

MENA Women's News Brief

February 4: The Woman Who Sold Her Baby For \$435 To Buy Firewood

"Last week in the northern Afghan province of Bamian an impoverished mother chose the only option she felt was left to her, after her drug-addicted husband abandoned her. She had to care by herself for five young children and an elderly father. So she sold 1-month-old infant for money—the equivalent of about \$435 in American currency—to buy kindling to keep her four other children from freezing in the harsh winter weather." (NPR)

Egypt

January 29: Women Rally in Cairo to Demand Investigation Into Protester Deaths

"Female protesters gathered in downtown Cairo Thursday, January 29 demanding an investigation into the deaths of activist Shaimaa Sabbagh and others say were killed by Egyptian security forces around the anniversary of the 2011 uprising. Sabbagh was killed during a march on the eve of the January 25 anniversary and another 25 women were killed on Sunday, January 25 in demonstrations commemorating the onset of the popular revolt that toppled veteran autocrat Hosni Mubarak." (Reuters)

February 6: In Egypt, social pressure means FGM is still the norm

"Awataf Mohamed Ali's son lies fast asleep on her lap, but her 10-year-old daughter, Shahd, is very much awake. In fact, she looks horrified. Ali has explained that in just 18 months' time, if she can find a doctor willing to help, Shahd will probably be subjected to female genital mutilation. It is a similar story across much of the country: in 2009 UNICEF estimated that 91 percent of married Egyptian women aged between 15 and 49 had been mutilated—72 percent of them by doctors." (Guardian)

Iran

January 27: Iranian women managers rising 10 percent annually: vice president

"The number of women managers is increasing about 10 percent annually in Iran, Vice President for Women and Family Affairs Shahin Mollaverdi said on Sunday, January 25. She also said a bill to increase women managers is under consideration by the government, IRNA reported. Mollaverdi called on all three branches of government and NGOs to help empower female managers." (Iran Times)

January 28: Iran to let foreign women watch men's volleyball tournament

“Jordan has executed by hanging Sajida al-Rishawi, a jailed Iraqi woman militant, whose release had been demanded by ISIS a security source said on Wednesday, February 4. The execution occurred the day after the killing of the Jordanian pilot Moaz al-Kasasbeh captured by ISIS was announced on Tuesday, February 3. Al-Rishawi was sentenced to death for her role in a 2005 suicide bomb attack that killed 60 people.” [Al-Arabiya](#)

Lebanon

January 26: Arrest in Lebanon sheds light on life of Islamic State leader's ex-wife, Saja al-Dulaimi
“The investigation into Saja al-Dulaimi, the ex-wife of ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, has shed light on the murky ways in which Islamist militias move through the Middle East. It has also illustrated how the families of Syrian and Iraqi militants quietly settling in Lebanon, hiding in refugee camps and the occasional Christian village. And it has yielded an intriguing profile of a woman in the jihadist world.” [Washington Post](#)

Oman

February 7: Why are Omani women still on Shura Council sidelines?

“As the Majlis Al Shura readies for the eighth election expected this year, women are asking themselves what it would take to be elected on a male-dominated council. There is only one woman in the current 84-member Shura Council. No woman was elected in 2007 from among 21 registered candidates. The best year for women was 2003 when they got the voters' nod and many thought it would get better but it did not.” [Times of Oman](#)

Saudi Arabia

January 26: (Op-Ed) Women's Rights in Saudi Arabia After King Abdullah (Catherine Powell)

“The death of Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz raises important questions about the future of the kingdom, including issues that have ripple effects around the world such as regional relations, counterterrorism strategy, and international oil pricing. With the transition of power to King Salman, another question emerges: what does the threshold for Saudi women's rights? [Council on Foreign Relations Development Channel](#)

February 1: Saudi frees women's rights activist close to blogger

“A woman who co-founded the Saudi Liberal Network internet discussion group with blogging activist Raef Badawi has been freed after about three months in prison, her daughter said on Sunday, February 6. Suad al-Shammari had spent around 90 days in prison in the Red Sea city of Jeddah, her daughter Sarah al-Rimaly told AFP. [The Lebanon Daily Star](#)

Syria

February 4: 'I couldn't sit and do nothing': the women saving lives in Syria

“As barrel bombs rain down on the Syrian city of Idlib, Hasnaa Shawaf and her team spring into action. Armed only with basic tools and medical kits, they are first responders for the Syria Civil Defence, a volunteer organisation training the country's newest generation of search and rescue workers. “I desperately wanted to help,” says Shawaf. ‘I couldn't just sit and do nothing.’ Shawaf was working as a math teacher in her hometown of Maaret al-Numan when she heard about the Syria Civil Defence.” [The Guardian](#)

