rights](#))

October 17: Spread of violent extremism threatens women's rights

“Speaking at UN Security Council session on women, peace and security, Iran Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations Gholamhossein Dehghani stressed how the spread of violent extremism is threatening the lives of women in the region. He added that the perilous ideology of violent extremism will not be limited to the Middle East and will also threaten other countries across the world.” ([Mehr News](#))

Iraq

October 7: Yazidi Woman Testifies an American ISIS Fighter Held Her as a Sex Slave

“In emotional testimony to a U.N. panel on ISIS’s treatment of women hosted by the UN Women for Peace Association, a 20-year-old Yazidi woman who went by the pseudonym Bazi described being bought and sold by ISIS fighters after they attacked her small village.” ([TIME](#))

October 8: Women's rights activist calls on Iraqi lawmakers to legalize women's shelters

“Yanar Mohammed, an Iraqi activist who founded an underground network of safehouses for women trying to escape violence, announced that she plans to testify before the council about how Iraq’s ban on shelters of this type puts women and girls in danger.” ([Al Jazeera](#))

October 9: ISIS soldiers told to rape women 'to make them Muslim'

“In its online English magazine, Dabiq, ISIS lays out its justification for its brutality against the Yazidis on religious grounds: ‘Enslaving the families of the kuffar [unbelievers] and taking their women as concubines is a firmly established aspect of the Shariah [Islamic law] that if anyone were to deny or mock, he would be denying or mocking the verses of the Qur'an and the narrations of the Prophet.’” ([CNN](#))

Israel

October 16: Inside the Outlawed Group of Muslim Women Patrolling the Temple Mount

“The authorities have outlawed the Mourabitat, a group of women considered a key player in the violent clashes on the Temple Mount, but its members intend to keep up what they define as holy work. The Mourabitat is made up of some 1,000 women, most of them Israeli citizens from the Galilee, along with some residents of East Jerusalem.” ([Haaretz](#))

October 18: Bill: Ban Parties Who Don't Include Women from the Knesset

“Haredi parties may be left scrambling to change their party policies in the near future, as the Ministerial Committee for Legislation meets Sunday, October 25 to discuss a bill barring parties that ban women from their lists of candidates. The bill, proposed by MK Ksenia Svetlova (Zionist Camp), would ban any party that refuses to allow women to run for office. While not explicitly named, the two parties most bound to be affected are the haredi Shas and United Torah Judaism (UTJ) parties.” ([Arutz Sheva](#))

Lebanon

October 17: Lebanese Women march demands end to trash crisis

“Lebanese women marched towards the residence of Prime Minister Tammam Salam on Saturday, October 17, to demand a swift and sustainable solution for the trash crisis. The protest was organized by a group called ‘Women Uprising,’ who protested demanding a better future for their children.” ([The Daily Star](#))

Libya

October 14: What if Libya becomes stable with women in leading role?

“Libyan women activists pondered last week in Tunisia over their contribution to peace and security in war-torn Libya after political haggles between men has divided the country. The women sent a strong message to the Dialogue process protagonists urging them to recognize women as key partners in the transitional process and not to exclude them or undermine their role as agents of change and as peacemakers.” ([The North Africa Post](#))

Morocco

October 16: UN Report Underlines Discrimination Against Moroccan Women

“The United Nations’ Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) published its report on the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in Morocco. The committee stated there is still room for improvement, particularly on issues regarding women’s rights. The committee’s experts highlighted how ‘the progress for the elimination of discrimination against women is very slow’ and expressed their worries regarding women’s limited access to justice.” ([Morocco World News](#))

Oman

October 16: Omani women carve a niche for themselves in film world

“Omani women have carved out a successful career in the film industry, but there is still great potential that has remained untapped, said an accomplished member of the Oman Film Society. People’s attitude towards cinema has changed and Omanis, especially women, are flourishing in the movie industry, said Fatma Al Salmi, a member of the society’s Board of Directors and vice president for Technical Affairs.” ([Times of Oman](#))

Palestinian Territories

October 7: Gaza's women-only cafe offers more than just coffee

“Noon — a letter in the Arabic alphabet that is added at the end of verbs used for females in the plural — is an all-female cafe that opened Sept. 17 in Nasser neighborhood, west of Gaza City, far from the cafes and restaurants on Omar Mukhtar Street and al-Bahr Street. The cafe manager, Nidaa Mhanna, 35, decided to open the cafe to enhance women’s privacy, as they do not feel completely comfortable in restaurants and cafes with a mixed clientele.” ([Al-Monitor](#))

October 11: Palestinian women take to the front lines of Israeli conflict

“Young Palestinian women have increasingly joined males to hurl rocks at Israeli soldiers and chant slogans as unrest has spread in recent days in the West Bank. ‘We make up half of society. We also have the right to defend our country,’ said a woman student during a face-off with the army at a checkpoint outside the city of Ramallah.” ([Al Bawaba](#))

Saudi Arabia

October 8: Saudi woman driver sparks new debate

“A Saudi woman said she was forced to drive her car in Dammam after she fell out with her driver and he walked away. The video clip of the veiled woman behind the steering wheel, explaining the reasons why she was driving, went viral on social media, and sparked the usual arguments between those who call for allowing women to be able to drive and those who oppose that right.” ([Gulf News](#))

October 11: In remote Saudi village, women are giving birth in cars

“Harsh road conditions and the long distance to the nearest hospital leave women living in Madraka, a village in Saudi Arabia's Jamoom governorate, with no option but to deliver their babies in cars when labor pains are at their peak. The closest hospital to the town is about 150 kilometers away and the trip there is not a pleasant one for women in labor.” ([Al-Arabiya](#))

October 14: Saudi Arabia's first ever female candidates in 'unfair competition' with male counterparts

“Women are permitted to run in the polls for the first time in Saudi Arabia in the upcoming December 12 local elections, but they are not in any way in a 'fair competition' with their male counterparts. Saudi women candidates have been banned from addressing male voters directly and are required by the Supreme Electoral Committee to appoint 'agents' on their behalf.” ([Daily Sabah](#))

October 15: Women in Saudi Arabia offered free rides for breast cancer checkups

“As part of efforts to raise breast cancer awareness in society, Easy Taxi has partnered with the Zahra Breast Cancer Association to give away all its female customers free rides to do breast cancer check-ups in different hospitals in Jeddah and Riyadh.” ([Al-Arabiya](#))

October 20: Ministry's insistence on dress code for female workers ignites heated debate

“The Ministry of Labor's decision to impose fines on female workers violating the dress code at their workplaces has sparked a heated debate. According to a local newspaper, the Ministry of Labor plans to impose a fine of SR1,000 on women not following the Islamic dress code within their workplaces.” ([Saudi Gazette](#))

Turkey

October 15: Women must be included in workforce to reach high growth rate says President Erdoğan

“Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan emphasized on Friday, October 16 the importance of including women in the workforce, especially for G20 countries, to reach their growth aspirations in the opening of the W20 (Women-20) Summit, held in Istanbul. President Erdoğan said that the female workforce in Turkey has increased to 32.3 percent and the percentage of female entrepreneurs has reached 8 percent.” ([Daily Sabah](#))

United Arab Emirates

October 7: Women must play bigger part in environmental science: Abu Dhabi summit

“Razan Al Mubarak, secretary general at the Environment Agency Abu Dhabi, said that it was important to keep open the possibility for women to occupy all roles throughout the environmental movement. ‘Across gender, across societal and economic dimensions, the environmental movement needs to be adopted by all of us, because it influences all of us,’ Ms. Al Mubarak said. She said the government needed to be able to support women in science and contribute to the empowerment of women.” ([The National](#))

October 13: UAE women lead space race

“As a child, Fatima Al Hameli had books and films on everything to do with astronomy and space travel, dreaming one day of being the first Emirati woman at NASA. Ms. Al Hameli is one of a growing number of Emirati women moving to the field – 65 of the 100 undergraduate students are women.

Emirati women are doing well, especially compared with similar courses in the West, where women make up only about 10 per cent of students.” ([The National](#))

October 15: Women grab 66 percent of UAE government jobs

“UAE is setting a precedent in gender balance and women’s empowerment at the workplace as women now account for more than 66 percent of jobs in the public sector workforce and occupy key decision-making positions.” ([Gulf News](#))

Yemen

October 18: Women of Taiz take up arms against Yemen’s rebels

“Nosaiba Abdullah’s seven-year-old-son Ahmed was killed when Houthi rebels shelled Taiz city’s Al Roudha district. Now, Kalashnikov in hand, she is ready to take on the rebels as a sniper for the popular resistance. Nosaiba is among the first batch of 26 women recruits trained by the pro-government forces to join battle against the rebels. Young and intrepid, many of them have lost loved ones in the fight for control of the city, which has been surrounded by the rebels.” ([The National](#))

General

October 9: Women and girls crucial in fight against Islamic State ideology, experts say

“Though extremist groups have recruited women throughout history, the way in which Islamic State systematically targets them is unprecedented. ‘Women are not a sideshow, the Islamic State has had a very explicit and concerted strategy to recruit women and they've done incredibly well... they have a marketing department, and it's very high tech,’ said Sasha Havlicek, director of the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, a London-based thinktank.” ([Reuters](#))


October 15: Gender-based violence is a problem among refugees, and not much is being done about it

“The UNHCR, UN Population Fund, UN Children's Fund, the International Rescue Committee and the International Medical Corps evaluated the humanitarian community in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria on their response to gender-based violence during the Syrian conflict. Major issues facing refugee women and girls include forced marriages, rape and lack of sexual health care.” ([Al Bawaba](#))

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