

# MENA Women's News Brief

December 29, 2014 – January 12, 2015

January 2: (Op-Ed) How Will Women in the Middle East Fare in 2015? By Haleh Esfandiari

"As we start the new year my optimism and faith women are stronger than my pessimism. Awareness of their rights is rising among Middle Eastern women of all classes especially among the young. Given this awareness and the persistent denial of their rights, I believe that Middle Eastern women will continue to fight religious extremists and autocrats and that, in the end, they will prevail." [Wall Street Journal Think Tank Blog](#)

## **Bahrain**

December 29: UN experts urge Bahrain to drop charges against women activists

"A group of United Nations human rights experts urging the government of Bahrain to drop charges against three women human rights activists exercising their rights to free expression and free association. 'All three activists have been detained or sentenced merely for their criticism of government authorities,' the independent experts said in a statement released December 29, 2014. 'Such criticism is not only fully legitimate according to Bahrain's obligations under human rights law; it is also essential to the free and public debate necessary for a healthy civil society.' The three activists include two sisters Ms. Maryam Al-Khawaja and Ms. Zainab Al-Khawaja, and Ms. Ghada Jamsheer. The experts commenting on the matter include Mads Andenas, UN Rapporteur of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; David Kaye, Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; Mich Forst, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; and Maina Kiai, Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association." [\(UN News Centre\)](#)

## **Egypt**

December 29: 1,191 reported sexual harassment cases in 100 days: Report

"At least 1,191 cases of sexual assault and harassment took place across Egypt during the second '100 days of al-Sisi's rule,' covering a time frame between 17 September to 25 December. The figures came as part of a year-end report prepared by the Appropriate Communication Techniques (ACT) independent organization and the 'I Saw Harassment' civil pressure group. The report said it only traced reported cases and those that were made public in the media. Alexandria on top of the list with the highest number of incidents (425), representing over 35 percent of the total, in comparison to Cairo (364) and Giza (58)." [Daily News Egypt](#)

## **Iran**

December 29: IRIB chief names woman as deputy for radio affairs

"The head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) has picked a woman as his deputy for radio affairs. Mohammad Sarafraz on Saturday, Dec 27 appointed Nasrin Abravani as his deputy to regulate radio affairs of Iran's broadcasting service. Abravani is the first woman ever appointed to the post. She replaces Mohammad Hossein Sufi who assumed the post in [2008](#)." [Iran](#)

January 2: Rise in young women drug addicts triggers alarm in Iran

"Shisheh — a high-purity crystalline methamphetamine — has become the second most popular drug after opium among young people seeking an escape fr

addiction is increasingly spreading across all social classes and affecting a rising number of women — a trend triggering alarm in the government. The problem was first revealed in a 2011 study on the prevalence of addiction, says Zahra Baranianian, an adviser to the state Drug Control Headquarters for women and family affairs. ‘It was when we realised that the number of married female addicts was going up, the age of addiction going down while the educational level [of addicts] was high. [Financial Times](#)

### January 3: Iran's Women's Affairs Chief Feels Powerless To Act

“Shahindokht Molaverdi, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani's Deputy of Women's and Family Affairs, was quoted as saying: ‘As a member of the cabinet, I have no knowledge of what general policies have been proposed to the Expediency Council by the Planning Organization.’ Molaverdi slammed the Rouhani administration for creating obstacles for the slightest activities of the Women's Affairs office. She added that most ministries do not allow Women's Affairs advisers to take part in administrative meetings.” [Payvand](#)

### Iraq

#### December 31: Shi'ite militias expand influence, redraw map in central Iraq

“Behind black gates and high walls, Iraqi national security agents took 200 women and children. Boys and girls play in the yard and then dart inside trailers, located in a former U.S. military camp and one time headquarters for Saddam Hussein's official Babel province's capital Hilla. The women and children are unwilling guests, rounded up as they fled their male relatives in October from Jurf al-Sakhr, a bastion of Islamic State, during a Shia militia and military operation to clear the farming community. Once they were arrested, security forces separated out the men, accusing them of being Islamic State fighters. They have not been heard from. Security forces say the women and children are being investigated, but have not been brought to court. [Reuters](#)

### Lebanon

#### December 31: Lebanese women not free despite domestic violence law

“The Lebanese parliament passed a new law on domestic violence April 1. Two days after the vote on the law, Human Rights Watch declared the legislation ‘good, but incomplete.’ Maya Ammar, Kafa [Enough] Violence Against Women's media officer, shares opinion, telling Al-Monitor, ‘This is a big step for women's rights, but it's not enough.’ According to Ammar, the only real breakthrough is that the law simplifies some legal mechanisms. Among the undesirable changes made to the original text is the provision involving marital rape, which is now ‘marital rights by force’ and is condemned only if it involves physical evidence of violence. [Al\(Monitor\)](#)

### January 2: (Op-Ed) Female journalists fight gender discrimination

“Journalism in Lebanon has witnessed a number of changes. Chief among these is the extent of women's fingerprints on the product of the profession. Reports examining this issue no longer focus on the emergence of women journalists, as this occurred a hundred years ago. What is currently being highlighted, however, is women's widespread presence in the profession and its institutions, which only began almost two decades ago. Let's explore this in the context of globalization. [Al\(Hayat via Al-Monitor\)](#)

## Oman

### January 7: Shelter from the storm of abuse for women in Oman

"A shelter for women who suffer from physical abuse has been opened by the Ministry of Social Development amid reports that assaults are on the rise. A reliable source at the Ministry confirmed that the hostel has been opened but will shelter only national females and expatriate women married to Omani nationals. It comes after repeated calls for help from women suffering abuse, said Shukoor Al Ghamri, former president of Omani Women Association, who vowed that solving the issue of violence against women in Oman was one of the priorities of the association. 'The association had proposed the idea unofficially to establish a temporary hostel for a



