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ESCWA

Women's Political Representation in the Arab Region

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Women's Political Representation in the Arab Region



United Nations
Beirut, 2017

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United Nations publication issued by ESCWA, United Nations House,
Riad El Solh Square, P.O. Box: 11-8575, Beirut, Lebanon.

Website: www.unescwa.org.

Acknowledgments

This publication was prepared by the staff of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) Centre for Women (ECW), namely Dr. Mehrinaz El Awady, Director, Amal Basha, Chief of Section, and David Krivanek, Associate Social Affairs Officer. The present publication is based on a background paper written by Dr. Rola el-Husseini, an international expert and Research Associate Professor at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, who has also provided a critical review of the study in its final drafts. Ayla Al Ghaziri and Fatima Mahmoud provided extensive research support.

The study benefited from the invaluable contribution and constructive criticism of participants in an expert group meeting, held at the United Nations House in Beirut in December 2016, to discuss its preliminary findings, and from rounds of internal reviews by ESCWA staff members. The final version also benefited from the substantive review and input of Nada Darwazeh, Chief of Section at ECW, and Karima El Kerri, Chief of the Population and Social Development Section at ESCWA.

Executive Summary

The objective of this study is to generate evidence-based policy recommendations for Arab States, in order to help them scale-up efforts to meet their commitments as relates to goal 5 of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), pertaining to gender equality, in particular target 5.5, which aims to ensure women's equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political and public life.

A thorough desktop review was conducted to develop the conceptual framework for the study and establish a knowledge base on the status of women's presence in decision-making and public life. This was supported by a survey completed by member States on the status of women's political representation, as well as national measures to enhance it. Interviews were carried out with women who sought to participate in public life, regardless of whether they were successful or not. Case studies were conducted in four countries in the region, in order to establish an in-depth understanding of the status of women's representation within their national political context.

This study examined women's representation in the legislative, executive, and judiciary branches, as well as in local councils, with the understanding that the analysis was incomplete in certain cases due to data limitation. Regional analysis was conducted to showcase new forms of women's representation, such as their participation in peace talks, national dialogues and constitutional committees, which challenge traditional roles and representations.

The political developments that began in December 2010 have provided new opportunities for strengthening and expanding women's rights and their representation in political and public life. States that have witnessed regime change (such as Egypt and Tunisia) have adopted new constitutional and legal frameworks that promote women's political representation, while the governments of States that did not witness such change (e.g. Jordan or Morocco) adopted pro-democratization measures in an attempt to pre-empt further upheavals. Although they have introduced more limited changes, member States of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) have also witnessed some positive advances, such as women being able to vote and run in Saudi elections for the first time in 2015. Consequently, the presence of women in the political sphere has generally increased in the region over the past years, as a result of the actions of governments, civil society actors, and international organizations.

Despite these advances, however, women remain largely underrepresented at all levels of governance in the Arab region. The average regional proportion of female members of parliament, 19 per cent, is well below the global average. Many governments still include only one or two female ministers, if any, and they are typically confined to portfolios associated with women's traditional roles in society (e.g. health or education). Those ministries also feature the highest proportion of female civil servants, and women's presence decreases notably at higher levels in the public

service hierarchy, Women account for only a fraction of the region's judges, and they are generally more present in lower courts than higher ones. Women also remain severely underrepresented at the local governance level, although decisions taken by local councils can have a tremendous impact on their lives.

These low numbers suggest that many barriers to women's political representation remain in place, despite the promises of greater gender equality brought forward by the so-called Arab uprisings. Such barriers are expressed along several dimensions, all intertwined. The sociocultural beliefs and norms of patriarchal societies place different expectations on women and men regarding their social contribution, which for women rarely includes political participation. This is compounded by strong institutional barriers to women's political participation, which include enduring legal discrimination against women and gender-blind processes that do not provide women with the tools they need to break into largely male-dominated political spheres.

Evidence from countries that have seen positive developments in terms of women's representation provides examples of good practices that should be emulated throughout the region. These examples highlight the importance of political will to address imbalances in women's representation, which is often accompanied by efforts to tackle other issues affecting women (for example by reforming personal status law). As these examples show, one of the most efficient tools for improving women's political representation is the adoption of quotas, for example for elections or for women's representation in the executive. Countries that have adopted such mechanisms have, on the whole, witnessed a normalization of the presence of women in the political sphere, as evidenced by the increasing number of female candidates in elections and of those managing to get elected outside of the quota system. Nevertheless, a narrow focus on augmenting headline numbers is not sufficient to sustainably improve women's political representation. Rather, the issue should be addressed in a holistic manner, through policies that also address sociocultural and institutional barriers.

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1. Women's Political Representation: A Snapshot of the Arab Region

A. Introduction

The governance structures of the Arab States have driven some observers to give credence to the idea that their citizens were too apathetic to instigate change. Yet this perception has been challenged since the political developments in Tunisia in December 2010 and their spread to countries like Egypt, Libya, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. The ensuing developments resulted in a host of different political settlements and stalemates throughout the Arab region. Upheavals led to regime change in countries such as Egypt, Libya, Tunisia and Yemen, while protests did not result in leadership change in Bahrain, Jordan, Morocco and Saudi Arabia, despite violent clashes between government forces and protesters in some cases.

Whether actual regime change transpired or not, regional uprisings and protests have provided new opportunities for strengthening and expanding women's rights, since women participated in the peaceful uprisings to demand, together with men, greater freedom, equality and social justice.¹ Nevertheless, patriarchal powers and other underlying forces that inhibit women's political participation² and their representation³ in political and public life remain strong; indeed they appear to have been left relatively unscathed even in the countries that witnessed regime change. This study aims to understand the status of women's political representation by examining their presence in traditional (parliament, cabinet, etc.) and

non-traditional (demonstrations, constitutional committees, peace negotiations, etc.) areas of governance, as detailed in chapter 1. Chapter 2 examines the barriers, whether enduring or new, to women's political representation. Chapter 3 provides case studies on four Arab States, highlighting the steps they have taken, or failed to take, to increase women's political representation. Finally, chapter 4 identifies a series of policy recommendations to address barriers to women's political representation, based on the findings of the study.

B. Purpose of the study

This study examines women's political representation within the framework of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, with a specific focus on target 5.5 of the SDGs, which aims to "ensure women's (...) equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political (...) and public life".⁴ This target was identified as one of six that are central to meeting goal 5 on gender equality and the empowerment of women. Several indicators were designed to measure the progress of target 5.5, including indicator 5.5.1 which suggests that the target could be attained by increasing the number of women in decision-making positions, both at the national and local levels.⁵ In addition, target 16.7 highlights the notion that decision-making at all levels should be responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative.⁶

The purpose of this study is to provide an overview of the progress in advancing women's representation in the Arab region, particularly following the political developments of 2010-2011, and of enduring barriers to such progress. It highlights that the marginal role played by women in political life in the Arab region must be understood in the context of specific political systems, each with their own opportunities and barriers. The study shows that in the Arab region, political systems range from those where women are on the path of participating openly and equally as full citizens, to systems where women have limited opportunities to participate equally, including in deliberations over their own interests. The study also details the role of various actors, including civil society and international organizations, in enhancing women's political representation.

It highlights the fact that their ability to do so, through various forms of support, is determined, and often constrained, by the legal and political environment in which they operate. Overall, the study argues that the uprisings have created a window of opportunity for women's increased participation in traditional and non-traditional areas, but their representation needs to be institutionalized in order to be sustained, and thus enable member States to meet target 5.5.

Most studies on women and politics in the region focus on their representation in legislatures, as legislative elections remain the most stable form of access to women's representation, since they are generally less dependent on the will of current political leaders. This type of political participation is also comparatively easier to assess, given that all Arab States provide gender-disaggregated data on the membership of their legislative bodies. Nevertheless, this focus on the representation of women in parliament

(and similar bodies) is problematic, in that it reflects only narrowly the extent of their representation in political life, and ignores their involvement in other political processes, whether formal or informal. Worse, it can prove counterproductive, as States may attempt to quell demands for greater participation of women in political life by introducing measures to increase headline figures in parliament, for example quotas, without taking further steps to ensure that women can meaningfully participate in public life at other levels of governance.

To provide a more comprehensive picture, this study expands the examination of women's representation in State power structures to the cabinet, the public service, and judicial bodies, as well as local councils across the Arab region, in addition to legislative bodies. The study also offers more detailed case studies on the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the political representation of women in four Arab countries, namely Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia. In doing so, the study highlights the need to adopt a holistic approach to understanding and promoting women's political representation. Representation in State structures beyond the legislative can pave the way for a greater involvement of women in politics, by providing them with the necessary experience and networks to successfully participate in democratic governance. Women in the public service, the judiciary and local councils provide a recruitment pool for future leaders at the national level. Most importantly, greater representation of women in these spheres contributes to the gradual acceptance of their contribution to governance. This reduces risks of their rights being taken away if political circumstances change, and fosters an environment more favourable to the participation of women in formal and informal political processes.

C. Research questions and methodology

This study seeks to examine the following research questions:

- What changes has women's representation witnessed since 2010 in different Arab States?
- What are the barriers to women's representation in the political realm?
- What elements have affected the advancement of women's political rights?
- How has the prevailing political system influenced women's representation in the four selected Arab States?
- What policy conclusions can be drawn at the regional and national levels?

An extensive review of the literature on women's political representation and leadership in the Arab region was conducted. This included a comprehensive desk review of the literature on women and political participation, to contextualize women's participation in the Arab region. The results of this desk study were corroborated and contextualized by the use of a survey sent by ESCWA to Arab national women's machineries, to solicit information about the representation of women in the various branches. The survey was completed by thirteen member States: Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Saudi Arabia, the State of Palestine, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia and Yemen.⁷ The results of the survey were complemented by phone interviews with officials, key experts, and civil society leaders from the countries examined.

The study underwent an internal and an external peer review process. The contents of the study were discussed and informed by an expert group meeting held at the United Nations House in Beirut in December 2016. The study

also benefited from input provided by experts participating in the expert group meeting, reflecting on their personal experience running for elections or being part of the parliament.

The study is limited by insufficient data, particularly in areas such as women's representation in local councils and the judiciary. Other limitations include the frequent changes witnessed in the memberships of committees, such as constitution drafting committees, as a result of members resigning. Many of these incidents were not accurately documented and fluctuations in numbers could be found among the different sources.

D. Key actors in advancing women's political participation

This study posits that increase in the political representation of women results from a dynamic process that sees several actors push against perceived barriers, as well as pushbacks, at different levels. In the context of the Arab region, this takes the form of interplay between three key categories of actors, namely the State, civil society organizations and international organizations.

1. States in the driver's seat?

In several countries in the Arab region, States have been in the driver's seat when it comes to promoting women's political representation in selected areas.⁸ As the examples of Tunisia and Morocco suggest (chapter 3), a commitment to a women's empowerment agenda by the State can tremendously accelerate its adoption in society at large. The inclusion of women's political representation in the national agenda paves the way for constitutional and legal amendments, as well as the implementation

of a comprehensive reform programme. Compared to some of its Gulf neighbours, the United Arab Emirates has, for example, achieved a higher degree of equality in areas such as access to education, healthcare, decent work, and representation in political and economic governance.⁹ The country has nine women serving in the Federal National Council (FNC), representing nearly 25 per cent of this advisory body. In 2015, an Emirati woman was appointed as the speaker of the FNC and the first Arab woman to head a national assembly. These achievements reflect the will of the political leadership to include women in public life, as highlighted in official declarations.¹⁰

Nonetheless, the role of the State in advancing the political representation of women in the Arab region remains contested. On the one hand, Arab States are seen as the custodians and enforcers of many of the barriers highlighted in chapter 2 and, more generally, of the political, economic and social disparities that continue to affect women in the region. On the other hand, there is a substantial record of political leadership taking measures to enhance the representation and participation of women in public life, in some cases arguably against existing social norms. Advances made in this regard in recent decades, especially in the Gulf region, should not be underestimated. Nevertheless, so-called “State feminism” remains a highly controversial concept.¹¹ It has been criticized by civil society actors as a way for (male-dominated) regimes to project a veneer of modernity or a willingness to democratize, without risking their hold on power. This has resulted in women’s rights being, according to those critics, instrumentalized to serve the interests of self-proclaimed “progressive”, but less than democratic, regimes in Egypt, Iraq, Tunisia or Yemen. More worryingly, State feminism has also been used by Arab States to pacify and repress civil society-led pushes for the greater participation of

women in different ways than those promoted by the State.

In addition, there is extensive evidence that State feminism has rarely been driven by a desire to promote inclusive participation. Mervat Hatem argues that policies enhancing women’s representation only benefited a small number of bourgeois and upper-class women.¹² They were the ones called upon to serve in parliament and in appointed positions in the State apparatus. Once in office, they rarely pushed for policies or laws that were favourable to the average woman.¹³ Rather, they often acted as representatives of their class, and in many cases of the ruling parties that had nominated them to these positions. This association of women’s rights with autocratic regimes partly explains the rejection of the feminist label by some women in the Arab region, for instance those from Islamist currents who refuse to be seen as “Western stooges”.¹⁴

2. Civil society and women’s groups: a complementary role

Prior to the Arab uprisings, civil society in most Arab countries had largely been assumed to have been either suppressed, or co-opted, by strong regimes.¹⁵ The level of attention changed dramatically after 2010, when protesters caught the world’s attention by taking to the streets to demand greater freedom and social justice.¹⁶

In reality, however, civil society organizations, and among them women-led groups pushing for greater political participation, have been active throughout the Arab region for years.¹⁷ Meanwhile, women’s groups have worked at the grassroots level to fight and advocate for greater political participation and representation for women. Their partnership has been effective in bringing women’s rights and concerns to the national agenda in many Arab countries, particularly since the start of the uprisings.

Box 1. Civil society leading a mentorship programme in Egypt

“After the 2011 Egyptian revolution, I considered that running in the parliamentary elections would represent an extension of my active role throughout the revolution. I was introduced to “Nazra for Feminist Studies” and their programme “The Academy”, which was focused on training and supporting female candidates all over Egypt. Their support probably gave me the “final push” to take this decision and submit my candidacy.

The Academy had some very strict rules for the selection of potential candidates:

- One had to never have run under the then-dissolved National Democratic Party (NDP), the ruling party under former President Mubarak;
- One had to be no more than 45 years of age;
- One had to have some experience in political, social, human rights, or union work;
- One had to have no affiliation to any religious-based political parties.
- The Academy stressed that women’s participation in politics had to be in the context of a democracy based on equal rights, something that had been non-existent in the general rhetoric and practices of the Mubarak regime. It provided legal advice and psychological support, helped each candidate within her respective constituency, and conducted a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis for all the candidates.”

Source: Personal interview with Magy Mahrous.

Civil society organizations use various methods and techniques to influence policy to enhance women’s political participation. Their activities include, for example, as shown in box 1, the organization of capacity-building programmes to mentor female candidates, so that they may become more aware of their political rights and capable of running for elections. Civil society organizations also produce research and conduct advocacy

campaigns to lobby and present solutions to increase women’s political participation. Another critical role played by civil society organizations is the development of “shadow reports” on relevant issues to international bodies, in an effort to hold the State accountable to its international engagements.

The ability of women’s groups to lobby for change varies greatly depending on the political context of the Arab country in which they operate. While women’s organizations have been able to influence policies in countries such as Tunisia, their ability to do so has been more limited in, for example, the Gulf countries. As their capacity to influence policy is, unsurprisingly, correlated with the degree of inclusiveness of the State structure, women’s groups have been highly active in movements that seek greater democratization and rights for all, as the 2011 uprisings have shown.

3. International organizations

International organizations such as the United Nations have played an essential role in promoting women’s political representation.¹⁸ As shown in box 2, the United Nations women’s rights conferences, declarations, conventions, and follow-up mechanisms and reviews have contributed to holding States accountable and improved States’ responses, when fulfilling their commitments to advance women’s rights. In recent years, Arab countries have come under increased international pressure to conform to human rights norms, particularly in terms of empowering women in all spheres of public life. This has led to an increasing willingness from these States to improve the participation of women in political processes (for example, several Gulf States have granted women the right to vote), if only to alleviate this international pressure.

Box 2. International organizations supporting States in fulfilling their obligations towards enhanced women's participation

In its concluding observations on Lebanon's combined fourth and fifth report, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) Committee recommended in paragraph 12 (f) that Lebanon "adopt a national action plan to implement Security Council resolution 1325". It further requested, as a follow-up to the concluding observations, that Lebanon submit written information on progress in implementing the above recommendation within two years. The National Commission for Lebanese Women has since then started to develop such a plan by soliciting the input of various stakeholders and actors, with the goal of presenting a draft plan to the CEDAW Committee by November 2017.

Similarly, the CEDAW Committee recommended that Oman withdraws the reservations it made on article 15 (4) of the Convention, which states that "States Parties shall accord to men and women the same rights with regard to the law relating to the movement of persons and the freedom to choose their residence and domicile", upon ratification. In response, Oman's combined second and third report, submitted in March 2016, included the following: "In implementation of the Sultanate's commitment made during the discussion of its universal periodic review report on human rights of 2011, and in line with the Committee's observation in paragraph 15 and recommendation in paragraph 16 of its concluding observations on the Sultanate's initial report, the Council of Ministers discussed, in its session No. 22/2015, held on 30 June 2015, the Sultanate's reservations to the Convention. The Council of Ministers agreed to withdraw the reservation to article 15 (4) of the Convention".

Source: CEDAW, Concluding observations on the combined fourth and fifth periodic reports of Lebanon, 2015. See http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CEDAW/C/LBN/CO/4-5&Lang=E, p. 3; and http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CEDAW%2FC%2FOMN%2F2-3&Lang=en, p. 7.

International bodies have also empowered civil society groups to partner with States by giving them a variety of tools to organize, promote women's political participation and hold the State accountable, in addition to access to funding. For example, the practice of "shadow reporting" allows civil society groups to submit their own assessment of their State's progress towards the international norms it has committed to, thereby constituting a powerful accountability mechanism. International organizations are also working closely with civil society groups to articulate their role in the 2030 Agenda, which emphasizes "Partnership" as one of its five key dimensions, along with People, Planet, Prosperity and Peace. This emphasis on partnership has created a rhetorical shift and established legitimate space for civil society to play an enabling and catalytic role in many areas of gender equality, including women's political representation.

Nevertheless, the influence of international bodies is limited by their member States' willingness to enact meaningful change. For instance, several States have introduced quota systems to guarantee a certain percentage of female representation in legislatures, in line with international recommendations, but they did not adopt significant further measures to address effective barriers to women's representation.¹⁹ Similarly, while there has been de jure progress in many of these countries in terms of legal frameworks affecting women, particularly where the State has committed to report to international instruments, de facto implementation of these laws remains limited. There is often a discrepancy between the theory and the application of these laws, either because women are unaware of their rights or because of patriarchal practices and interpretations of the laws by courts. This confirms the notion that, for women's political representation to improve, there needs to be a strong commitment from the State, beyond raising headline numbers.

E. Snapshot of regional trends

This part of the study examines women's representation in the various structures of decision-making in the Arab region, including the legislative, executive (cabinet and public sector), and judiciary branches, as well as local governance. This section also sheds light on some unconventional forms of women's participation witnessed during and after the political developments of 2010-2011.

Box 3. New forms of participation: the Syrian Arab Republic

In 2016, the Syrian Women Advisory Board was established as an independent body comprising twelve Syrian civil society leaders. It was formed to help organize and amplify the voices of Syrian women to feed into the peace process, and ensure that the concerns, experiences, and priorities of Syrian women from different backgrounds and fields of expertise were at the forefront of the peace talks. In particular, the Board has played a role in supporting the mediation efforts and shuttle diplomacy, as well as informing the analysis, of the Joint United Nations-League of Arab States Special Envoy to the Syrian Arab Republic towards reaching a solution for the ongoing conflict.

The Board has taken it upon itself to accompany the peace process and provide substantive input as well as gender analysis of items on the negotiation table, and to work with all parties in the political process. Beyond its work on women's concerns, the Board advocates a broad list of priority issues, with an emphasis on the principles of inclusion, justice, diversity, and partnership, among others.

The Board does not attempt to portray itself as the sole representative of Syrian women. It seeks to engage in collaborations and partnerships with various structures – particularly at the local level – to highlight the different views Syrian women, civil society, local communities, and other partners hold, with the aim of consolidating these views, channelling them to the ongoing negotiations and presenting relevant, viable, and responsive options for peace.

In the past decades, there has been some progress in terms of the conditions that make women's political participation possible. For example, female literacy has increased in most of the Arab States, especially the Gulf countries. In 2010, the literacy rate of young women aged 18-24 years reached 98 per cent in Bahrain and 99 per cent in Kuwait. In Yemen, the number of young women who can read and write has increased from 60 per cent in 1990 to 90 per cent in 2015.²⁰ In addition, women in countries such as Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco, the State of Palestine and Tunisia have successfully lobbied for the introduction of various measures, for example electoral quotas, to increase and strengthen women's political representation. Civil society groups have also pushed for the revision of personal status and nationality laws, as well as penal codes, in a number of countries, in order to address violations of women's human rights.²¹ This has resulted in a relative reduction of gender inequalities in terms of legal and civil rights, a key enabler of political participation.

The 2010-2011 uprisings have, in this regard, proved to be a window of opportunity for women's political participation. The extent and quality of their participation during these political developments was unprecedented and inclusive, as it was not limited to a certain class or age group, nor was it State-sponsored. In addition, the role of women was not limited to participating in demonstrations, but also included collecting data and reporting incidents of human rights violations, including brutality and torture, particularly where it affected women, through various channels, such as social media or through human rights organizations. This period also saw women in conflict-affected countries engage in new forms of political participation, such as involvement in peacebuilding processes. For example, as shown in box 3, Syrian women have extensively participated in peace talks led by the United Nations, where they have been able to

represent women's concerns and interests, providing an example of best practices in the inclusion of women in conflict-resolution and State-building.

Yemeni women had a similar successful experience engaging in the country's peace process, particularly in view of their limited role in politics in previous decades.

In addition, the absence of key enablers for women's representation, reflected in indicators such as the low literacy rates among women and weak role of civil society, as well as the dominant patriarchal society and discriminatory laws against women, makes their unprecedented participation in the peace process a success story, as shown in box 4.

Box 4. Yemeni women's participation in the national dialogue process

In 2011, the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Envoy to Yemen, Jamal Benomar, met with the leaders of political parties, tribal Sheikhs, and representatives of the youth movement of Change Square, where peaceful sit-ins took place during the 2011 uprising in Yemen. The purpose of the meeting was to prepare for a National Dialogue Conference (NDC) to ensure a peaceful transfer of power, as per a GCC initiative. Since women had initially been excluded from the United Nations Envoy's schedule of meetings, a women's Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) approached the Special Envoy, demanding that meetings be set up with representatives of women's groups. Women's groups invoked United Nations Security Council resolution 1325, which requires parties in a conflict to prevent violations of women's rights, support women's participation in peace negotiations and post-conflict reconstruction, and protect women and girls from sexual and gender-based violence, to lobby for the inclusion of women in the peace process and hold the United Nations staff accountable for the implementation of the resolution.

In response to these lobbying efforts, the United Nations Special Envoy met with 30 women activists. As the meeting was successful, the Envoy offered to continue meeting with them during his missions to finalise the preparatory work of the NDC. A National Technical Preparatory Committee for the NDC (NDC-TC) was appointed by the Yemeni President, comprising 24 men from political parties and 6 women representing women's NGOs, human rights and youth groups. The NDC-TC elected a woman as its spokesperson. Women's participation in the preparatory phase led to the adoption of a quota of 30 per cent of women in the NDC, which was composed of 565 members. The NDC-TC reserved 40 seats for women from independent groups, and requested that each participating political party and movement, including the Youth Group, the Southern Movement and the Houthis, as well as civil society organizations, include at least 30 per cent of women in their delegation lists. Although some delegations did not adhere to the NDC-TC decision, this resulted in the total number of women reaching 29 per cent of the NDC's total membership. Women were elected as the presidents of three out of nine thematic working groups, and a similar number were elected as either vice-president or rapporteur. Both the quantity and the quality of women's representation greatly influenced the agenda and deliberations of the NDC over a period of almost ten months, resulting in the adoption of the NDC Outcome Document. The NDC Outcome Document stipulates that women's representation in all State power structures, both in appointed and elected positions, shall not be less than 30 per cent. It also bans marriage before the age of 18 for both sexes. These two issues were highly contested during the NDC, but the provisions were ultimately introduced, owing to women's determination and lobbying efforts.

Unfortunately, the presidential decree issued to stipulate the formulation of the Constitution Drafting Committee (CDC) did not abide by the NDC Outcome Document regarding the 30 per cent quota for women. In March 2014, the CDC was formed, with only four women out of 17 members. Nevertheless, women's participation in the process of drafting the constitution was without precedent in Yemen's history. The CDC submitted a first draft of the new constitution, which includes several articles explicitly acknowledging and protecting women's human rights in the social, economic, cultural, civil, and political spheres.

Despite these positive advances, however, women's representation in governance institutions in the Arab region remains low in comparison with the global average. Four countries from the Arab region (Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman and Qatar) rank in the bottom five on the political empowerment sub-index of the World Economic Forum, which measures the ratio of men and women in ministerial positions as well as parliament.²² Such gender inequality is also found in the judiciary and public service, as well as local governance, as highlighted below.

1. Women in the legislative branch

The political representation of women in the Arab region dates back to the middle of the twentieth century, with Lebanon granting women the right to stand in elections in 1952, followed by the Syrian Arab Republic (which had already granted women the right to vote in 1949), the Comoros, Egypt and Somalia. Arab women acquired the right to vote and stand in elections gradually, and in some cases only recently. Kuwait granted women suffrage in 2005, the United Arab Emirates in 2006, and Saudi Arabia in 2011. Today, women in the entire Arab region have the right to vote and run for elected office. The representation of women in the region's parliaments has, as a result, gradually increased, to 19 per cent on average in 2016, but remaining below the international average of 23 per cent. While this rate is one of the lowest in the world, there has been noticeable progress, as the proportion of women in Arab parliaments has tripled from the 2004 rate of 6 per cent.²³

Table 1. Year of women's suffrage by Arab country

Country	Year of suffrage
Lebanon	1952
Syrian Arab Republic	1949 (vote); 1953 (suffrage)
Comoros	1956
Egypt	1956
Somalia	1956
Tunisia	1957 (vote in municipal elections); 1959 (suffrage)
Mauritania	1961
Algeria	1962
Morocco	1963
Libya	1964
Sudan	1964
Yemen	1970
Jordan	1974 (exercised for the first time in 1989)
Iraq	1980
Djibouti	1946 (vote); 1986 (suffrage)
State of Palestine	1994 ^a
Oman	1997
Qatar	1999
Bahrain	2002
Kuwait	2005
United Arab Emirates	2006
Saudi Arabia	2011 (exercised for the first time in 2015)

Source: <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/suffrage.htm#Note3> and http://womensuffrage.org/?page_id=69.

^a Establishment of the Palestinian Authority (PA).

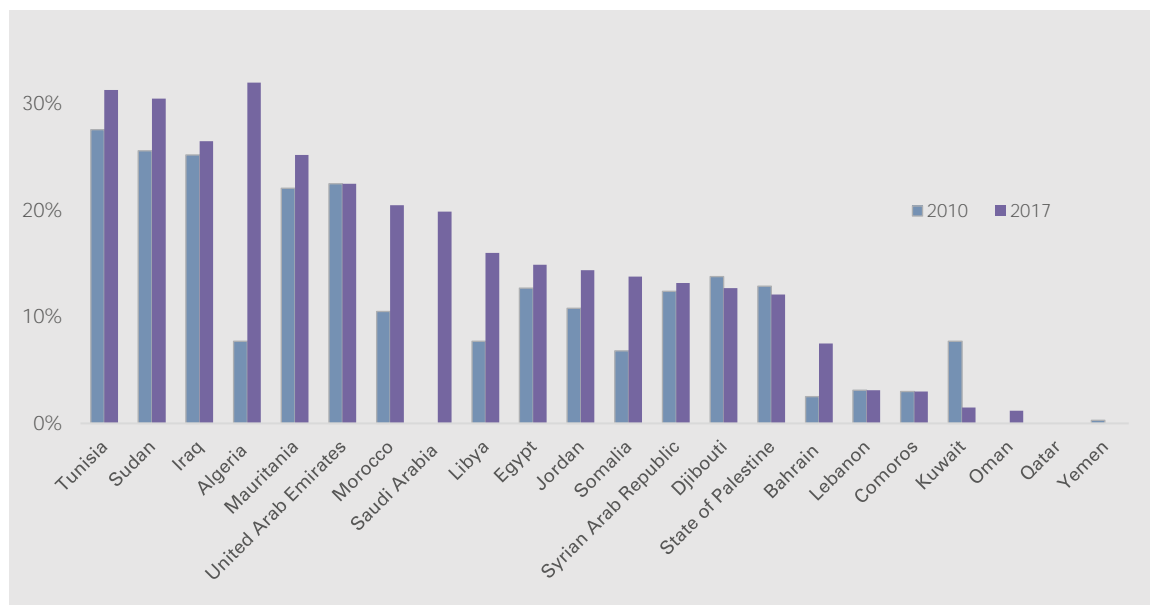
The majority of countries in the Arab region have seen an increase in the representation of women in lower (or single) houses of parliament between 2010 and 2017. In 2013, for the first time, 30 women were appointed to Saudi Arabia's Shura Council (advisory body), representing 20 per cent of seats by 2016. In Algeria, the proportion of female members of parliament (MPs) tripled, from 8 to 32 per cent (which was also the largest proportion in the region), in line with a quota introduced in 2012. This proportion fell back to 26 per cent in the

2017 elections, however, as the quota is set at the constituency rather than the national level, resulting in fluctuations in the national aggregate. The percentage of female MPs more than doubled in Bahrain (from 3 per cent to 8 per cent), and doubled in Morocco (from 11 per cent to 21 per cent) and Somalia (7 per cent to 14 per cent). Increases were more modest in other countries. The share of female MPs eroded slightly in the Djiboutian parliament, from 14 per cent to 13 per cent, and more markedly in Kuwait, where it fell from 8 per cent to 2 per cent. The proportion of female MPs remained stable, but low, in Lebanon, where there has been no general election during this period, in contrast with the country's image of modernism when it comes to women's rights. Women are not represented in the Shura Council in Qatar, while Oman counts just one female MP. In Yemen, there was one

woman in the elected house of parliament until she passed away in 2015. She has not been replaced, as no legislative elections have taken place since 2003 (see figure 1 and figure 2 for more details about women's representation in lower and upper houses of parliament in the Arab region).

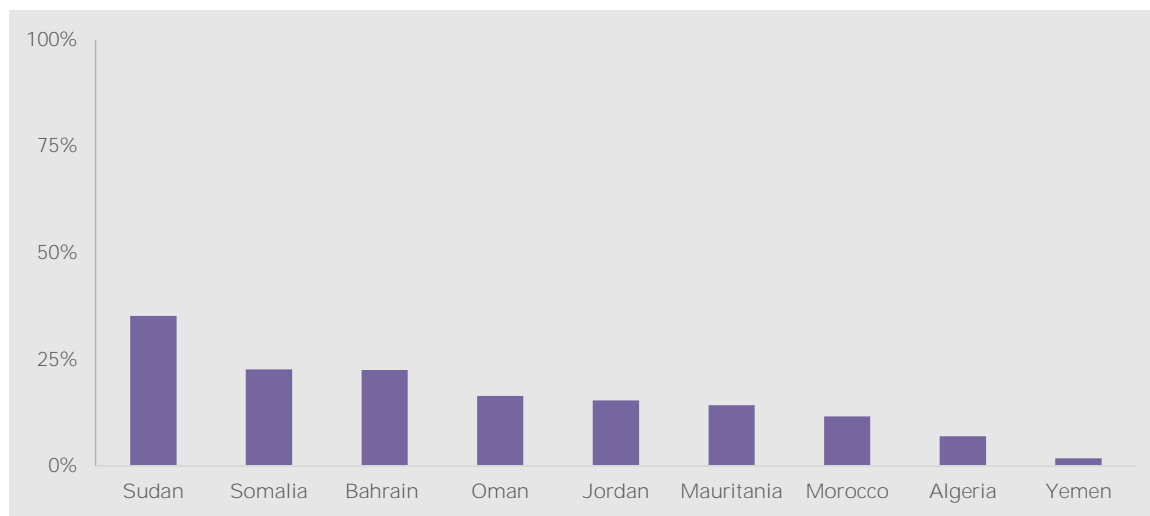
Tunisia and Sudan top the regional ranking in terms of the representation of women in lower (or single) houses of national parliaments, at 31 and 30 per cent respectively. These two countries therefore meet the baseline set by the Beijing Platform at 30 per cent. The Sudan ranks first in terms of female representation in upper chambers, with 35 per cent, followed by Bahrain and Somalia. Yemen comes last out of the nine countries that have a bicameral legislature, with only two women appointed to the Consultative Council out of 111 appointed members.²⁴

Figure 1. Percentage of women in lower or single houses of parliament



Source: Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU).

Figure 2. Percentage of women in upper houses of parliament (as of January 2017)



Source: IPU.

Box 5. Women in traditional forms of participation: Egypt

The number of women who ran for office in the 2011-2012 elections was the highest that Egypt had seen since 1956. There were 984 female candidates for parliament – a high number even when compared to the artificially inflated pool of 404 candidates in 2010, and a nearly eight-fold increase from the 133 female candidates who ran in 2005. This scale of female political participation was greeted with outright alarm in conservative social circles in Egypt. In their new engagement with popular electoral politics, women voters challenged deeply rooted gender constraints that had previously hindered their participation, such as traditional household and childcare obligations, as well as an entrenched assumption that women could have no real effect on political results. A common scene in the post-uprising era was women holding their children and queuing for hours to vote. Many non-elite women overcame significant societal pressures and financial constraints to participate as candidates and voters.

Source: Mehrinaz El-Awady. Women's Political Participation in Egypt: Beyond Numbers, Associations for Middle East Women Studies (AMEWS) E-Bulletin, Issue 12, December 2014, p. 3. Available from <http://iwsaw.lau.edu.lb/publications/amews/amews-ebulletin-2014December.pdf>.

Evidence also suggests some progress in the number of women seeking to engage in traditional forms of political participation such as elections. The case studies in chapter 3 suggest a progressive rise in the number of women running for elected positions in a number of Arab States. As shown in box 5, this is also the case in Egypt, where the number of women running for office witnessed a considerable increase in 2011-2012 compared to previous elections.

In addition to the legislature, women in countries such as Egypt, Tunisia and Yemen participated in national constitution drafting processes, which had previously been a domain largely reserved for men. There were 5 Egyptian women out of 50 members of the country's Constitution Drafting Committee, while Yemeni women accounted for four out of 17 members in the Constitution Drafting Committee. Women represented 24 per cent of members of the Tunisian Constituent Assembly, tasked with drafting the country's new constitution. This change in structure and inclusion of women was a contributing factor to incorporating breakthrough articles relating to gender equality, women's quotas and issues

such as gender-based violence (GBV) in the new or amended constitutions.²⁵ In Yemen, the draft constitution introduced a quota of 30 per cent of women in all power structures, as well as a ban on child marriage. The 2014 Egyptian constitution assigned 25 per cent of seats in local councils to women. The Tunisian constitution calls for parity representation at all levels of governance.

Given the scarcity of women in political positions, measures have been adopted and implemented in several countries to improve their representation. The most common of these measures is the quota

system,²⁶ as shown in table 2. Quotas can be applied through several mechanisms, for example by mandating that political parties include a set proportion of women on their electoral lists, or by reserving a number of seats for female parliamentarians. Quotas are not, however, a goal in themselves. They are an initial step to ensure and improve the representation of women and challenge the cultural stereotypes about women's participation in politics. They are temporary measures that should be discontinued once de facto equality is reached – although achieving this goal is likely to take time.

Table 2. Electoral quotas for women

Country	Quota type			Quota source
	Single/lower house	Upper house	Local councils	
Algeria	Reserved seats	No quota	Reserved seats	Electoral law
Bahrain	No quota		No quota	
Comoros	No quota		No quota	
Djibouti	Reserved seats		No quota	Electoral law
Egypt	Legislated Candidate Quotas		Reserved seats	Ad-hoc for parliament, constitution for local councils
Iraq	Reserved seats		Reserved seats	Electoral law
Jordan	Reserved seats	No quota	Reserved seats	Electoral law
Kuwait	No quota		No quota	
Lebanon	No quota		No quota	
Libya	Legislated Candidate Quotas		Reserved seats	Electoral law
Mauritania	Legislated Candidate Quotas	Legislated Candidate Quotas	Reserved seats	Electoral law
Morocco	Reserved seats	No quota	Reserved seats	Electoral law
Oman	No quota	No quota	No quota	
State of Palestine	Legislated Candidate Quotas		Reserved Seats	Electoral law
Qatar	No quota		No quota	
Saudi Arabia	Reserved seats		Legislated Candidate Quotas	Constitution for parliament, electoral law for local councils
Somalia	Reserved seats	No quota	No quota	Constitution
Sudan	Reserved seats	No quota	No quota	Electoral law
Syrian Arab Republic	No quota		No quota	
Tunisia	Legislated Candidate Quotas		No quota	Electoral law
United Arab Emirates	No quota			
Yemen	No quota		No quota	

Source: Based on data from the Quota Database. Available from <http://www.quotaproject.org> (accessed 15 March 2017).

The introduction of quotas by 13 out of 22 Arab countries has undoubtedly improved women's representation in elected positions. As Mona Lena Krook points out, many countries have seen an increase in the number of women in political office, and "in many cases, a crucial drive for change has been the adoption of quota policies to facilitate the selection of female candidates".²⁷ However, she cautions that "not all quotas are equally successful in increasing women's political representation: some countries experience dramatic increases following the adoption of new quota regulations, while others see more modest changes or even setbacks in the proportion of women elected". She notes that in the past couple of decades over 100 countries have adopted quota systems, and that "quotas appear to reflect a growing international norm regarding the need to promote women's political representation". Nevertheless, attempts to introduce quotas in the Arab region have often been met with stiff resistance (see for example the case of Yemen, detailed in chapter 2 – box 7), highlighting the need to make the argument that quotas are a necessary first step toward a fairer representation of both sexes in the public sphere.

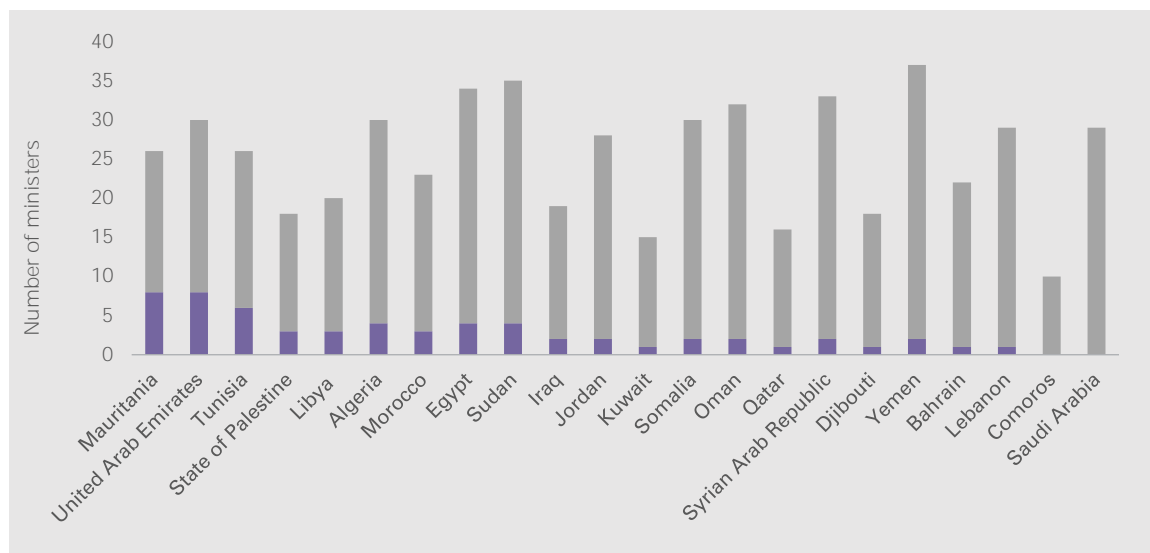
2. Women in the executive

The Arab region has witnessed improvements in the representation of women in cabinet,²⁸ although they generally remain confined to so-called "soft" portfolios associated with the traditional roles of women in society (e.g. education and healthcare). Some women ministers have been appointed to "hard" portfolios, such as Finance in Tunisia, International Cooperation in Egypt, and Legal Affairs in Yemen. Figure 3 shows that by January 2017, Mauritania had the largest share of female ministers, with almost a third of the 26 ministers in cabinet being women. Women accounted for 27 per cent of ministers in the United Arab Emirates and 23 per cent in Tunisia. There were, however, less than a tenth of female ministers in half of the

countries of the region, with most countries reporting only one or two women in ministerial positions. Two countries, namely the Comoros and Saudi Arabia, do not have a single female in a cabinet-level post.

In the public sector, Arab women are over-represented in fields associated with their traditional roles, such as education, health and social development. For example, women comprise 58 per cent of the workforce in the Jordanian Ministry of Health. Women contingents in ministries such as the interior, finance or defence, remain much smaller, as such domains are traditionally seen as less suitable for women (chapter 2). Overall, women remain underrepresented at leadership and managerial levels: even in those "soft" ministries where they are otherwise prominent, the proportion of women gradually decreases as the hierarchical level rises.

Women are much less represented than men in foreign ministries, and account for only a fraction of the diplomatic corps, giving them few occasions to represent their country in international settings. This is slowly changing, however, as women have been appointed as ambassadors by several Arab States in recent years (in 2016, for example, the United Arab Emirates appointed three female ambassadors to European countries). Another level of representation achieved by Arab women is that of representation in international organizations, with such examples as the appointment of a Bahraini woman as President of the United Nations General Assembly, a Saudi woman as Director of United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Jordanian and Yemeni women as Director of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Regional Bureau for Arab States, Egyptian and Jordanian women as Executive Secretary of ESCWA, and an Egyptian woman as the youngest ever appointed Deputy Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF).²⁹

Figure 3. Women holding ministerial positions (as of January 2017)

Source: IPU, with data obtained from national governments, permanent missions to the United Nations and publicly available information.

3. Women in the judiciary

Data on the proportion of women judges³⁰ is limited, with only a handful of countries reporting sex-disaggregated data on the composition of the judiciary. As shown in figure 4, in 2010, the top performer appeared to be Algeria, where over one third of judges were women, followed by Tunisia, standing at 28 per cent, and Morocco, at 20 per cent.³¹ These numbers rose to 39 and 24 per cent by 2017 in Tunisia and Morocco respectively (chapter 3). In countries that provide a breakdown by type of court, it appears that female judges generally sit on administrative courts, as well as other lower level instances (e.g. those handling juveniles). Female judges remain generally banned from sitting on religious (sharia) courts in countries that have them, while several countries continue to bar women from taking oaths as judges altogether.

Nevertheless, recent judicial appointments suggest that the representation of women in the judiciary is improving. In 2006, Bahrain

appointed its first female judge, as the first GCC country to do so; a decade later, there were 21 women judges in Bahrain, constituting roughly 10 per cent of the judiciary. In 2015, 26 women judges were appointed to preside over courts of first instance in Egypt, bringing the total to around 80 (out of around 12,000 judges).³² A year later, Saudi Arabia appointed its first female judge, although to a lower (commercial) court.³³ In Algeria and Tunisia the high number of women currently enrolled in post-graduate schools where future judges and public prosecutors are trained suggests that the representation of women in the judiciary is likely to rise markedly in the medium to long term.

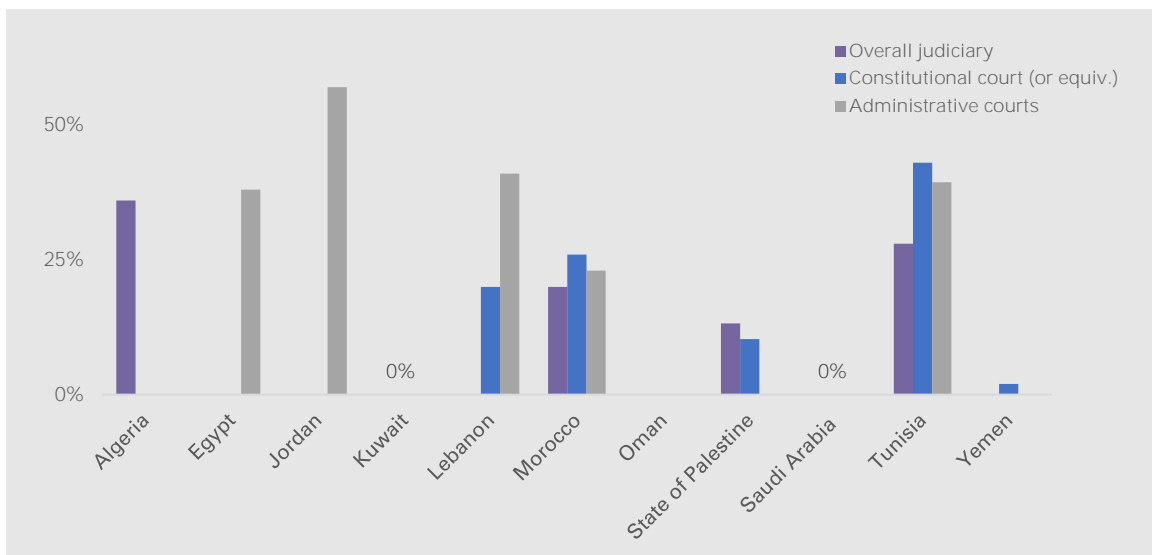
As figure 4 shows, however, women were represented in only five constitutional courts (or equivalent) in the region. Although a woman, Tahani al-Gebali, was appointed to Egypt's Supreme Constitutional Court in 2003, and later became one of its vice-presidents, she left the judiciary in 2013 to pursue a political career. Arab women are also represented in

some international courts. Examples include Micheline Braidı, a Lebanese national, who is a trial chamber judge at the Special Tribunal for Lebanon.³⁴ Taghreed Hikmat, the first female judge in Jordan, sat on the International

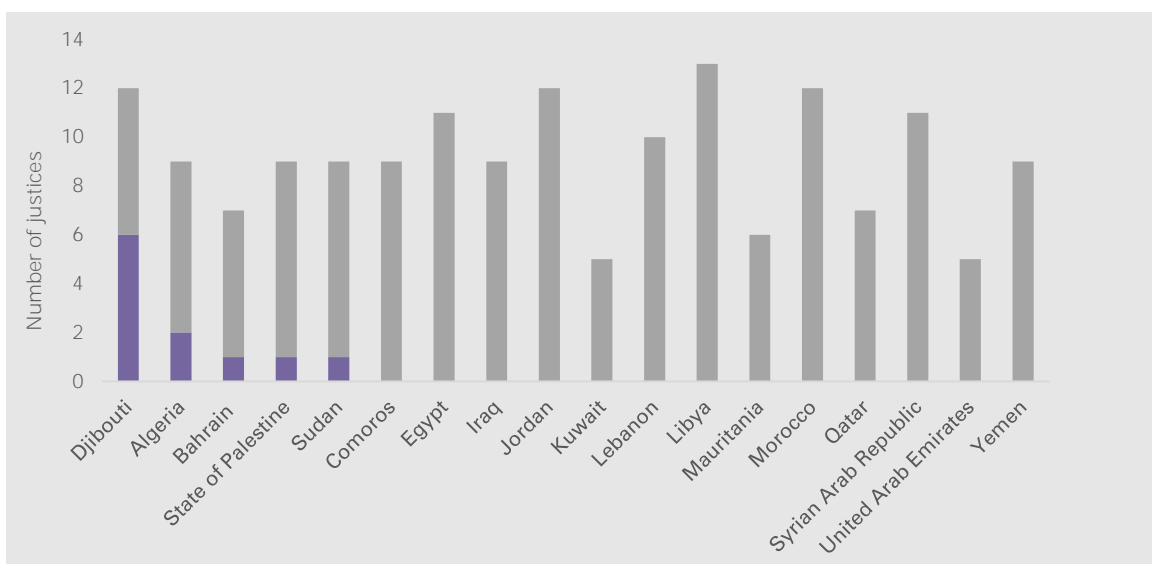
Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda from 2003 to 2011.³⁵ These numbers remain limited, however, largely as a result of the reduced pool of female judges in national judicial systems from which appointments are made.

Figure 4. Women judges in the judiciary

A. Proportion of women judges, 2010



B. Female justices at the Constitutional Court or equivalent, 2016



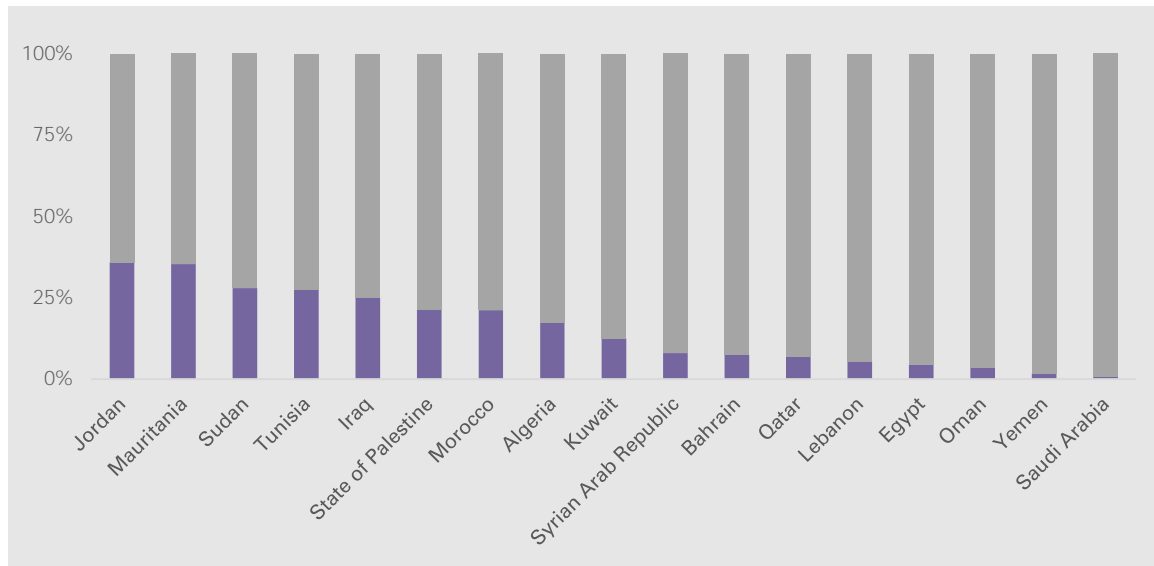
Source: OECD (2014).

4. Women in local councils

The lack of information on women's presence in local councils constitutes a key knowledge gap, given the influence of these bodies on the daily lives of women and men, and the gateway to political participation they often represent. Nevertheless, with data available for only 17 out of 22 countries in the region, it appears that the representation of women in local councils is greatest in Jordan, where they accounted for 36 per cent of members in 2013, followed by Mauritania, the Sudan, Tunisia and Morocco. Women were poorly represented in Yemen, although data for this country dates back to 2006, and Saudi Arabia, where women accounted for only 21 out of 3159 local councillors, after the first election in which they were able to run in 2015 (table 3).

Women mayors are rare in the Arab region, particularly in larger municipalities. Some notable exceptions include Zekra Alwach, a former Director General of the Ministry of Higher Education, who was appointed mayor of Baghdad in 2015, as well as Vera Baboun, who was elected mayor of Bethlehem in 2015. Fatima Zahra Mansouri, a then-33-year-old lawyer, became the mayor of Marrakesh in 2009. Although the number of women in mayoral positions appears to be increasing, it remains low overall: in the 2016 Lebanese municipal elections, women won only 57 *Mukhtar* (head of municipal council) seats, representing only 2 per cent of the total number of 2896 *Mukhtars*. The number of women governors is equally low throughout the region, although the appointment of Nadia Abdu as Egypt's first-ever female governor in 2017 constitutes a breakthrough.³⁶

Figure 5. Percentage of women in local councils (as per the latest available data)



Source: Ministries of the Interior (or equivalent) and local media sources.

Table 3. Women in local councils

Country	Year	Total seats	Number of women	Percentage of women
Algeria	2012	26895	4715	17.5
Bahrain	2014	40	3	7.5
Comoros	(...)	(...)	(...)	
Djibouti	(...)	(...)	(...)	
Egypt	2008	53010	2335	4.4
Iraq	2009	(...)	(...)	25.0
Jordan	2013	961	345	35.9
Kuwait	2008	16	2	12.5
Lebanon	2016	12139	663	5.5
Libya	(...)	(...)	(...)	(...)
Mauritania	2013	3722	1317	35.4
Morocco	2015	31503	6673	21.2
Oman	2016	202	7	3.5
State of Palestine	2012	5629	1205	21.4
Qatar	2015	29	2	6.9
Saudi Arabia	2015	3159	21	0.7
Somalia	(...)	(...)	(...)	(...)
Sudan	2015	(...)	(...)	28.0
Syrian Arab Republic	2013	25	2	8.0
Tunisia	2009	(...)	(...)	27.5
United Arab Emirates	(...)	(...)	(...)	(...)
Yemen	2006	(...)	(...)	1.7

Source: Ministries of the Interior (or equivalent) National Electoral Commissions or local media sources.

2. Barriers to Women's Political Representation

This chapter of the study offers an overview of the obstacles to women's political representation in the Arab region. Although barriers are intertwined and tend to reinforce each other, for the purpose of analysis, the study divides them into two broad categories. Sociocultural barriers stem from the practices and beliefs pervasive in societies that are overwhelmingly defined by patriarchy.³⁷ Institutional barriers result from legal discrimination against women and gender-blind processes, notably the electoral process, which fail to address the inequalities encountered by women seeking to partake in governance. This chapter offers a general overview of the two types of barriers based on a review of the literature. It then examines these barriers within the context of the Arab region, through illustrative examples and interviews with women who sought, successfully or not, representation in informal and formal political processes in Jordan, Libya, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen.

A. Sociocultural barriers

A broad set of barriers can be linked to sociological and cultural factors, which reflect the omnipresence of patriarchal beliefs and norms that seek to regulate aspects of personal, religious, economic, and political life in the region.³⁸ Historically, differing expectations for the social contributions of women and men have resulted in lower literacy rates for women, reducing their ability to exercise their political

and civil rights, but the vast majority of countries now appear to be bridging the literacy gap.³⁹ Nevertheless, patriarchal norms and expectations continue to have a pervasive effect on women's political representation, in that they assign specific roles and representations to each gender. This is compounded by the perception that politics is a male-dominated space that is unsafe for women, conservative religious interpretations that legitimize the exclusion of women from the political sphere, as well as the rejection of feminism by many in the region.

1. Gender-specific roles and representations

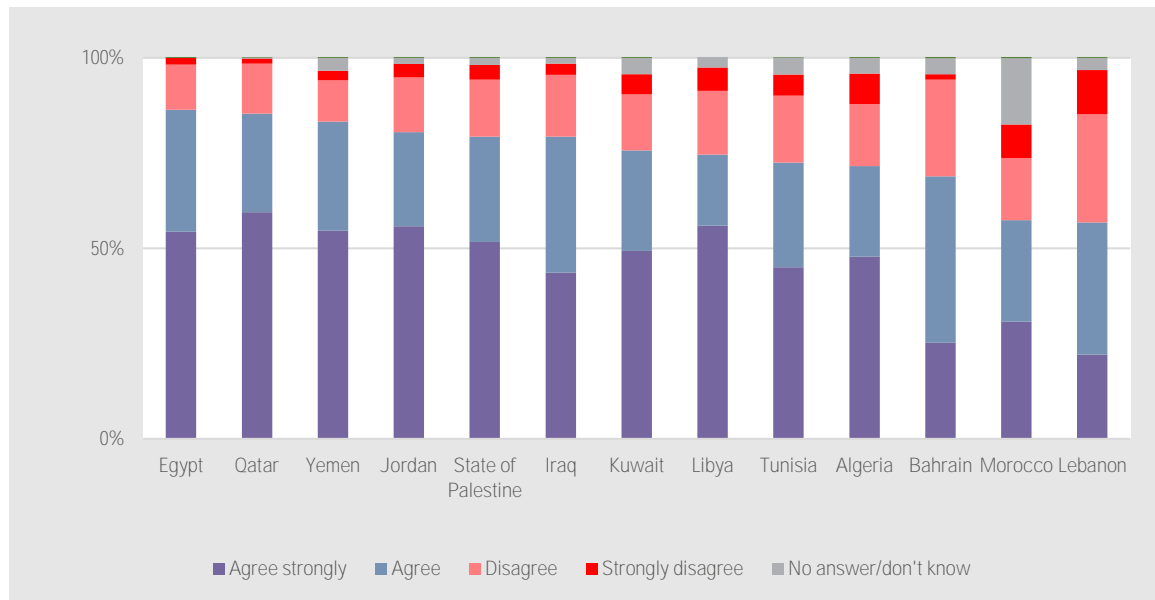
A key sociocultural barrier stems from patriarchal norms that place specific expectations on women regarding their economic and social contribution. The types of patriarchal societies that are prominent in the Arab region traditionally attach less value to the contribution of women, than that of men, to public life. This has a clear impact on women's political participation in general, as they are less likely than men to keep themselves informed on political issues, vote, be active in political parties, and seek to run in elections.⁴⁰ In addition, because of differing gender expectations, women are seen as less credible candidates when they run for elections (by men and, to a lesser degree, women), partly because they are less able than men to mobilize male-dominated networks to provide clientelistic services to their constituents. In the judiciary, many in the Arab region continue to oppose the

appointment of female judges, invoking stereotypes such as women being too emotional to deliver objective judgments.⁴¹

Present male dominance in the political sphere reinforces the notion that women have little place there. As Suad Joseph argues, male dominance “reinforces patriarchy in that males and seniors constitute the overwhelming majority of political power-holders, as heads of State, members of parliament, government officials, and members of political parties”.⁴² This, in turn, strengthens stereotypes that men are better able to lead: in the World Values Survey (Wave 6), a majority of respondents in the Arab region (men and women) agreed that men made better political leaders than women, as illustrated in figure 6. Patriarchal societies seem more accepting of women’s participation in politics if it is acquired through inheritance, as shown in box 6.

Patriarchal societies tend to attach value to women performing roles of “care”, for example education and taking care of household chores.⁴³ On an individual level, such gendered expectations placed on women result in many of them experiencing “time poverty”, which makes their political participation more difficult. The great majority of women in the region must perform a triple role, spreading themselves thin between paid employment, taking care of their household and raising their children. Involvement in politics would add another load to an already full schedule. This reality often discourages women from running for office or rising in the ranks of the executive or the judiciary, at least until their children have left the house. There are fewer such expectations of men to take care of their household or raise children, leaving them more time to build their careers and political networks.

Figure 6. Perceptions of men and women on political leadership



Source: World Values Survey Wave 6 (2010-2014). Available from <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWV6.jsp>.

Box 6. Heiresses to political dynasties

Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan, as well as Begum Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina of Bangladesh, have led large traditionally patriarchal and majoritively Muslim countries, and have each served more than one term as Prime Minister. Yet they did not rise to the top based exclusively on their qualifications within democratic regimes. In all three cases, these women were heiresses to powerful political dynasties, and inherited the mantle of leadership after their fathers or husbands had been killed. This highlights the fact that in patriarchal societies, women often depend on the political networks, as well as the wealth, initially built-up by male relatives when they seek to engage in electoral politics.

Zulfikar Bhutto, Benazir's father, had been Prime Minister of Pakistan in the 1970s. He was executed in 1979 by political opponents, leaving behind a daughter and two sons. Older than her brothers, and favoured by her mother, Benazir led – while under house arrest – the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy, formed to oppose the military rule of Zia-ul-Haq. She went into exile in 1984, but returned when Zia ul-Haq died in 1988. Finding herself in a favourable position to accede to power, she led her party to victory and became the first Muslim woman to lead a country in modern history.

The case of Bangladesh is even more intriguing than that of Pakistan. One of the strictest patriarchal societies and poorest Muslim countries in the world, with a relatively low female literacy rate (57 per cent), Bangladesh has seen two women prime ministers alternating power since the 1990s. In 1991, Begum Khaleda Zia became the second Muslim female political leader to head a government, after Benazir Bhutto. Her husband's assassination had paved the way for her entrance into politics. He had been President of Bangladesh from 1977 until his assassination in a military coup in 1981. His death allowed her to inherit the leadership of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, which he had founded in the late 1970s, and the party became her stepping stone to accede to the premiership. Begum Khaleda's main political rival has been another woman, Sheikh Hasina Wazed, who also inherited political power from a man, her father in this case. Sheikh Hasina's father Mujibur Rahman was the founding leader and first President of Bangladesh, and was serving a term as Prime Minister when he was assassinated with his wife, brother and two sons in 1975. His daughters Hasina and Rehana were in Europe at the time and were therefore spared. Sheikh Hasina only returned to Bangladesh in 1981. The rivalry between the two women, their similar blood-drenched legacies, in addition to their almost three decades-long control of the levers of power, have made them key figures of the Bangladeshi political landscape. Nevertheless, their political inheritance from deceased male relatives was the main reason these women rose to such heights of political leadership.

This phenomenon of political inheritance appears to be preponderant in the Indian sub-continent. India witnessed a similar phenomenon when Indira Gandhi, daughter of the first Indian Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, inherited political leadership after her father's death. While Nehru died a natural death, Indira was assassinated in 1984. She was followed by her son, Rajiv, who was assassinated in 1991, paving the way for his Italian-born wife, Sonia Gandhi, to rise to power. However, the young widow refused to take over the leadership of his party, the Indian National Congress, breaking the cycle of inheritance.

The closest example of an Arab woman inheriting her assassinated husband's political capital is that of Nayla Moawad, the widow of René Moawad, who held office as Lebanon's President for 17 days before being assassinated in 1989. However, she preferred to act as a placeholder for her son Michel, instead of creating her own political power base. She stepped down when Michel came of age, allowing him to assume his father's mantle as a prominent Lebanese politician.

2. Perception of politics as an unsafe space for women

In many Arab countries, the political realm is commonly perceived as a corrupt, and sometimes violent, “dirty game” and an unsafe space for women.⁴⁴ The perception that women pay a high price for exercising their political rights can act as a strong deterrent to them seeking increased participation in political processes.⁴⁵ Indeed, women in or attempting to run for office have often faced smear campaigns of a magnitude incomparable to those experienced by their male counterparts. Women perceived as seeking to challenge conservative norms and assigned gender roles can see details of their private lives, real or fabricated, exposed, and relayed in an often complacent media, in an attempt to ruin their reputation. In addition, they face direct physical threats, abuse and other forms of intimidation.

Although these concerns are not specific to the Arab region,⁴⁶ the unstable political and security situation in several Arab countries makes the risk of attacks against women considerably higher.⁴⁷ Women’s fear for their safety is justified, as exemplified by the assassination of Iraqi female MP Lamia Abed Khadouri in 2005, and of Libyan female activist Salwa Bugaighis in 2014, as well as the assassination attempt against Lebanese journalist May Chidiac in 2005.⁴⁸ Extremist religious groups in the region have also been known to compile “death lists” featuring female civil society and political activists. Yemeni writer and activist Bushra al-Maqtari was targeted by a religious fatwa calling for her death, because of an article she wrote on violence encountered by the Peaceful Life March Youth in 2012.⁴⁹ Women seeking to participate in politics are also likely to face gender-based violence. Dozens of cases of sexual harassment, in some cases escalating to gang rape, were reported in and around Tahrir

Square in Cairo in 2011 and 2013, with men seeking to take advantage of the disorder created by a context of mass uprisings.⁵⁰

A Gallup survey that interviewed men and women in Egypt, Libya, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia and Yemen after the 2010 uprisings, revealed that one of the greatest barriers to women’s participation in politics was women’s perception of the lack of safety and respect for women in the political sphere. For example, after the uprising in Egypt, 37 per cent of women who noted that they felt safe walking in the streets at night despite the upheaval nevertheless expressed fear of openly expressing their political views.⁵¹ The 45 per cent of Egyptian women who did not feel safe walking in the streets shared those same concerns about expressing their political views. Similarly, the majority of Tunisian women surveyed reported a negative assessment of law and order, as well as less confidence in national institutions, compared to Tunisian men. Tunisian women linked this to the heightened feeling of insecurity, given the overall vulnerability that their society was experiencing, as well as the increased level of violence that women faced, all of which limited their presence in public venues.⁵²

3. Conservative interpretations of religion

Unsubstantiated conservative interpretations of Islamic texts have historically been used by patriarchal societies to legitimize the exclusion of women from the political, economic and social spheres. Several Arab countries have justified their enforcement of discriminatory laws based on sharia (Islamic) law. Women in a conservative religious environment are, on average, less likely to seek to participate in politics, owing to their own preferences or those of their male relatives. Islamist political parties are also less likely than their secular

counterparts to include women on their electoral lists, unless compelled by law to do so. They are also less likely to appoint women ministers to cabinet positions when given the opportunity. In addition, Islamist networks, including television channels, mosques and schools, can be mobilized to propagate a conservative agenda hostile to the representation of women in politics. A leading Yemeni women's rights activist noted that for every conference, demonstration or workshop her organization held in favour of women's political representation or the introduction of a quota, there have likely been many more sermons against these demands in many of the country's thousands of mosques.⁵³

Nevertheless, the low rate of political representation of women in the region cannot be traced back solely to the dominance of Islam as a religion, as is sometimes assumed.⁵⁴ A quick glance at Muslim States outside the Arab region shows that, in Indonesia for example, women received 17 per cent of the vote without the help of a quota system in the 2014 elections. Prominent Muslim women, such as Tansu Çiller in Turkey, were able to ascend to the highest office in their country decades before an American woman was able to run for the presidency as a serious candidate. The current leaders of Bangladesh and Mauritius are Muslim women.⁵⁵ Even in the Arab region, as shown in chapter 1, some Muslim-majority States have made great strides in raising the proportion of female ministers, public servants, MPs and judges. A Gallup poll of six Arab countries also found that there was no significant correlation between adherence to Islam and lack of support for women's rights.⁵⁶ In addition, there is increasing evidence that Quranic texts can be used as a vector for women's empowerment, including in the political sphere.⁵⁷ These examples show that Islam, in itself, does not constitute a hindrance

to women's political representation; rather, the hindrance stems from its interpretation in favour of a patriarchal order.⁵⁸

4. Rejection of feminism

Feminism remains a highly controversial ideology in the Arab region, which prevents its broad use as a tool to support women's political representation. Feminism is largely viewed as a Western orientalist imposition, and in some cases, as incompatible with local culture or religion. Many Islamist women reject the "Muslim feminist" label, arguing that Islam has given women all their rights, and hence that there is no need for feminism to support them.⁵⁹ Feminism has also been discredited, to a degree, by the practices of State feminism highlighted in chapter 1. These largely resulted in the election and appointment of women from a cosmopolitan and upper-class background, weakening the message of feminism as a vector toward inclusive politics, and reinforcing stereotypes of women from lower and middle classes or more socially conservative backgrounds having little place in politics.⁶⁰

B. Institutional barriers

Barriers to women's participation stemming from the overall institutional framework are pervasive throughout the Arab region. Women's efforts to improve their political representation should be understood within the context of the democratization processes that are at work, at different paces, throughout the region. Nevertheless, women face hurdles that are specific to their gender when seeking greater political representation. These include enduring legal discrimination, lower rates of political and economic participation, gender-blind institutional and political processes, the lack of an enabling environment for civil society

organizations, male dominance over political parties, as well as a sometimes hostile media.

1. Enduring legal discrimination

Although all Arab States have lifted legal restrictions on women's ability to vote and run for office, their effective ability to exercise those rights is still indirectly curtailed by other legal barriers.⁶¹ Most States in the Arab region feature dual legal systems. They consist of civil law, often inspired by Western legal systems (Napoleonic code or Anglo-Saxon common law), and family or personal status law, which draws upon patriarchal interpretations of religion.⁶² If women often enjoy equal rights under civil law, such as the right to vote and stand for elections, they continue to face discrimination under family and personal status law. In addition, the constitutions of some Arab States confine women's equality with men to rights in the public sphere, thereby excluding gender equality in the private sphere.⁶³

This uneven legal status has negative implications for women's exercise of their political rights and, consequently, for their political representation, as it reduces their ability and credibility to participate in public life. Notably, it safeguards discriminatory laws, such as the guardianship system enforced in some countries, under which adult women must obtain permission from a male guardian to travel domestically or overseas. Such restrictions on women's mobility, which in some cases also include driving bans, make women's ability to campaign, vote or engage in other forms of political participation dependent on their guardian's consent.⁶⁴ Restrictions on women's right to initiate a divorce in some countries also limit their ability to leave a domestic setting where their involvement in the political sphere is not encouraged. Such legal provisions can constitute strong barriers to

women's political representation, and contribute to their exclusion from the political realm. They also privilege a certain segment of women, namely upper-class women whose families tend to be more open to women's participation in the political and public spheres.

In the judiciary, the legal barriers to women's representation are more explicit, as several States in the region continue to ban women from acting as judges, particularly in sharia or criminal courts. These States argue that this is in line with interpretations of Islamic law, according to which women should not be allowed to sit on sharia or criminal courts. Such interpretations are widely contested, however, as demonstrated by the appointment of female judges in a rising number of Muslim countries, in the Arab region and beyond (chapter 1).

States in the Arab region have been, overall, slow in addressing legal discrimination. Local women's groups have limited options for challenging enduring discrimination, even though the constitutions of many Arab States make reference to the equality of rights in the public sphere. All Arab States (bar the Sudan) are parties to CEDAW, which prohibits legal discrimination. In several countries, legal reform initiatives aimed at eliminating discriminatory laws have encountered resistance under various justifications. For example, in Jordan, the constitutional reform of 2011 was initially expected to add gender to the list of prohibited grounds for discrimination, which already includes race, language and religion, but this was not incorporated in the final draft of the constitution. In addition, several Arab States have put forward substantial reservations to the provisions of CEDAW, particularly to article 2, which urges States to take action to eliminate all forms of discrimination, including the revision of their legislation. These States have often based their reservations on concerns that the provisions contradict interpretations of Islamic law (sharia).

2. Lower rates of political and economic participation for women

Women in the Arab region are less likely to participate in political processes, including voting in elections, owing to sociocultural, economic and structural factors that result in them being generally less informed and less engaged on political issues than men.⁶⁵ Literacy rates remain, on average, lower for women and girls than for men and boys, although this gap is gradually being bridged. In addition, even in cases where women seek to exercise their political rights, their ability to do so can be curtailed through several means, including restrictions on their mobility (for example, making women dependent on their male guardians to access voting centres, particularly in rural areas). Women voters are also more likely to be harassed, as well as physically intimidated and in some cases attacked, which can further discourage their political participation.

The limited rates of political representation and political participation of women tend to reinforce each other.⁶⁶ Lower rates of political participation for women across the Arab region make them a less sought-after body of voters for political parties. Although both male and female voters can hold stereotypes that create hurdles at the polls for female candidates, female voters are more likely to see women as fit for office and to vote for women. As a result, lower rates of voting and participation by women only further disadvantage women candidates in elections.⁶⁷ This also narrows down the pool of politically engaged and connected women that could be included on electoral lists or appointed to cabinet positions. The appointment of women to the cabinet therefore typically tends to take place on a technocratic, rather than political, basis, emphasizing the limited engagement of women in politics (chapter 3).

The large gender gap in labour-force participation between women and men in the Arab region (21 versus 76 per cent) also has consequences for their political representation.⁶⁸ It results in fewer women being financially independent, making them unable to run campaigns or dedicate themselves to politics, unless they receive the support of relevant men. More generally, the poor representation of women in the labour-force reinforces stereotypes that women are less legitimate and less qualified to enter the public sphere than men.⁶⁹ It also reduces the opportunities for women to build wider networks that could be mobilized in support of a political career.

3. Gender-blind institutions and processes

In most Arab countries, the gender-blind character of formal processes of political participation, such as elections, constitutes an important structural barrier for women's representation. A gender-blind electoral process is damaging to democratic, fair and inclusive representation when it upholds, rather than seeks to rectify, inequalities in terms of access and opportunities for candidates, depending on their gender or other characteristics.⁷⁰ Similarly, appointment and hiring processes in the cabinet, as well as in the judiciary and public service, rarely provide for affirmative action to improve the representation of women. In Arab countries, this has resulted in a large gap in rates of representation between women and men at all levels of governance, as highlighted in chapter 1.

Although there are proven methods to bridge gender gaps, such as quotas for elections, appointments, recruitment and nominations, few Arab States have implemented those. This reflects the historic male dominance over political institutions in the Arab region.

Few women have been represented in processes to draft the constitutions upon which further laws, regulations and decrees are built. In constitution drafting committees where women were better represented (for example in Egypt, Tunisia, or Yemen), the resulting draft constitutions introduced strong measures to improve women's representation. Similarly, the continued underrepresentation of women in legislative and executive bodies makes it less likely that electoral systems will be reformed to include concerns specific to women. Women are underrepresented in the bodies charged with supervising and organizing elections, which would provide them with better channels to ensure that the electoral process is gender-sensitive in practice. Female electoral watchers are also rare, and therefore less likely to address, report, and monitor potential issues, particularly those faced by women voters, including physical and psychological intimidation or abuse.

4. Absence of an enabling environment for civil society organizations

Given the importance of civil society organizations as a vehicle for promoting women's political participation, as discussed in chapter 1, any barriers hindering the work of such organizations are likely to impact women's representation. Some States forbid or curtail the activities of civil society groups, through several means, including legal harassment, crackdowns on often vital foreign funding, campaigns to delegitimize civil society organizations and their agendas, as well as the encouragement or tolerance of violence against civil society activists. Although recent political developments had created hopes that the space for civil society would decidedly grow in the region, such progress appears fragile. A case in point is Egypt, where parliament

passed a controversial law in November 2016 forcing NGOs to register and receive State approval to operate.⁷¹ The law curtails fields in which NGOs can be active, while also restricting their ability to cooperate with foreign organizations or receive funding from abroad.

Women's groups appear to be frequently targeted in campaigns to put restrictions on civil society actors. For example, the work of Nazra for Feminist Studies and the Center for Egyptian Women's Legal Assistance, two leading Egyptian women's groups that promote women's political participation and provide mentorship for potential female candidates, was blocked. (box 1 – chapter 1). The two organizations became the targets of investigations launched against their members, asset freezes and travel bans, over allegations of illegal foreign funding. Similarly, in March 2017 the military government of Eastern Libya banned overseas travel for women under 60, on the basis of allegations that there were civil society activists receiving foreign funding.⁷²

groups active in advocating for women's issues in the Arab region have often encountered difficulties in cooperating and coordinating with other, generally male-dominated, civil society groups, as well as political parties and trade unions, to form the coalitions needed to bring about the desired change.⁷³ This reflects the same dynamics as those connected to male dominance over political parties (see below), and can result in the sidelining of women's groups and their concerns within civil society coalitions. The State should foster an enabling environment for all civil society organizations, including women's groups, notably by including them as legitimate interlocutors in consultative processes. This, however, is rarely the case in the Arab region.

5. Male dominance over political parties⁷⁴

In systems that allow multi-party electoral politics, inequalities in political representation can largely be traced back to the central role played by political parties in supporting aspiring politicians to run for office. Political parties in the Arab region are male-dominated, and as a result, men retain the ability to control appointments to electoral lists and party institutions. Commitments and provisions relating to women's participation are a rarity in the internal statutes and by-laws of parties. As men tend to appoint other men, political parties in the region have generally failed to achieve a fair representation of women in their membership and internal governance. More importantly, parties tend to include few women on their electoral lists, as they are seen as less electable, unless forced by law do so.⁷⁵ When women are included on candidate lists, typically to meet a quota, they tend to be placed in lower positions, or in electoral constituencies where the party is less likely to win (see the example of Tunisia in chapter 3).

This underrepresentation on party lists precludes women from gaining access to organizational structures and financing, as well as the patronage and mentorship networks that are often necessary to running in, and winning, an election. In addition, men tend to mentor other men, and to form networks that often thrust promising young men to the forefront.⁷⁶ Thus, not only do women rarely have role models, they also rarely have mentors who advocate for them in the political realm. When they do have such a mentor, it is generally a family member, a father or a husband, as this is more socially acceptable. As a result, female politicians tend to be related to prominent male politicians. In Lebanon, for example, the great majority of women parliamentarians have been the widows, wives, or sisters of male leaders.

Box 7. Challenging male dominance over the political system

The mixed track record for women's representation in the Middle East (chapter 1) is partly due to the often virulent opposition to quotas on the part of some of the more conservative elements of society, who dispute the argument that quotas are needed to address enduring barriers to women's political representation, even if they have full political rights in theory.

In Yemen, for example, while women were fighting for the adoption of a quota in the NDC in 2013, conservative groups opposed to such measures organized several marches and demonstrations in the streets. In parallel, religious scholars held conferences and issued pamphlets and fatwas, declaring that a women's quota would contradict Islamic teachings and is being imposed by the West.^a Interestingly, women were also part of efforts to block measures to increase their representation in government. "Women Against Quota" marched in the streets of Sana'a, while a female leader representing a religious party at the NDC stated that a "quota is racism against men".^b Such opposition is likely due to a combination of individual political preferences, pervasive patriarchal beliefs and norms, as well as possible instrumentalization by male-dominated groups in an attempt to delegitimize pro-gender equality reform. It also partly results from a lack of information and limited prior political engagement: some of these women were invited to an information session on the proposed quota system, and changed their stance after attending.

^a <http://www.aljazeera.net/news/reportsandinterviews/2013/11/10/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%83%D9%88%D8%AA%D8%A7-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%86%D8%B3%D8%A7%D8%A6%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%AA%D8%B4%D8%BA%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%85%D9%86>.

^b <http://www.barakish.net/news02.aspx?cat=0&sub=0&id=58808>.

The pervasive negative effect of male dominance over political parties has meant that they have been generally targeted by measures to increase women's representation. Mandatory quotas for women on electoral lists have proved to be one of the most efficient ways to increase women's representation in politics globally.

In the Arab region, countries that have adopted such systems, such as Algeria, Mauritania or Tunisia, have seen a clear rise in the numbers of female MPs. Tunisia, for example, penalizes parties that do not have female nominees by cutting their public funding and entitlements, while in Algeria parties that see their women candidates elected can be awarded supplementary State funding.

6. An unsupportive media

The media in the Arab region plays a key role in reinforcing male domination over the political sphere, by granting much less airtime to women politicians and candidates, or to gender equality issues. During elections, for example, the media generally concentrates on and covers the campaigns and platforms of male candidates, rather than those of women. In 2015, women accounted for only 18 per cent of persons heard, seen or read about in the Arab region's media (the lowest rate in a global comparison); for topics related to politics and government, the rate drops to 9 per cent. Similarly, even as female reporters slightly outnumber men in the region's media, only 27 per cent of political stories were covered by women, again the lowest rate globally. As a result of this male dominance, gender equality issues were raised in only 6 per cent of news stories in 2015, overwhelmingly by (the few) female reporters. Stories seen as clearly challenging gender stereotypes in the political sphere constituted only a fraction (1 per cent) of all news reports.⁷⁷ Although the emergence of social media has helped women overcome some of these barriers, much fewer women than men have internet access in the region, precluding their equal use of such tools as a means to circumvent traditional media channels.

C. Examples from the field

1. Women in the transition process in Yemen

Yemeni women's participation in the National Dialogue Conference process after the Yemeni uprising has been construed as a historical moment. However, the decision by women in the NDC to run for internal elections for senior positions proved a challenging endeavour. Nabila Al-Zubair, a well-known Yemeni novelist, poetess and political analyst recalls:

I was one of the 565 members, appointed by Presidential Decree, of the National Dialogue Conference in Yemen, which was convened from 18 March 2013 to 25 January 2014. My name was listed under the Independent Women Component, which comprised a total of 40 women. After the launch of the NDC, its members were distributed among nine thematic working groups (WG). According to NDC regulations, women should chair at least three WGs, as a way of concretely translating the NDC's own rules to reach a rate of women's representation of at least 30 per cent in all NDC structures.

I was a member of the Sa'ada Cause WG, which was composed of 50 members and tasked with examining the causes of and proposing solutions to the situation in Sa'ada, a Northern governorate and Houthi stronghold that had witnessed a series of conflicts between 2004 and 2009. In the first meeting, we were supposed to elect a chairperson for the WG, so I ran for the election. I won a clear majority of voters; the candidate who came second had 18 fewer votes. When I was announced as the winner, members got angry and rejected the election results. Those who refused to accept me as the

chairperson came from multiple backgrounds, representing tribal, military, religious and political leaders. But although they were representing different political and social forces, they united against me. They withdrew from the meeting and boycotted subsequent ones. It was not acceptable to them that the WG would be presided over by a woman. Some even claimed that “what happened was not a rejection of Yemeni women’s leadership; rather, it was a rejection of Nabila as a person due to her liberal ideas and writings.”⁷⁸

The work of the WG was paralyzed for almost two months, since there was no quorum to convene it. In this fight, I was not alone, however: NDC women supported me and protested against the members who rejected me as the chairperson. The issue was widely discussed on social media platforms, with a high number of Yemenis finding it scandalous that the results of clean, free and fair election had been rejected by members of the NDC. In just one day, a YouTube video about my case was seen more than 20,000 times. Under such pressure, the NDC leadership had to intervene. After several mediation efforts, the leadership was finally able to convince the boycotting members to return to the WG meetings, abide by the democratic rule, and accept the result of the elections.

I want to emphasize that women’s solidarity yielded a positive result – women have power when they are united. I continued to chair this (challenging) WG until the end of the NDC. I submitted its outcome report, which was adopted in the last session of the NDC.⁷⁹

Following the NDC, seven Yemeni women were selected by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) and the United Nations Secretary-General Special Envoy to Yemen, Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, to participate in UN-brokered peace talks in Kuwait in April 2015. They were representatives of civil society organizations selected from the Yemeni Women’s Pact for Peace and Security, a group established with support from UN Women and the United Nations Secretary-General Special Envoy to Yemen. The participation of the seven women in the peace talks was met with a broad smear campaign, with false accusations levelled against them and questions raised about who was behind their participation in the process. Though most of these women were well-known for their peaceful activism to end the war in Yemen, campaigns orchestrated by both sides of the conflict, including militias and political parties, questioned the purpose and the added value of women’s participation in the peace and negotiation process. Afrah Al-Zoubah, First Deputy of the NDC Secretary General says:

The two negotiating parties refused to meet us from the beginning, so we had to take steps to clarify our mission, each within our own network and connections. This proved an uphill battle, however. A senior member of one of the official delegations asked us if the objective of our participation in the peace negotiations was to gain ministerial posts. It was clear that the unqualified men feared that qualified women would get a piece of this small cake.⁸⁰

2. Conflict as a barrier to women’s representation in the Syrian Arab Republic

The conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic has caused large-scale destruction and human

rights abuses across the country and the region, affecting women from all sociodemographic groups. The conflict has created a complex web of barriers that limit women's access to opportunities to participate in public affairs and decision-making processes. Many of these barriers result from the magnitude of physical violence, intimidation, displacement and humanitarian needs.

These barriers resonate with sociocultural and structural barriers that had existed prior to the conflict, but they were augmented as a result of the failure of political processes and rule of law in several parts of the Syrian Arab Republic, and further amplified as a result of reinforced patriarchy and radicalization. Violent extremist and radical groups subjected women and girls to gross human rights violations, including executions and exceedingly cruel punishments, use as human shields,⁸¹ in addition to imposition of particular restrictions, such as dress codes.

Across the spectrum, Syrian women face numerous barriers to their participation in political and civil activism, social work, as well as peace processes to end the conflict. At the beginning of the conflict, Syrian women played an important role in nonviolent protests despite significant systematic intimidation, detention, and torture.⁸² Their contributions to local ceasefires, humanitarian corridors, coordinating relief activities, and mediation and conflict mitigation at the local level are remarkable.⁸³

Barriers to women's participation in the peace process remain particularly evident, given that they were not represented at the negotiating table, or even in informal channels, during the first three years of the conflict, despite the explicit call for their participation in the 2012 Geneva Communiqué.⁸⁴ Social fragmentation, political polarization, the lack of technical and

financial capacities, in addition to security-related tensions, are among the key barriers that hinder women's voices and contributions to the peace process. These barriers vary from one group to another, and are constantly influenced by the broader political and security dynamics of the conflict.

Conflicting views and positions often taxed the ability of women's groups and civil society organizations to facilitate women's participation in the peace process at the national level, despite their success at the local level. Such tensions were particularly pronounced when the stakeholders involved were perceived to be associated with parties to the conflict, increasing the risk of further polarization and fragmentation.

The United Nations Special Envoy for Syria exerted efforts to help address some of these barriers, coinciding with the Geneva II Talks. The Syrian Women's Initiative for Peace and Democracy was launched following a 2014 conference for Syrian women leaders held in Geneva and supported by UN Women. This conference acted as a forum for exchanging perspectives on women's participation in the peace process, with a dual focus on enabling women's participation and strengthening women's contributions to the talks. The conference was concluded with a range of recommendations, in relation to ending the fighting and promoting the peace process, and on the role of women in peacebuilding.

The Syrian Women's Initiative has achieved notable success in addressing some of the key barriers towards formulating a broad-based and consistent agenda for peace in the Syrian Arab Republic, and its members continue to champion civic efforts towards a just and durable resolution to the conflict. Despite these achievements, however, most of the barriers

remain. Negotiating parties continue to have minimal representation of women in their delegations, while efforts to create an enabling environment for women's groups to organize and lobby for peace are insufficient. Recent efforts to further mitigate these barriers include support for the Syrian Women's Advisory Board based in Geneva, which is an independent civil society body that advises the Special Envoy and functions as a link between the peace process and Syrian women's organizations and civil society organizations.

3. Running as a woman candidate in Jordanian elections

In the 2007 Jordanian parliamentary election, only six women won seats, despite a record number of female candidates. One of those was Samar Haj Hassan, who was a candidate in the Third Constituency of Amman, the capital, competing against 26 others.⁸⁵ She says:

I faced two major challenges during the elections. The first was about how to introduce myself to voters as a qualified woman candidate and present my electoral platform, which had a special focus on women's and children's rights, as well as on the pension law, reflecting my broad experience working at the National Council for Family Affairs. I worked hard to develop my electoral platform and make it relevant to the daily challenges faced by Jordanian women. My experience working on the protection of families and children's rights represented a strong asset, and a key motivation for my decision to run in the parliamentary elections. The second challenge was that of financing my campaign, since I was running as an independent candidate and had to cover all the campaign costs from my personal financial resources.

Hassan's electoral campaign as an independent candidate was difficult, and her limited resources made it very challenging to run in one of the richest and most highly competitive constituencies in Jordan. Other candidates in Amman's third district included wealthy businessmen, politicians and political party candidates. "Had I run in the elections as the candidate of a political party, my campaign would have been much easier and less costly for me", says Hassan.

Another challenge I faced, although I think it affected both male and female candidates, was people's lack of confidence in the fact that elections could lead to any change in their lives. But sometimes the same challenge faced by men and women is easier for men to overcome compared to women, due to stronger networking and financial abilities. As a result, most of the votes I got did not come from poor neighbourhoods, but from rich ones. Had I won the election, I would have introduced legal reforms as my first priority on the agenda, since I felt that legislatures were not sensitive to the challenges of actually implementing the laws enacted.

Regarding gender issues, Hassan says that "legislators are not aware of gender issues and the complex realities faced by women". She also challenges prevailing societal views about women not being qualified to be involved in the public sphere: "As the only woman member of the Independent Elections Commission, out of five, my track record has never been challenged, since I have proved myself as a qualified professional woman. That is what counts. Demonstrating professionalism will have an impact on people's beliefs and expectations, regardless of gender".⁸⁶

4. Women's political representation in Libya: a case of pre-existing inequalities

Since the uprising that overthrew the government of Muammar al-Qaddafi in 2011, Libya has witnessed severe political instability and the spread of armed militias. The country experienced a power struggle when the Islamist-dominated General National Congress (GNC) refused to step down for the newly elected House of Representatives (HoR), and the Libyan polity began to fragment. Following peace talks, the United Nations-backed Government of National Accord (GNA) was announced in early 2016, but the fragmentation of the country persisted with the emergence of two competing governments. Fighting and conflict have continued, and the ongoing civil war has led to substantial deterioration in living conditions.

The Libyan civil war has disproportionately affected women, who bear the brunt of war and conflict that constantly target them and their children.⁸⁷ They are particularly affected by the absence of law and order, which has resulted in nationwide protection concerns.⁸⁸ Due to the spread of war across the country and the lack of security and stability in most cities, women have been less able to take part in peacebuilding, as they face strong barriers preventing them from being engaged in the political process.⁸⁹

As a result of the dire humanitarian crisis, war and instability, women face several obstacles in their efforts to engage in the ongoing political process and participate in political dialogue. Sociocultural barriers have been highlighted as the most robust obstacles that Libyan women encounter when they strive to engage in the political process.⁹⁰ Zahia Farag, an activist and the chairwoman of the African Women International Federation Board, stresses the fact that:

Libyan society is a traditional and male-dominated society, and Libyan women have historically been denied access to the public sphere. Furthermore, the lack of laws that protect women and support their engagement in the public sphere hinders their advancement. It prevents many of them from contributing to the nation-building process and participating at the political level.⁹¹

Farag emphasizes that:

The lack of education and awareness among women contributes to their absence from politics. Women have little experience in the public sphere or in politics, due to the deeply rooted inequalities they faced prior to the uprising, and their exclusion from public life.⁹²

In the present situation of conflict, it is more difficult to mobilize women and secure access to education for many of those who live in war zones. The lack of political will by the government has been highlighted as an important barrier to women's political participation, although the electoral law passed on 22 July 2013 introduces a quota for women in parliament (6 out of 60 seats). Moreover, as a result of the lack of awareness and understanding of many provisions and regulations that might give women access to political participation, including Security Council resolution 1325 and human rights provisions, female aspirations have not materialized.

More generally, Libyan women are inhibited by a conservative societal framework. Key impediments to their political and civic participation include limited access to transportation, restrictive norms requiring women to be home before sundown, and the

expectation that their sole concern should be to raise their children and take care of their household.⁹³ The lack of funding for women's empowerment is another key obstacle, as is the lack of a long-term vision to advance women's

political participation by the international community. The absence of any cross-regional participation mechanisms that would bring women and men together to bridge geographic and ideological divisions is also notable.

3. Case Studies

The diverse political and sociological profile of Arab States has resulted in multiple realities for women in the region. Although the previous chapters have highlighted some common trends and barriers, the level and quality of women's political representation vary to a great extent among individual Arab States.⁹⁴ In this regard, a regional perspective carries the risk of overlooking the complex historical, political, cultural and socioeconomic context of each country, and how these factors have affected, positively or negatively, the presence of women in the political sphere. Those are also the environments in which a variety of actors seeking to advance the political representation of women (the State, women's groups and civil society organizations, with support from international organizations) have been operating, and they have influenced their capabilities, strategies and interactions.

This chapter of the study seeks to examine the individual cases of four Arab States, in order to reveal specific local dynamics that have led to progress, or setbacks, for women's political representation. It provides in-depth case studies of the qualitative and quantitative aspects of women's representation in leadership positions in four Arab States, namely Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia. These have been selected as examples of countries taking effective action to improve the representation of women at all levels, despite their different political structures. Two of those countries, Jordan and Morocco, are monarchies that were left relatively unchanged by the political developments of 2010-2011. Tunisia and Egypt, on the other hand, witnessed

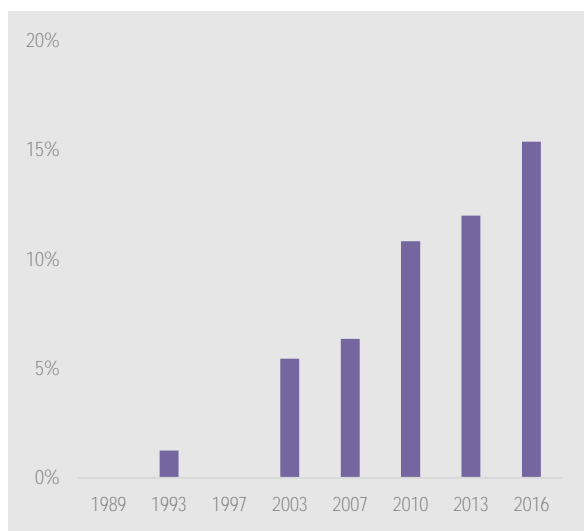
regime change after a period of upheaval. This chapter examines the presence of women in the executive, legislative and judiciary branches by scrutinizing the composition of the cabinets, the election of women to representative bodies (at both the national and local levels), and the number and role of women in the judiciary. In addition, the chapter investigates the number and role of women in the civil service, with a focus on its upper echelons.

A. Jordan

1. Legislative branch

Women in Jordan were allowed to vote and run as candidates for the first time in the 1989 elections, but none of the 12 female candidates (out of a total of 647 competing for 80 seats) were elected that year. In the following elections, in 1993, only three women ran as candidates; one of them, Toujan Faisal, became the first female member of the Jordanian parliament. She was not re-elected in the 1997 elections, however, and none of the other 16 female candidates were elected either.⁹⁵ This was an unwelcome surprise for Jordanian women, and did not make for good publicity for a government attempting to present a modern face, in a process referred to by Glenn Robinson as "defensive democratization".⁹⁶ In response, for the first elections under the new King, Abdullah II, in 2003, a quota system was introduced. Women had six seats reserved for them in the lower house of parliament, out of 110, i.e. 5 per cent.⁹⁷

Figure 7. Percentage of Jordanian women in parliament, 1989-2016



Source: IPU.

In the 2007 elections, six women won the seats reserved for them through the quota system. In addition, one woman won a seat in an open competition. In 2010, the number of seats reserved for women was doubled to 12, amounting to 10 per cent of the parliament's 120 seats.⁹⁸ Again, one woman was also elected in an open competition. In 2013, following regional political developments, 121 women ran for office.⁹⁹ The number of seats allotted to women was increased to 15, with the addition of three seats reserved for women from Bedouin areas.¹⁰⁰ This rise was also in line with the increase in the number of parliamentarians to 150, leaving the female quota at 10 per cent of all seats.¹⁰¹ However, three additional women were elected outside of the quota system, bringing the total number of women in the legislature to 18, or 12 per cent of the total number of parliamentarians.¹⁰²

A campaign to increase the number of reserved seats in parliament to 23 took place during the debate over the electoral law for the 2016 elections. The proposal was turned down in

parliament, however, disappointing its backers, including women's groups.¹⁰³ The elections were held in September 2016 and saw 252 female candidates competing for seats, the largest number in Jordanian history. There were 15 seats out of 130 reserved for women; women candidates won an extra five seats, bringing the percentage of female MPs to 15 per cent.¹⁰⁴ In this regard, the Jordanian example provides evidence that political will, as demonstrated by the introduction of quotas, along with some momentum toward eliminating certain forms of discrimination against women through legal reform,¹⁰⁵ have contributed to the normalization of women's presence in politics. This is reflected in the gradual increase of women elected in open competitions, and in the rising number of female candidates. Observers have reported that this "was accompanied by a vital shift in the perception of women. In the build-up to the election, coalitions anxious to tap into the female vote scrambled to incorporate a woman on their lists".¹⁰⁶ Nevertheless, parity remains a distant prospect: the majority of lists (86 per cent) in the 2016 elections included only one female candidate, severely limiting women's chances of being elected.¹⁰⁷

2. The executive

(a) The cabinet

The year 1989 is generally considered the year of Jordan's passage to democracy, as the country held its first elections (widely considered to have been free and fair) in two decades that year. In the post-1989 era, several women have held portfolios in government. Rima Khalaf became the Minister of Industry and Trade in 1993, and in 1995 she became the Minister of Planning.¹⁰⁸ Neither of these ministries were from among those associated with traditional women's roles. In 1999, she also became the first female Deputy Prime Minister

in the region. In 1995, Salwa al-Masri took over the Social Development portfolio. Khalaf continued to serve in all the successive cabinets until 2000. Two women were appointed to the cabinet in 2002, and the number increased to five in 2005.

In the following years, the number fluctuated between two and four female ministers, but women's representation in the cabinet never exceeded 15 per cent. The 2010 cabinet included three women. The next one, formed in early 2011, after uprisings in the region inspired demonstrations in Jordan, comprised two women (Ministry of Social Development and Ministry of Antiquities and Tourism). The following cabinet of October 2011 also had only two women (Higher Education; Social Development). The cabinet formed in May 2012 included only one woman, who was appointed State Minister for Women's Affairs. In contrast to the portfolios held by Khalaf in the previous decade, most of these were "soft" portfolios.

The most recent cabinets also comprised a limited number of female ministers. A small cabinet of only 21 ministers was formed in November 2012, and did not include any women. The cabinet formed in March 2013 initially comprised one woman, although this number rose following reshuffles. The 2015 reshuffle saw a record number of five women in the cabinet, with portfolios for Communication and Information Technology; Industry, Trade and Supply; Transport; Social Development; and Culture. The cabinet formed in June 2016 comprised four women, although only one of the women ministers in the previous government kept her post (Communication and Information Technology). The three other portfolios held by women were Tourism; Social Development; and Public Sector Development.

The number of women in government fell to two in the September 2016 reshuffle, to the disappointment of civil society and women's groups. The government was modified once again in January 2017, but with no change in the number of female ministers, who only account for 7 per cent of the cabinet's 28 ministers.

A review of the profile of women currently serving in the cabinet confirms that their appointments were largely technocratic in nature.¹⁰⁹ None of the women appointed to government had previously been members of the Jordanian parliament, nor had they been affiliated with a political party. This technocratic profile highlights the fact that the pool of women holding political office, or benefiting from political connections, from which ministers can be appointed is unsurprisingly smaller than that of men. In addition, the high level of education and relevant expertise in the public and private sector of female ministers suggests that the expectations placed on them, in terms of educational qualifications or experience, are much higher than those placed on men.

(b) The public sector

In Jordan, as elsewhere in the Arab region, women tend to prefer working in the public rather than the private sector. The former is perceived to be more compatible with the multiple shifts many women experience when they combine a professional career, taking care of the household and raising their children. To cope with these roles, Jordanian women in the private sector tend to quit their jobs after marriage, while those in the public service do not. In 2015, women occupied about 45 per cent of positions in the Jordanian public sector.¹¹⁰ Yet they held only 29 per cent of supervisory or leadership positions.

These numbers drop markedly, to 24 and 21 per cent respectively, when the Ministries of Health and Education are excluded, highlighting the fact that women remain severely underrepresented in traditionally male-dominated spheres. They represent only a fraction of the workforce in customs, the armed forces, the police and the general security forces.¹¹¹ They are least represented in “hard” ministries such as the Interior (13 per cent). Gender expectations also influence the kinds of roles women perform in the civil service. According to a 2010 UNDP study, across all ministries, women were particularly underrepresented in jobs related to the religious and Islamic affairs sector (8 per cent of employees, for example Imams), transport (17 per cent, for example drivers), natural resources (19 per cent), and infrastructure, services and communications (24 per cent).¹¹²

Women are also underrepresented in leadership positions, although there are stark divergences between ministries in this regard. According to a 2010 study by the Jordanian National Commission for Women (JNCW), 57 per cent of employees in middle leadership position at the National Library Department were women.¹¹³ Similarly, 53 per cent of middle managers in the Ministry of Political Development were female, which was higher than the proportion of overall female employees in the ministry (44 per cent). Nevertheless, the overall percentage of women in leadership positions remained low. Even in “soft” ministries such as Social Development, of which several ministers have been female, in 2010 “there [were] four women heads of departments out of 13 in the ministry, and only two female directors out of 40 directors in different regions”.¹¹⁴

Recruitment and retention trends in different ministries show that although the number of women in the public sector is increasing, their representation continues to markedly decrease as one goes up in the hierarchy. Evidence gathered from focus groups of female and male public servants suggests a key factor is implicit discrimination privileging men.¹¹⁵ Decision makers, who are largely male, appear to prefer to promote men to higher positions, as men have better mentoring networks,¹¹⁶ and are often perceived to be more competent, or to have more time to dedicate to work, as their wives are assumed to be taking responsibility for the home.¹¹⁷

The government has demonstrated its awareness of the need to improve the breadth of women’s representation in the public sector. The annual plans of the Ministry for Public Sector Development contain targets for the representation of women in the public service in general, and in leadership positions in particular. This is supported by capacity-building and mentoring programmes targeting female civil servants, as well as the analysis and recommendation of possible mechanisms to improve women’s representation, for example the introduction of flexible working arrangements. The government has also produced gender disaggregated data on employment in the public sector, which is relatively rare in the region.

3. The judiciary

The number of female Jordanian judges has risen steadily since the first was appointed in 1996. In 2013, 16 per cent of about 850 judges were women.¹¹⁸ This progress reflects a deliberate government policy aimed at raising the number of women in the judiciary. Since 2005, 15 per cent of seats have been reserved

for women at the Judicial Institute of Jordan, the postgraduate institution that trains future Jordanian judges.¹¹⁹ The Government has also launched several funds providing aspiring and current female judges with scholarships for training in Jordan and abroad. The number of women judges is likely to continue to rise steadily in the future, as there are now more women than men studying law at the University of Jordan.¹²⁰

Nevertheless, female judges continue to face considerable obstacles, as their poor representation in higher courts suggests. None of the eleven members of the Judicial Council in Jordan is a woman, and there are no female judges in high courts such as the Court of Cassation or the Court of Grand Felonies.¹²¹ Instead, women judges are largely found in juvenile courts, reconciliation courts, criminal courts and courts of first instance. Women judges also continue to face strong social opposition in their work, as many Jordanian men (and in some cases women) believe that women are too emotional to deliver fair judgments.¹²²

4. Local councils

A woman was appointed to the Amman Municipal Council for the first time in 1980. In 1982, a municipalities law was promulgated, giving women the right to vote and to stand for election to municipal councils.¹²³ The first municipal elections took place in 1995. Ten women won municipal seats across the country, and one was elected Mayor of the town of Al-Wahadneh in north-western Jordan. She lost her seat in the 1999 municipal elections, however, while eight women won local seats. In the 2003 elections, only 5 out of 40 female candidates won seats, amounting to less than 1 per cent of the total; the government appointed an additional 102 women, bringing the percentage of women in municipal councils to 21.¹²⁴

Box 8. The politics of introducing quotas in Jordan

The introduction of the women's quota for municipal elections in 2007 illustrates the external political motivations that are behind such policies in some cases. The government took great pride in the quota, presenting it as "a gift to women from the King" as stated by an official at the Interior Ministry. The Prime Minister was keen to emphasize that this was a "governmental move rather than a consequence of pressures from any women's organization, be it domestic or foreign".^a

Some researchers have, however, suggested that introducing the quota was an attempt to please international donors and secure aid. At the time, the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) funded by the United States was preparing to hand out awards from a US\$ 5 billion fund to countries that were "ruling justly" and "establishing economic freedom". As David and Nanes point out, "Jordan's passage of the gender quota coincides neatly with its being named eligible for MCC funds", noting that the "potential to qualify for aid from the MCC provided the incentive for Jordan's gender quota at the municipal level". These reforms also constituted means of presenting a modern and westernized political process to international donors, especially as the move was somewhat disingenuous. Instead of taking 20 per cent of the existing seats and reserving them for women, the government created additional seats for each council to bring the proportion of women to at least 20 per cent.

The above example suggests that it is difficult to attribute progress on women's rights to solely one actor: the government, international organizations or civil society organizations. Progress is often the combined result of the work done by each one of them, even when such efforts are not coordinated among the various stakeholders.

^a Assaf David and Stefanie Nanes. The Women's Quota in Jordan's Municipal Councils: International and Domestic Dimensions, *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy*, vol. 32, No. 4, October 2011, pp. 275-304.

In January 2007, Jordan introduced a 20 per cent quota for women in municipal councils (box 8); as a result, the July 2007 elections saw the election of 203 women through the quota. In addition, 23 women won open elections, and one woman was elected mayor. The next municipal elections were held in August 2013, two years after the Arab uprisings, and at a time when Jordan's economy, society and infrastructure were beginning to suffer from the strain of hosting Syrian refugees. Popular resentment and apathy characterized these elections, which saw a turnout of only 30 per cent, compared to 50 per cent in 2007.¹²⁵ The women's quota was raised to 25 per cent of seats for these elections. Women won 29 per cent of municipal seats (270 through the quota and 56 outside of it), but no woman was elected to a mayoral seat.¹²⁶ The increasing number of women winning seats outside of quotas is an encouraging sign, one that again underlines the fact that the political participation of women is gradually becoming normalized in Jordan, as each city and town has now at least one woman on its council.

B. Morocco

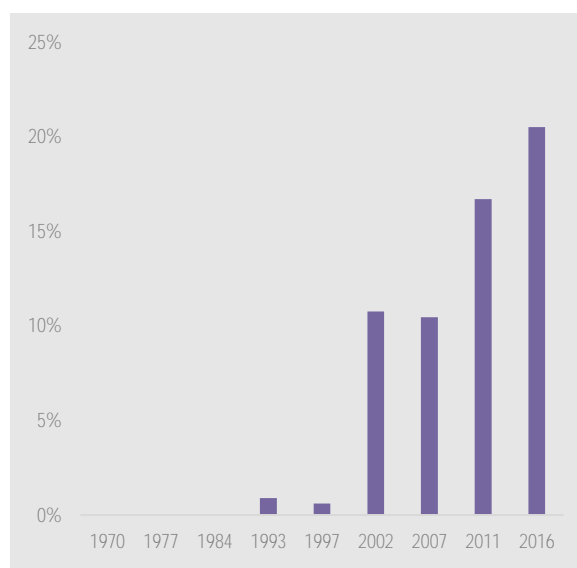
1. Legislative branch

Although women in Morocco obtained the right to vote and to run for office in 1963, their participation remained limited for the next three decades.¹²⁷ In 1993, two women joined the Moroccan legislature for the first time, out of 222 members of the lower chamber (*majlis al-nuwwab*, or the House of Representatives).

Women remained largely excluded from political institutions until the reign of King Mohammed VI, who ascended the throne in

July 1999.¹²⁸ Partly in response to increasing domestic and international campaigns, King Mohammed VI endorsed an agenda of modernization, introducing pro-democratization reforms that sought, *inter alia*, to increase the representation of women in parliament, which had up until that point been the lowest in the region. The 2002 elections took place under a revised voting system, with the introduction of a women's quota in the form of a closed-list proportional representation system. Under the new system, 30 seats were reserved for women out of 325. Thirty women were elected via the national (women-only) lists presented by 24 of the 26 parties that participated in the elections, and five additional women were elected through district lists (which are open to candidates of both sexes). Following the introduction of the quota, women's representation in parliament witnessed a considerable increase. Figure 8 shows that it rose from 0.6 per cent in 1997 to 10.8 per cent in 2002.¹²⁹

Figure 8. Percentage of Moroccan women in parliament, 1970-2016



Source: IPU.

Box 9. Running as a female candidate in Morocco

I consider my struggle for the improvement of the status of Moroccan women within society and within the State to represent an indissoluble part of the Moroccan feminist movement. My journey began from within one of the country's existing political parties, the Socialist Union of Popular Forces (USFP), and was enriched by my participation in the activities of several feminist and human rights organizations. At the time, Morocco had been witnessing an increased struggle to democratize both the State and Moroccan society, as a basis for achieving sustainable development. Feminist organizations and women's branches within democratic parties had succeeded in placing the improvement of women's status at the heart of this democratic and developmental cause. It soon became clear that achieving this goal would require a struggle on two fronts: the personal one, which involved improving the situation of women in the private sphere, and the public one, which included increasing women's participation in the economic and political life of the country, as well as encouraging women to participate in all areas of decision-making (political, economic and administrative). This encouraged many women like me to run as candidates in different electoral contests – whether at the local or the legislative level. I ran for office based on the belief that the absence of women from electoral institutions is a crucial reason why their causes are not taken up by the decision makers who set policies in these institutions. This is how my journey in elected institutions started. I made sure to run in several elections, both local and national, and while I did fail in some, I succeeded and won a seat in others.

Source: Personal interview with Fatima Belmoudden, former member of the Moroccan Parliament

The 2007 parliamentary elections took place three years after the passage of a new *moudawana* (personal status law), which reinforced gender equality in the eyes of the law. These elections saw a stark drop in the number of voters. Voter turnout plunged to a

“historical low” of 37 per cent, down from 51 per cent in 2002 and 58 per cent in 1997.¹³⁰ The election results surprised many observers, as Islamist parties (running on a platform of protecting Morocco's Islamic identity) won fewer seats than expected, which led them to level accusations of corruption and vote buying against other parties. The election results were also seen as a step back for women, with only 34 female candidates elected to parliament.¹³¹ This led women's organizations to demand the adoption of special provisions that would enable women to be elected or appointed to high level positions. They also promoted the idea of a 30 per cent quota for women in the legislature, especially the lower chamber, as they deemed this number necessary to “provide a critical mass that would allow significant changes in policies and procedures”.¹³² As shown in box 9, this coincided with a growing realization by many Moroccan women that removing the substantive barriers to their public participation could only be achieved if they increased their representation in all structures of power.

In 2011, Morocco witnessed a wave of protests inspired by similar movements in the Arab region. The protests were associated with the emergence of what Zakia Salime has termed “new feminism”, which “seems to be emerging from outside of the traditional spaces of feminist organizations, and seems to be carried out by men and women as partners in the struggle for social and economic justice”.¹³³ This incorporation of women's demands in a broader agenda resulted in them being addressed in the constitutional reforms introduced by King Mohammed VI in response to the protests, which included several amendments reinforcing gender equality. The voting system was also changed: the national list of seats reserved for women doubled from 30 to 60 out of a total of 395 seats (15 per cent), while a new list of

30 seats was reserved for young candidates under the age of 40. The new law led to a large increase in the number of women candidates in the subsequent 2011 elections, where they made up nearly 23 per cent of all those running for office. As a result, 67 women were elected to parliament, amounting to about 17 per cent of the total number of legislators. The largest female representation (16 MPs) belonged to the leading party, the Islamist Justice and Development Party (known by its French acronym PJD). This was notable, as in general conservative parties “tend to return fewer women to parliament than parties to the left”.¹³⁴ However, the reserved seat system “forced all parties to search seriously for women candidates to fill their list for the national list election”.¹³⁵

While higher quotas led to an improvement in terms of the representation of women in parliament, they also led scholars to question their effectiveness as a measure to increase women’s inclusion in the political process. Indeed, “opponents of the adoption of electoral quotas for women often predict that quotas will come to constitute a glass ceiling, which tend to prevent women from being nominated and elected beyond the quota requirement and to non-reserved seats. At a first glance, the [2011 Moroccan elections seem] to confirm this prediction”.¹³⁶ Though all parties ran women for the national list, very few of them had female candidates heading the district lists (only 3 per cent of women candidates were at the head of their lists).

Whether the quotas indeed constitute a glass ceiling that impedes women’s access to representation in Morocco remains to be seen. Darhour and Dahlerup were not convinced that this was the case, and saw a glimmer of hope in the election of seven women on district lists, a historical record. Indeed, as it was more

challenging for women to run on district lists, it is notable that they still managed to win. Darhour and Dahlerup nevertheless questioned the sustainability of women’s representation without the quotas. They predicted that the number of women in parliament would decrease should the quotas be removed, “not as dramatically as in Egypt after the removal of the previous quota system [in the 2012 elections, see Egypt case study] but enough to show the limited sustainability of women’s political representation even in Morocco”.¹³⁷

The 2016 elections were, in this regard, a good test of the strength of the reforms and the viability of the quotas.¹³⁸ Women won 21 per cent of seats in parliament, or 81 seats, representing an increase of almost a quarter compared to the previous elections. Out of those who won, 71 women were elected within the quota system and the rest in elections also open to men.¹³⁹ Although women’s representation still falls short of the aspirations of Moroccan feminist movements, the results of these elections suggest that, similarly to what we have seen in Jordan, voters in Morocco are slowly getting accustomed to seeing women in parliament and are increasingly willing to elect them to seats beyond those reserved for them.

Morocco’s success in increasing women’s representation can be attributed to many factors that combined to introduce this change. The reform of the personal status law, as highlighted in box 10, coupled with the political will to introduce change, in addition to the efforts of civil society and feminist groups, created an overall environment favourable to women’s presence in the public sphere. This suggests that, as argued in chapter 2, eliminating disparities and discrimination in the private sphere can positively impact women’s presence and participation in politics.

Box 10. Reforming the *moudawana* in Morocco

The first reforms of the Moroccan *moudawana* (*moudawanat al-usra* or *moudawanat al-ahwal al-shakhsiyya*) personal status law were enacted in 1993 by King Hassan II, after a civil society campaign that gathered over one million signatures. Though reforms were still in their early stages, they included giving a bride the right to verbal consent to her marriage, forbidding forced marriage by a girl's father, and mandating a judge's permission for a husband's unilateral repudiation of his wife, as well as for taking another wife.

Upon his accession to the throne, King Mohammed VI announced the formation of a royal commission to reform the *moudawana*. The work of the commission resulted in a proposal to replace the old code by a new one. The new code was ratified in January 2004 by the Moroccan House of Representatives after extensive deliberations.

The new legislation introduced several reforms, and upheld the principles of equality between men and women, equality of responsibility within the family and equality in terms of rights and obligations within the household. The new law also raised the age of marriage to 18, limited polygamy, and introduced the possibility of divorce by mutual consent under judicial supervision. This ended the practice of unilateral repudiation by men. In 2007 the *moudawana* was further modified, as women were granted the right to pass their citizenship to their children from foreign husbands. This resulted in Morocco having some of the most progressive laws on women's rights in the Arab region, although their enforcement has proved difficult in remote rural areas.

In response to the protest movement of 20 February 2011, the monarchy promised constitutional reforms, part of which concerned women's rights. The new constitution, approved by referendum in July 2011, addressed the concerns and demands of women's organizations in article 19, which enshrines equality between women and men by making them equal citizens under the law. It granted men and women equal social, economic, political and environmental rights, and equal civil rights. It also led to the creation of the Authority for Equality and the Fight Against All Forms of Discrimination, charged with putting into practice the constitutional recognition of equal rights. This emphasis on equality now paves the way for the full implementation of women's rights as prescribed in CEDAW and the withdrawal of reservations to the Convention.

2. The executive

(a) The cabinet

Although women had been represented in parliament since 1993, the first female ministers were appointed to the cabinet four years later. Four women were appointed as State ministers, covering largely "soft" portfolios such as Youth and Sports; Education; Social Affairs; and Mining, in the 1997 government, which comprised a total of 28 ministers. The cabinet proved short-lived, however, and it was replaced by a new cabinet in 1998, which only featured two women as State ministers.

The 2007 government included five women ministers with portfolios for Energy, Mines, Water and the Environment; Health; Social Development and Family; Sports and Youth; and Culture. There were also two female ministers of State heading the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. The 2007 government contained an interesting exception to the trend that sees women generally nominated for "soft" portfolios, with the appointment of Amina Benkhadra to the Ministry of Energy, Mines, Water and the Environment. This was largely a technocratic appointment, however, as Benkhadra held a doctorate in

mining from the prestigious École des Mines in Paris, and had years of experience in the public sector. The ministers of Sports and Culture were also not professional politicians (their respective backgrounds were in sports and theatre).

Following the victory of the PJD in the 2011 elections, its leader Abdelillah Benkirane was tasked with forming a government. The first PJD-led cabinet, announced in January 2012, featured only one female minister out of 31. Bassima Hakkaoui, a PJD MP, was appointed to head the Ministry of Solidarity, Women, Family, and Social Development. Her appointment proved controversial, however, as she had been a long-time critic of feminist organizations and their views. In a reshuffle the next year, Fatima Marouan became the Minister for Crafts and Social Economy, while four women obtained State minister portfolios. This brought the number of female ministers in government to 6 out of 36 ministers.

The cabinet appointed in April 2017 comprised the highest number ever reached of women in cabinet (9 out of 39 members), although only one was a minister – the remaining eight held State minister positions. Bassima Hakkaoui remained as minister with a slightly renamed portfolio (Solidarity, Equality, Family, and Social Development). The State ministries were, meanwhile, either soft (Crafts and Social Economy) or largely technocratic in nature, covering issues such as Fisheries; Water; and Sustainable Development.

(b) The public sector

Morocco has a relatively large civil service. There were almost 600,000 civil servants in 2016, over 90 per cent of whom were concentrated in seven ministries.¹⁴⁰ Women make up almost 39 per cent of all civil servants, a number that has been markedly increasing in

the past years. 58 per cent of all female public servants work in the Ministry of Education, 13 per cent in the Ministry of Health and 11 per cent in the Ministry of the Interior. Women make up 59 per cent of all personnel in the ministry of Health, 45 per cent in the Ministry of Justice and between 41-42 per cent in the Ministries of Economy and Finances; Education; and Islamic Endowments and Affairs.

These numbers show a clear trend towards feminization in the health sector, as well as the presence of a number of women in the educational sector, whether at the school or the university level, as consistent with regional trends. In Morocco as elsewhere, educating (especially children) and caring for people is seen as an extension of women's biological and social roles. Women are therefore not discouraged from entering these fields, especially when families become aware of their feminized work environments. Work that minimizes contact with unrelated males is more tolerable, if not desirable. The increasing feminization of staff at "hard ministries" such as Justice; Economy; and Finances provides a counterpoint, and shows that women are expanding their areas of activity in the public service beyond traditional spheres. Nevertheless, women remain largely underrepresented in some "hard" ministries, including the Ministry of the Interior, where they account for only 21 per cent of personnel.

According to a UNDP study, women accounted for only 11 per cent of public employees working in a rural environment in 2009.¹⁴¹ This can be explained by the high levels of rural illiteracy, especially among women. In addition, social customs and mores are more liberal in urban environments, and allow women more leeway to work outside the home, especially as the higher cost of living in the city is likely to result in the need for two salaries in many homes.

Women's representation in the public service tends to decrease as one moves up in the hierarchy. The UNDP study noted that although women's participation stood above 30 per cent at the professional and middle management levels, at the executive level it decreased to just over 23 per cent. That percentage drops even further, to just over 15 per cent, in specific leadership positions.¹⁴² For example, in 2012 only 12 per cent of secretaries-general (the highest civil service rank) were women.¹⁴³ In the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, only 12 per cent of all ambassadors and less than 6 per cent of all consuls were female in 2009. Women's participation at the higher levels remains weak even in ministries with a high concentration of women such as Education or Health. Moreover, there appears to be no significant correlation between the degree of feminization of a given ministry and the representation of women in leadership positions.

The share of women in the public service in Morocco has been increasing over the past few years, as a result of more women entering the labour force. Successive governments have also shown growing awareness of the need to feminize the public sector, resulting in a series of plans and actions to improve the attractiveness of a civil service career for women. Nevertheless, women in the public service continue to face strong barriers both to their entry and career progression. These include issues related to work-life balance. An internal survey of the civil service suggests that women are more likely to move up in the hierarchy when they are not married, while the opposite is true for men. The survey also suggests that having children has a much more marked effect on the career progression of women than men, in the absence of suitable facilities such as nurseries.¹⁴⁴ In addition, women cannot benefit from established

networks of mentorship to the same extent as men. Women public servants also report more occurrences of attacks on their authority, competence and qualifications, despite being on average more educated than their male counterparts.¹⁴⁵

3. The judiciary

Morocco appointed its first female judge in 1961, making it the first Muslim country to nominate a woman to the bench. While the number of women remained low in the 1960s and 1970s, it increased subsequently, and by 2015 women represented 24 per cent of all sitting judges (1,000 female judges out of 4,175 according to the Ministry of Justice and Freedoms). These judges were appointed based on their merit in an open competition, as prospective judges (women and men) must take an entrance exam to the Higher Judiciary Institute, a postgraduate institution where they undergo extensive training.

Some of these women have been appointed to high-ranking positions in the judiciary. Female judges have taught at the State-run Higher Judiciary Institute since 1982. There were 47 women in the Supreme Court (*Cour Suprême*), and 96 in the Court of Appeals by 2010.¹⁴⁶ A female member of the Supreme Court was appointed to the Constitutional Court in 1999; and another in 2003. As part of the 2011 constitutional reform, a quota was set for women on the Supreme Council of the Judiciary, where women were given three seats out of ten. Nevertheless, women judges account only for a fraction of higher-ranking positions. They are also underrepresented among public prosecutors and in the criminal division, and are absent from the military court.

Moroccan female judges have shown strong awareness of the need to promote women's

participation in the judiciary, both in the Arab region and at home. For example, a Moroccan female judge was elected as the president of the Arab Women's Legal Network. This network is a regional NGO founded in 2005 and based in Jordan that aims to promote women working in the judicial sector in the Arab region. Another significant organization is the Moroccan Association of Women Judges established in 2011, after a constitutional amendment granted judges freedom of expression and the right to join or create professional associations. This association is the first of its kind in the Arab region.

4. Local councils

The first municipal elections after the accession of King Mohammed VI to the throne took place in September 2003, with women winning less than 1 per cent of all seats, a score virtually unchanged from the 1997 election. This reflected the fact that women accounted for less than 5 per cent of the total number of candidates.

The next municipal elections took place in 2009, and were accompanied by the introduction of a 12 per cent quota for women. This was not the only measure taken by the government to ensure fairer female representation at the local level, as the Ministry of the Interior set-up a fund to "support programmes that inform the population about women's political participation and train potential female candidates". The government also introduced a financial bonus for political parties that encouraged women's candidacies.¹⁴⁷ The number of women running for office quadrupled, compared to 2003, with over 20,000 female candidates. 3,406 of them were elected, divided between the 3,200 who won the seats reserved through the quota and an additional 206 who won seats in open competitions.¹⁴⁸ Although this marked a strong increase from the

127 women counsellors serving prior to these elections, only a disappointing number of women were elected outside of the quota seats.

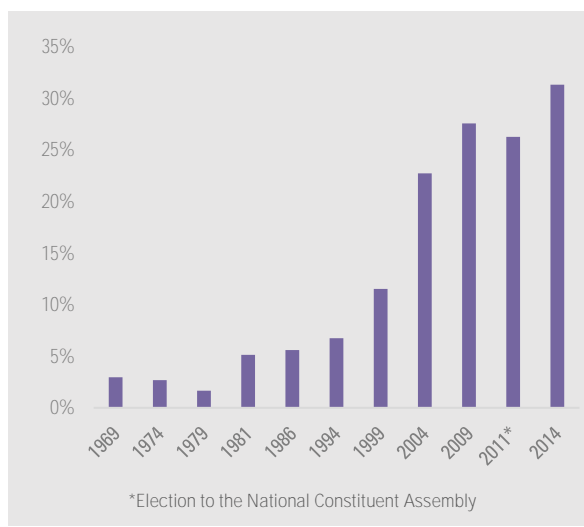
Prior to the 2015 local and regional elections, parliament passed a law that aimed to increase female representation at these levels from 12 to 27 per cent. Female candidates amounted to more than 21 per cent of all candidates at the local level and 38 per cent at the regional level. This contributed to the election of over 6,673 women, more than double the number of women elected in 2009. However, no female candidate was elected to head any of the regional councils, despite the high number of women elected to them (38 per cent, or 8 per cent higher than the percentage set by the law). The percentage of women elected at the local level (21 per cent), did not reach the minimum threshold of 33 per cent set by the law.¹⁴⁹

C. Tunisia

1. Legislative branch

Tunisian women have enjoyed better representation in the legislative branch than most women in the region. The first women were elected to parliament in 1969 and their number was generally on the rise in the following decades. Although its elections had the veneer of a multi-party competition, Tunisia was a de facto one-party State dominated by the Democratic Constitutional Rally (RCD) of Bourguiba and Ben Ali. The regime regularly thrust women candidates to the forefront, in an attempt to project the image of a modern and inclusive State, despite severe human rights violations and popular frustration with a lacklustre economic record. In the 2009 elections, the last before the Ben Ali regime was toppled, 59 women were elected to parliament, amounting to about 28 per cent of the 214 seats.

Figure 9. Percentage of Tunisian women in parliament, 1969-2014



Source: IPU.

Observers of Tunisia saw the so-called “Jasmine Revolution” of 2011 as a test of the extent to which women’s rights had taken root in the country, after decades of “State-sponsored and top-down secular ‘feminism’”.¹⁵⁰ Although the Tunisian State had up to this point prided itself on championing women’s rights, the post-2011 period made it clear that women’s acquired rights had not become entrenched in the national psyche. Traditional attitudes and behaviours regarding women’s role in society were still prevalent, and continued to affect their political representation. The period following the toppling of the Ben Ali regime saw the rise of the Islamist Ennahda party, leading Tunisian women to fear that they might lose the rights acquired under Bourguiba and Ben Ali. This fear was especially acute during the protracted constitution drafting process. Ben Ali’s departure and the opening up of political space after the uprising freed voices that had previously been suppressed. If some of these voices called for democracy and secularism, full citizenship and equality, others called for a new political system based on a strict understanding

of sharia law, and the reestablishment of the caliphate. Such advocacy for a religious political institution that calls into question some of the basic principles of modern democratic societies – such as freedom of religion and worship, in addition to the rights of minorities and women – was problematic for the groups it targeted.

To safeguard women’s rights, Tunisia introduced, early on in the transition, an ambitious gender parity law. In the 2011 elections to the National Constituent Assembly (NCA), the entity tasked with drafting a new constitution, about 5,000 out of over 11,000 candidates were women. This was due to the introduction of a “zipper” list system, which forced parties to alternate the names of male and female candidates on electoral lists, effectively guaranteeing that women would win seats.¹⁵¹ The new electoral law led women to win over 57 out of 217 seats (26 per cent); most of the women elected were members of Ennahda, as the party won the largest share of the vote.¹⁵² Meherzia Labidi of Ennahda became the first Vice-President of the NCA, and three out of the seven members of the bureau providing support to the NCA President were women. Several women became NCA committee rapporteurs, although only one, Farida Labidi, also of Ennahda, was named president of a committee.¹⁵³

The outcome of the 2011 elections was disappointing, however, as women won much fewer seats than men despite the “vertical parity” on electoral lists. This showed that barriers to female political representation remained strong: most political parties adhered to the letter, rather than the spirit, of the women’s quotas. There were only 7 per cent of women heading lists, which largely curtailed women’s chances of being elected, given that the number of seats a list would win was based

on its share of a generally dispersed vote.¹⁵⁴ The initial draft electoral law for the 2014 election contained a provision to introduce “horizontal parity” on electoral lists, which would have enforced the equal representation of women and men as heads of lists. However, this provision was rejected by the NCA.¹⁵⁵

Box 11. State feminism under Ben Ali

In 1987, Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali took power in a bloodless coup d'état after President Bourguiba was declared medically unfit to rule. Following in the footsteps of Bourguiba, who had embraced State feminism as a symbol of his modernist policies, Ben Ali perpetuated State feminism, partly in an attempt to co-opt women and their cause in his confrontation with the Islamists.

Ben Ali's regime started a programme to promote Tunisian women's rights. In 1989, the regime legalized two women's groups, the Tunisian Association of Democratic Women and the Tunisian Women Association for Research and Development. It created a commission tasked with reforming the personal status code in 1992, and the commission's recommendations were implemented a year later, in 1993. Ben Ali's regime also established a State secretariat in charge of women and the family, which later turned into the Ministry of Women and the Family. A new terminology surrounding women was developed, one which placed the emphasis on “their new gains” under the regime, and the fear that some elements within society were threatening them. In parallel, the regime repressed, in some cases brutally, the political opposition, cracked down on human rights and their defenders, and repressed freedom of the press. In this regard, some have argued that State feminism had been used as an enterprise aimed at consolidating the political regime and reinforcing the leadership, instrumentalizing women's cause in a “duel between women's rights and public liberties, women's rights against human rights”.

Source: <https://anneemaghreb.revues.org/353>.

Nevertheless, women won 68 out of 217 seats (31 per cent) in the 2014 legislative elections, the first of the post-Ben Ali era, slightly exceeding the Beijing baseline of 30 per cent. The majority of these women came from the two main parties, Nidaa Tounes (33 female MPs) and Ennahda (27 female MPs). Women had headed a higher number of electoral lists compared to the 2011 elections, 11 per cent, which had facilitated reaching this all-time high in terms of the representation of women in the Tunisian parliament.¹⁵⁶ Yet this number remains low, and shows that top-down measures to improve the representation of women, such as the zipper-list system, can be circumvented by gatekeepers, including political parties. As noted by a Tunisian scholar, even with the provision of quotas, “deeply-rooted mentalities seem to remain the main obstacles to a larger participation of women in political life, in spite of constitutional advances”.¹⁵⁷

2. The executive

(a) The cabinet

Tunisia's first female minister was appointed in 1983 to head the Ministry of Family and Women. A handful of female ministers and State secretaries were appointed throughout the 1980s and 1990s, but only to soft portfolios (Family and Women; Health; Social Development). The government headed by Mohamed Ghannouchi from 1999 to 2011 saw several women in cabinet, although there were rarely more than two at any given time (about 7 per cent of an average of 27 ministers), owing to frequent permutations.¹⁵⁸ These female ministers were again largely confined to soft portfolios.

Following the 2011 revolution, cabinets in Tunisia have lasted on average slightly over one year. The first two governments that

followed the Jasmine Revolution (January 2011-December 2011) saw a total of three women being allocated ministerial portfolios, out of 37 ministers, although the female Minister of Culture was replaced by a man after ten days in office, following revelations of her past support for Ben Ali. The portfolios the female ministers were granted were largely in line with the historical trend: Health and Women's Affairs. There were also two female State ministers, covering Sports and Higher Education. These appointments were largely technocratic, with two of the women being appointed in their area of expertise. The Minister of Health was a trained physician and the Minister of Culture a film director, while the State ministers for Sport and Higher Education were, respectively, a former athlete and the head of a higher learning institution.

The following cabinet (December 2011 - March 2013) included 2 female ministers out of 42. They were given charge of the ministries of Environment and Women's Affairs. In the cabinet formed in March 2013, only one woman was allocated a portfolio (that of Women's Affairs), while two female State ministers were also appointed. In the following cabinet (January 2014-March 2015), only two women were given ministerial portfolios, the Ministry of Commerce and Handicrafts and the Ministry of Tourism. This was the first time a woman had been appointed Minister of Tourism and Handicrafts. As Tunisia's economy is highly dependent on tourism, the appointment of a young woman to that position was considered significant. A third woman was also appointed State minister for Women's Affairs. The February 2015-August 2016 cabinet witnessed an increase in the number of women ministers (8 of out 41 ministers, or 20 per cent), although the

tendency to appoint women to soft ministries remained. The three female ministers ran ministries of Culture; Women, Family and Childhood, in addition to the higher-profile Tourism and Handicrafts Ministry. There were also five female State ministers.

The current Tunisian cabinet, formed in August 2016, saw a sharp quantitative and qualitative increase in female appointments, with six women holding ministerial portfolios, as well as two female State ministers. Women therefore constitute a fifth of the forty-member cabinet, although this remains far below the aspirations of parity enshrined in the Tunisian constitution. For the first time in the country's history, a woman, Lamia Zribi, was allocated a "hard" or sovereign portfolio, that of Finance. Zribi has a largely technocratic profile, with experience leading large bodies in the public and private sector, as well as a stint as State minister in the previous government. Also notable was the appointment of Hela Cheikhrouhou to head the Ministry of Energy and Mines. Cheikhrouhou is a young technocrat with international experience in different United Nations agencies and the African Development Bank. The Ministry of Tourism remains in the hands of the female minister that ran it in the previous government. The three other ministries with female appointments were, more traditionally, soft ministries: Health; Women, Family and Children; as well as Youth and Sports. These recent trends suggest that the participation of previously marginalized groups in cabinet is improving, as evidenced by the fairer inclusion of the youth and women in the current cabinet, with a young prime minister (born in 1975) in charge and a greater number of women, including two holding high-profile portfolios.¹⁵⁹

Box 12. Women in the Tunisian presidential election

Five women ran in the 2014 Tunisian presidential election, but only one took part in the actual race; the others withdrew before the election or were unable to take part for procedural reasons. The one female candidate – and the first female candidate in modern Tunisian history – received a very low score (0.45 per cent of the vote). However, she did not finish last among the 27 candidates for the presidency (11th out of 27). As a candidate, she made it clear that her candidacy was not based on a women’s rights agenda, saying “I am not a candidate for women. I am a candidate for all of Tunisia”.

Source: <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/perspective/profiles/2014/11/16/Kalthoum-Kannou-Tunisia-s-first-female-presidential-candidate.html>.

(b) The public sector

Although 37 per cent of all civil service employees in Tunisia were women as of 2014, they accounted for only 29 per cent of civil servants in leadership positions.¹⁶⁰ Women represented over 60 per cent of all civil servants without leadership responsibilities. In line with the regional (if not global) trend, the proportion of women decreases as one moves higher in the hierarchy: although women represented 32 per cent of heads of departments in 2014, this proportion drops to 22-23 per cent for directors and directors-general, and just over 4 per cent for secretaries-general. The number of women in leadership positions has nevertheless been increasing: a decade earlier, in 2004, women held only 15 per cent of leadership positions. The representation of women across ministries was also uneven: while it was high in ministries such as Education and Health, it was the lowest in Defence and Interior.

Reinforcing a trend noticed elsewhere in the Arab region, the public sector is an attractive

work place for women in Tunisia. This reflects relatively advantageous provisions granted to female public servants compared to the private sector. These include maternity and post-natal leave, as well as the ability to take leave without pay for up to two years to raise children. A law passed in 2006 also allows female employees in the public sector the option of part-time work at two-thirds of their full-time salary, while retaining “full rights to advancement, promotion, holiday, and retirement and social coverage”.¹⁶¹ Nevertheless, gender awareness remains low in the civil service, which translates in the glass ceiling phenomenon observed when it comes to the representation of women in leadership positions.

The lack of women in the higher ranks of the civil service has recently attracted substantial attention from civil society actors, the government and international bodies. In partnership with UN Women, the government has commissioned an extensive survey to identify key barriers to the advancement of women in the public service.¹⁶² Sixteen civil society groups, including the powerful *Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail* (UGTT), formed an alliance in 2015 to improve the representation of women in the public service at all levels, notably by campaigning for legal revisions to reduce the barriers of entry and improve career progression for women in the civil service, providing capacity-building programmes for aspiring and current female public servants, and raising awareness by organizing activities with the public at large.¹⁶³

3. The judiciary

The first Tunisian female judge ascended to the bench in 1968, following a reform of the judiciary in 1967. A new law had changed the conditions of admission to the examination to become a magistrate, making it open to all

graduates of the law faculty of the University of Tunis, without discrimination.¹⁶⁴ The number of women judges gradually increased in line with their admission to the examination, although the overall percentage of female judges remained low compared to the global average. In the 1980s and 1990s, women represented an average of 18 per cent of the number of candidates annually admitted to the bench. In the period between 2000 and 2006, this percentage doubled, with women making-up 36 per cent of all judges admitted to the judiciary. The number is likely to have increased since then, given the higher enrolment rate of Tunisian women in university law courses compared to that of men.¹⁶⁵

Owing to this open process, in which women have the same chances as men, the proportion of female judges is today the highest in the region. The increase in the number of women admitted to the bar has resulted in a progressive feminization of the judiciary. In 1997 women represented 23 per cent of judges, or a total number of 265 women against 885 men. Among the 265 women, 25 occupied high positions of the third rank, 56 in the second rank and 184 in the first rank. In 2005 the number of women increased to 28 per cent. In 2017, 39 per cent of all magistrates are women (845 out of 2171 magistrates).¹⁶⁶ Nevertheless, while more women occupy third rank positions and hold functions of president of the court, prosecutor or examining magistrate, they remain underrepresented in the higher ranks of the judiciary.

4. Local councils

Municipal elections have been regularly postponed since the Jasmine Revolution, and are now scheduled to take place in December 2017. These will be the first local elections since the fall of the regime, as the last municipal

elections were held in 2009. In the 2009 municipal elections, the Ben Ali Government had called for a larger participation of women in the political process, and had exhorted the ruling RCD to reserve 30 per cent of all candidacies for women. As a result, women had won almost 33 per cent of all seats in the local elections. The representation of women at other levels of regional and local governance remains highly lacking, however. To date, there have been no women mayors, and only a small number of female heads of district. Out of 24 governors currently in office, there is only one woman, the second woman to have ever been appointed to this post.

The 2017 elections will be governed by a new gender parity law that will require both vertical and horizontal parity on electoral lists, in line with the commitment to parity in the 2014 constitution. Parties will have to reserve the top slots for women in half the constituencies, in addition to abiding by the zipper-list system used for vertical parity. According to the Danish Centre for Research and Information on Gender, Equality and Diversity, “the law is unique worldwide and it is expected to make a huge difference, especially in the poorer and more traditional south and interior parts of Tunisia”.¹⁶⁷ Nevertheless, a recent study has shown that 43 per cent of rural women do not intend to vote, citing their lack of trust in local authorities. This trend might affect the outcome of the elections, skewing the results in rural areas in favour of male candidates, as men remain less likely to vote for women.¹⁶⁸

D. Egypt

1. Legislative branch

Women in Egypt have been able to vote and run in elections since 1956. Two women

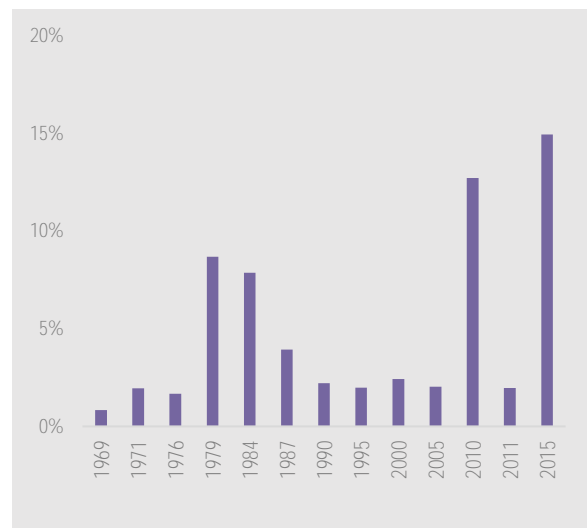
were elected to parliament in the 1957 elections, making history as the first female MPs in the Arab region. Various quotas were introduced and removed in the following decades, causing women's representation to fluctuate wildly.¹⁶⁹ For instance, in 1979, President Sadat issued a presidential decree reserving 30 seats for women out of the 360 elected seats in the People's Assembly, the lower chamber of parliament.¹⁷⁰ In the legislative elections that year, 34 women secured seats in parliament. In 1983, a similar law was adopted, and in the 1984 elections, women won 36 seats out of 458. In 1986, the quotas were scrapped. In the next election cycle, in 1987, only 14 women won seats, while four others were appointed, amounting to 4 per cent of lawmakers in total.¹⁷¹ The proportion of women in parliament remained low throughout the next two decades, dropping to below 2 per cent in 2005.

The quota system was reintroduced in 2009, in a law put forward by the ruling party, the National Democratic Party (NDP), which reserved 64 seats for women. In the 2010 elections, the last of the Mubarak era, a total of 396 women ran for the reserved seats: 148 of these candidates were members of political parties and 248 ran as independents. The NDP secured 55 of the women's seats, while six seats were won by independent candidates. The remaining seat went to the Wafd party. There was only one woman among the 10 parliamentarians that President Mubarak had the discretionary power to appoint after the election. In total, women accounted for 13 per cent of MPs that year.

After Mubarak was toppled following a wave of protests in 2011, a military government took over and removed all existing quotas, including those for women and minority groups. Instead, the government introduced a requirement for the inclusion of at least one woman in each electoral list, without specifying her position.¹⁷²

The removal of quotas led to a new decrease in the proportion of women in parliament, which fell to 2 per cent following the 2011-2012 elections. Out of only eleven female parliamentarians, two were appointed by the government, four were from the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP), the Muslim Brotherhood's political arm, three were affiliated with the Wafd party, one with the Egyptian Bloc and one with the Arab Nasserist party.¹⁷³ This drastic reduction in the percentage of women in parliament was deemed an embarrassment for Egypt, especially as it was soon followed by a Thomson Reuters Foundation report that alleged that "Egypt is the worst country in the Arab world to be a woman".¹⁷⁴ While the methodology of the report is debatable and to a certain extent inaccurate, its shocking results nonetheless created an outcry among human rights activists, feminists, and secularists in Egypt.¹⁷⁵ Accompanying this decline in women's presence in parliament was a context of serious threats to women's rights, as highlighted in box 13.

Figure 10. Percentage of Egyptian women in parliament, 1969-2015



Source: IPU.

Box 13. Threats to women’s rights creating an unfriendly environment for women in the public sphere

Under the Morsi presidency, several proposals with extremely negative consequences for women’s rights were discussed in parliament. Proposals by the Freedom and Justice Party and al-Nour, an ultra-conservative Islamist party, included repealing the *khul’* law, which gives women the right to initiate a “no-fault” divorce, decriminalizing the practice of female genital mutilation, altering child-custody laws in favour of fathers, and lowering the age of marriage for girls. Other suggestions from these parties have included a “wife obedience” law that would force women to return to the marital home and eliminate alimony payments in case of “disobedience”.

These proposals highlight the need for women to be represented in parliament to oppose laws that adversely affect them. Such negative discourse on women’s rights also created an overall environment that was not welcoming to women’s political participation. This was evident in the 2012 constitution, which generally ignored women’s rights. This context also enabled the rise of conservative voices advising women to stay at home and refrain from engaging in politics.

The results of the 2011-2012 elections were particularly disappointing for women’s rights advocates, given that the number of female candidates running for parliament had reached an all-time high of 984. Of these, 633 were nominated on the lists of political parties and 351 ran as independent candidates. In comparison, there were 404 female candidates in 2010, and 133 in 2005. This increase in the number of female candidates constitutes a positive development, and suggests that more women were willing to join the political sphere following the political developments of 2011. Interestingly, there were proportionally more female candidates in the governorates of the more conservative Upper Egypt, and other

peripheral areas, than in Cairo and other metropolitan areas.¹⁷⁶ There seemed to be little correlation between the Islamist or secular character of parties and the representation of women on their lists. The percentage of women on the electoral lists of the country’s major secular parties did not exceed 16 per cent, while the FJP and the Salafist al-Nour party featured about 13 per cent of women on their lists.¹⁷⁷

Subsequent governments did not reintroduce quotas: indeed, the victory of Mohamed Morsi in the 2012 presidential election was perceived with concern by many women’s rights activists. The 2012 constitution made no mention of gender equality, instead referring vaguely to “equality and equal opportunities for all citizens, men and women”. While this was seen by some as implicitly referring to legal equality between the sexes, many women’s rights advocates saw it as “the worst constitution in Egypt’s history regarding gender equality, since it was literally silent on the issue”.¹⁷⁸

In 2013, Morsi was removed from power. A new constitution was drafted and passed by referendum in January 2014. Although there were only five women on the committee of fifty who drafted the constitution, it was considered one of the most progressive fundamental laws in the region in terms of women’s rights, as it enshrines gender equality and protection from all forms of discrimination.¹⁷⁹ The constitution did not introduce a specific quota for women in parliament (although it did for local councils), but tasked the government with ensuring an “appropriate” level of political representation for women (as well as other groups such as the youth and religious minorities).

The new constitution paved the way for the adoption of a complex quota system ahead of the 2015 elections. The 2014 electoral law

allocated 56 seats to women, out of the 120 MPs elected through party lists, in addition to half of the 28 presidential appointees.¹⁸⁰ This guaranteed 70 seats for women in parliament, out of 596 in total.¹⁸¹ A total of 652 women ran in the 2015 elections, amounting to 10 per cent of all candidates. 276 of them ran for the 448 individual seats, out of 5420 candidates, while there were 376 women running for party-list seats, out of 780 such candidates. Most political parties ran a limited number of women in the elections for individual seats, however, with 23 out of 50 parties having no female candidates at all in those races.

One of the main surprises of the elections was the victory of 19 women in the individual seats. As a result, the 2015 legislature comprised 89 female parliamentarians: 75 having won their seats in the elections, and another fourteen having been appointed. In total, women represented 15 per cent of the total number of MPs, the highest proportion in Egypt's parliamentary history.¹⁸² This record representation can be attributed to several factors beyond the new quota. The drop in the parliamentary representation of women after the 2011-2012 elections came as a wakeup call for some (especially secular) women, who realized that they were at risk of being marginalized and losing their rights if they did not actively participate in the political process. This resulted in a high number of female candidates. Civil society groups were also more mobilized, providing resources and capacity-building for female candidates. Finally, these elections arguably witnessed the beginning of a shift in the perception of women in politics, as their participation was seen as increasingly legitimate by male and female voters alike.¹⁸³

2. The executive

(a) The cabinet

By regional standards, Egypt has a relatively long history of women holding ministerial portfolios. In 1962, Hikmat Abu Zayd was appointed Minister of Social Affairs, a portfolio that has regularly been held by female ministers in subsequent governments. Women headed mostly "soft" portfolios in the following decades, with a few exceptions, such as the appointment of a female Minister of Economy and International Cooperation in 1996. There have also been female State ministers holding portfolios such as Foreign Affairs.

The fall of Mubarak and the assumption of power by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces were followed by a quick succession of cabinets that included few female ministers, in the absence of a strong commitment to affirmative action. No female candidates ran in the 2012 presidential elections. Bothaina Kamel, a television presenter, announced plans to do so, but did not receive enough endorsements to make the ballot. In their electoral programmes, male candidates, whether secularist or Islamist, remained generally silent on gender issues.¹⁸⁴ While some of the secular candidates had talked about appointing women to senior executive positions, the eventual winner, Mohamed Morsi, had made no such promises. The Islamist-dominated cabinet appointed following his election included only 2 women out of 35 members, both independents.

A year later, in 2013, large numbers of women, as well as men, supported the removal of Morsi from power. Those women were portrayed in the media as being from all walks of life and all

social classes, united in their fear of an Islamist government that would roll back their acquired rights. However, it was “a particular type of women [who] became advocates of this view. This set of women represented a familiar type: those who stood to lose the most from the dismantling of the model of State feminism that existed under Mubarak”.¹⁸⁵ These women were joined by other independent female figures, leftists or Nasserists, who also saw the Muslim Brotherhood government as a threat to women’s rights. This created a space for the emergence of a new discourse on women’s rights, one “focused on the need to return to the State’s legacy of protective feminism”, which was later embraced by Abdel-Fattah el-Sisi, an army general, in his bid for power.¹⁸⁶

This new discourse did not result in a significant increase in the number of women in government, however. The first cabinet after the ouster of Morsi (July 2013-March 2014) was headed by Hazem El Beblawi, a prominent economist, diplomat and former international civil servant. Despite his liberal credentials, the cabinet he formed only included three women, holding the Ministries of Environment; Information; and Health, out of 34 ministers. The following cabinet (March 2014-September 2015) comprised four women, who were in charge of the International Cooperation; Manpower and Immigration; Social Solidarity; and Urban Development portfolios.

The cabinet formed in September 2015 included three women, as ministers of Immigration and Expatriate Affairs; International Cooperation; and Social Solidarity. Following the swearing-in ceremony, a hashtag complimenting the appearance of the three women (“Egypt is getting prettier”) emerged on the social media platform Twitter. Although the reaction can be interpreted as a celebration of the modern, emancipated Egyptian woman (as none of the

three wore a veil), in the view of many observers it was also symptomatic of the enduring double standards women face in Egyptian politics, with much more attention being paid to their appearance than to their qualifications.¹⁸⁷

In a 2016 reshuffle, a female minister was appointed to the Investment portfolio, but this move also generated controversy, as she was the only woman out of ten new ministers. With four female ministers out of 35, the representation of women in cabinet reached only 11 per cent, leading the Egyptian Center for Women’s Rights to remark that this failed to reflect women’s contribution to the Egyptian economy, which is “up to 30 per cent in the formal sector and 70 per cent in the informal sector”.¹⁸⁸ The current cabinet, following an early 2017 reshuffle, also saw the appointment of a female minister of Planning and Administrative Reform, while the portfolio of the female minister of International Cooperation was expanded to include Investment.

(b) The public sector

According to data from the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS), 36 per cent of all working women were employed in the public sector, including the myriad of different government-owned enterprises, in 2015. Women represent 35 per cent of all government employees. Contrary to the trend in most other Arab States, however, the number of women in public employment in Egypt has been decreasing over the last two decades, largely after the public sector employment guarantee for university graduates was scrapped in the 1990s. Indeed, the main beneficiaries of the government’s employment guarantee policies were “[w]omen from largely urban-based middle and higher income households who could afford university or

secondary vocational degrees”.¹⁸⁹ In addition, the egalitarian hiring policies of the Egyptian State also rendered work in the public sector appealing. Benefits including maternity leave made public sector employment desirable for women, as it was “compatible with their domestic work burdens and allowed them to continue working after marriage”.¹⁹⁰ The fact that employment opportunities in the public sector have been drying up has therefore disproportionately affected women, rather than men, as they have been less able to find employment in the (formal) private sector.¹⁹¹

Egypt does not provide data on the breakdown of the number of women in leadership positions in the public sector, or the percentage of female employees per ministry. Anecdotal evidence suggests that it remains low, although some breakthroughs are notable. Women have recently become heads of public universities or national research centres. However, when compared to other Arab States, the public sector in Egypt does not constitute a clear avenue for women to enter politics. There is little precedent in modern Egyptian history for the public sector serving as a recruiting ground for future career politicians (parliamentarians for example) or technocrats called to serve in a cabinet.

3. The judiciary

Until recently, the Egyptian judiciary was a strictly male preserve. In 2003, a woman, Tahani al-Gebali, was appointed to serve on the Constitutional Supreme Court by presidential decree. She was the only female judge out of about 9,300 judges in total. However, women’s “exclusion from the bench is not codified in any law (religious or secular) or in the constitution, but is simply a matter of standard practice based on stereotypical and biased views about women”.¹⁹² Nor is their exclusion due to a dearth

of competency, as the legal profession is relatively feminized: Egyptian women have worked in “all other fields of law, as lawyers, legal counsellors, and teachers in law schools”, while “the State Affairs Committee (government attorneys) and the Administrative Prosecution Committee (which is affiliated to the Ministry of Justice, and undertakes investigation into administrative violations of State employees) include a considerable number of women”.¹⁹³

Box 14. The battle for the State Council

As of 2017, the State Council, the powerful court governing the application of administrative law, is the only Egyptian court that does not admit female judges. In 2009, the Special Board of the State Council announced that it would accept applications from women, prompting over 300 women to apply to serve as assistant representatives in court. In response, in 2010, 88 per cent of the 380 judges in the State Council’s General Assembly voted to bar women from being appointed.^a Ultimately, the State Council decided to “delay the appointment of women as judges, but [affirm] the right of women to be hired for technical positions provided there are no sharia, constitutional or legal constraints preventing it”.^b

Accordingly, no woman has ever served on the State Council. In January 2014, a female lawyer who was prevented from applying for a judicial position there filed a lawsuit against the State. In response, a State Council judge “cited sharia and the political circumstances in his reasoning against women in the State Council. He added that the constitution does not oblige the judicial body to appoint women”. In March 2017, a female MP announced that parliament would debate a draft law that would force the State Council to appoint women.^c

^a <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/a-win-for-women-in-egypt-s-courts>.

^b <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/03/egypt-women-judges-draft-law-state-council.html>.

^c Ibid.

To justify their refusal to appoint female judges, male judges in Egypt have put forward stereotypical views about women, based on patriarchal interpretations of women's rationality. They have, for example, alleged that women "easily succumb to emotions, preventing them from making competent decisions", or that women are sometimes "not in the right psychological or biological state of mind", which should preclude them from hearing cases.¹⁹⁴ "Cultural sensitivities" are yet another factor explaining the underrepresentation of women in the judiciary. In an interview with Human Rights Watch, a senior judge argued that "the nature [of the work] is not suitable for women because they have to investigate murder, arson and rape. We still cannot imagine that a girl can play that role".¹⁹⁵ This perception of women as overly sensitive explains that, when Egypt appointed its first batch of female judges, they were at first assigned to courts dealing with "soft" issues involving other women, such as divorce or custody. In 2007, the Supreme Judicial Council selected 31 women to serve as judges in family courts. This step faced strong criticism from Islamist and conservative groups. In 2008, another group of female judges was added to serve in family courts.

Egypt has a long way to go to catch-up with other Arab and Muslim majority countries, such as Morocco, Jordan or Tunisia, in terms of improving gender parity in the judiciary. Although the number of female judges is slowly increasing (it is estimated to have reached about 70, or 0.5 per cent of all judges), they are still found predominantly in lower courts. For example, in 2015, a group of women were appointed as presiding judges in courts of first instance. Although this was a positive development, it remained insufficient, as courts of first instance have a narrow remit. They are the first level of litigation in civil cases and in

criminal cases involving misdemeanors and petty offenses.

4. Local councils

Egypt has three administrative levels: the governorate is sub-divided into cities (or regions for rural governorates) and city districts (or villages). Each of those local levels has a Local Popular Council (LPC) directly elected by voters and a Local Executive Council (LEC), whose head is either appointed by the President (in the case of the governor) or by the Prime Minister (for cities, regions, city districts and villages).¹⁹⁶ Despite this somewhat complex make-up, Egypt is a highly centralized country and local administrative bodies lack real authority. This has resulted in the limited interest of citizens in voting or standing in local elections, as evidenced by a minimal voter turnout. In the 2008 elections, a Christian woman became the first female mayor in Egypt in a rural town. However, observers have pointed out that her father had been the previous mayor, and that she had benefitted from his strong networks within the NDP.

Egypt has been without local councils since 2011, when they were dissolved by court order following the January uprising.¹⁹⁷ As local elections have been repeatedly postponed (they are likely to take place in 2018), women's representation at the local level has been the result of appointments. In 2013, two women were named to head local councils in Cairo's Dokki and Nozha districts. In 2015, Egypt witnessed the appointment of the first woman to head a municipal district, in Alexandria. In February 2017, the first female governor in Egypt's history was appointed in the Beheira governorate. The representation of women at the local level is likely to increase markedly following the next local elections, as the 2014 constitution requires a quarter of the seats in

local councils to be reserved for women. This measure will come into force in the next elections. In theory, it should raise the number of women councillors to nearly 13,000.

The upcoming local elections will, in this regard, provide the next test of whether Egyptians see women as legitimate holders of political positions.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

A. Conclusions

The aim of this study was three-fold: to review the presence of women in the political sphere in Arab countries following the political developments of 2010-2011; highlight key barriers to the participation of women in parliamentary, executive and judicial bodies, as well as in local councils; and assess the achievements and shortcomings of the policies put forward by Arab States to advance the representation of women at these levels of governance.

The present study provided a snapshot of regional trends in the representation of women in public life. The study found that the region witnessed improvements in the representation of women in general in recent years, although figures generally remain below global averages. Mauritania set a good example, as women's representation in cabinet reached one third of its 26 ministers. Additionally, Algeria, the Sudan and Tunisia met, for the first time, the baseline set by the Beijing Platform at 30 per cent for women's representation in parliament (although it fell below the threshold in Algeria after the 2017 elections). Progress also included new forms of participation in many countries, for example in advisory boards, national dialogues or constitutional committees, all domains that were formerly restricted to men. These trends have created a glimmer of hope after decades of struggles. In addition, new or amended constitutions have tended to be more inclusive of women's issues, while anti-discriminatory laws are being increasingly adopted and

contribute to improving the lives of women in the region.

Nevertheless, progress remains uneven between countries, despite the earlier promises of fairer representation brought forward by the wave of uprisings. Although the proportion of female members of parliament has been steadily rising, this has largely been the result of quotas being rolled out in an increasing number of States. These represent a strong driver in normalizing the presence of women in the public sphere. Women remain underrepresented in the executive, with most Arab countries having appointed only one or two women to cabinet-level posts. Women are equally underrepresented in the judiciary, accounting for only a fraction of the region's judges. In a few Arab countries, women are still banned from sitting on courts altogether. Women also remain underrepresented in local councils, even as the decisions taken by such councils can have a tremendous influence on their daily lives.

Beyond the headline numbers, however, there is a critical need for further probing into the more qualitative aspects of women's participation in public life. Female ministers tend to hold soft portfolios traditionally associated with women's role in society (e.g. education or health). Similarly, in the public service, female public servants are more concentrated in "soft" ministries than in those for interior, foreign affairs, justice, and Islamic affairs for instance. Across the board, women's representation decreases as one goes higher in the hierarchy.

The same is true of the judiciary: in countries that allow women to practice as judges, they are predominantly found sitting on lower-level courts, typically those handling family matters. There are very few women sitting on constitutional, supreme, or appeals courts.

This lack-lustre regional picture is the result of several sociocultural and structural barriers to women's political representation. Sociocultural barriers stem from the pervasiveness of patriarchal beliefs and norms, which result in gender-specific roles. The great majority of women in the region have to balance a triple shift, spreading themselves thin between paid employment, taking care of their household and raising their children, leaving little time for a political career. Evidence from countries that provide data on retention and recruitment (for example Morocco) shows that the number of women in senior positions in the civil service is decreasing, although the overall number of female public servants is on the rise. This suggests that women face more barriers to balancing their professional and family life as they progress in their careers compared to their male counterparts, whose wives are assumed to take responsibility for the home.

Poor women's representation figures also reflect more insidious psychological and ideological barriers, which are in some cases internalized by women. The political realm is widely perceived as corrupt and as a "dirty game", making it an unsafe space for women, to the extent that it can discourage them from seeking greater involvement in public life. There is also a tendency to perceive feminism as a Western-imported ideology among some of the region's women and men, which translates into the rejection of feminism as a tool to challenge patriarchal systems and improve the representation of women. Finally, rigorist interpretations of Islam serve to confine women

to traditional roles, which seldom include political participation.

Women continue to face several institutional barriers to their political representation. Although women in the region have largely secured the right to vote and stand in elections, enduring legal discrimination still restricts their ability to fully exercise these rights. For instance, impingements on women's freedom of movement can prevent them from casting their vote or campaigning. Guardianship systems can also make the political participation of women conditional on the preferences of their male guardians. Other laws, such as restrictions on women's education or access to work, delegitimize the presence and contribution of women in the public sphere.

The gender blind nature of political processes in Arab countries means that they cannot address gender inequalities in society. Women have, on the whole, fewer opportunities to gain experience and skills, build professional networks and establish independent wealth, all of which are often needed to engage in a political career.¹⁹⁸ Women are also less likely to be politically engaged, making them a less sought-after body of voters and limiting the pool of women capable of running for office. As a result, male-dominated political parties tend to not include women on electoral lists unless legally forced to do so. Women are also less able to benefit from the existing networks of mentorship and patronage that prevail in the region's public life. The lack of an enabling environment for civil society organizations has disproportionately affected women, given the key role played by such groups in advancing their political representation. Finally, the media plays a noticeable role in reinforcing male domination over the political sphere, by granting much less airtime to women politicians and candidates, and very little airtime to gender equality issues in general.

Sociocultural and structural barriers can often combine, resulting in the continued underrepresentation of women in public life observed in the Arab region. These barriers tend to be self-reinforcing: for example, the inability of women to effectively stand and vote in elections prevents them from pushing for policy changes that would address barriers to access other spheres, or to constitute networks of patronage and mentorship more sensitive to the specific needs of women seeking greater participation in public life. The poor representation of women in parliament also limits the pool of women who can be appointed to cabinet, executive bodies and higher-level posts in the civil service.

In-depth analysis of four Arab States, namely Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia, shows mixed results and reflects their own, often uneven, pace of progress towards equal representation. Unsurprisingly, institutional barriers have proved somewhat easier to address than sociocultural ones. Various forms of quotas (in parliament, the executive, local elected bodies or the judiciary) have increased the representation of women, but they remain insufficient if enduring barriers are not addressed; as such, gains made by women under quota systems can easily be reversed, as happened in Egypt. These gains by women generally take time to be internalized in society: even in countries with the most affirmative State feminism policies, women continue to suffer from gender discrimination in the street, in the home and at work. In the public sector, where State feminism policies could in theory be most easily implemented, figures from all four countries show that women do not reach positions of leadership in numbers that match their presence in society.

In all four countries, pro-women laws and measures have been introduced by successive

governments, and presented as evidence of democratization and modernization. Granting women more rights or allowing them stronger representation can be seen as a tactic to divert attention from other issues, and promote the State as a modernizing or reforming entity. In that context, however, the State controls the breadth, depth and pace of these pro-gender reforms. Nevertheless, State feminism has also achieved some more positive results, and in some cases has created a new status quo that is more favourable to women. Evidence from all four countries does show that this leads women to become more assertive in defence of their rights, which are increasingly taken for granted. For instance, Tunisian women (and men) pushed back strongly against the concept of “gender complementarity” being introduced into the constitution; in Egypt, General Sisi garnered the support of several women’s groups in his fight against Islamist groups, as they feared a pushback against women’s rights.

Overall, the study finds that although there have been improvements in women’s political representation across the Arab region since 2010, this trend appears to have no clear-cut relation with the upheavals that started that year. Women in countries that witnessed regime change (e.g. Egypt or Tunisia) saw an increase in their political representation, but so did their counterparts in most of the countries that were left untouched by the upheavals. This suggests a number of other factors at work during this period, including greater and more effective pressure from civil society and international organizations, as well as a stronger political will.

Nevertheless, the importance of the political developments of 2010-2011 for women’s political representation should not be understated. Women’s participation in the uprisings opened a window of opportunity for them to push for the realization of their rights.

This resulted, for example, in constitutional and legal amendments reflecting gender concerns and the introduction of quotas in the new constitutions adopted by countries like Egypt or Tunisia. In parallel, governments that withstood the wave of protests in the region (such as those of Algeria, Jordan and the Gulf countries) have also sought to improve women's rights and representation, if only to project an image of liberalization in order to pre-empt further upheavals. Fears in some countries in the region (e.g. Egypt or Tunisia) that Islamist parties would reverse advances in gender equality and women's rights when they came to power in free post-uprisings elections were trumped, largely because of the high degree of mobilization by women's groups and their ability to find allies across the political spectrum. In this sense, while the uprisings did not immediately fulfil their promises of substantially increasing women's political representation, they have opened up new opportunities for women to demand, and obtain, the full realization of their rights, including to fair political representation.

The study highlights a number of knowledge gaps that should be addressed by governments, civil society and international organizations. Data on the representation of women in the judiciary, and *a fortiori* the breakdown of the type of courts on which they sit, constitutes a key knowledge gap. The extent of women's participation in local councils is equally unknown – the record of women members of these bodies, in terms of putting forward decisions that affect the daily lives of women (and men), remains largely undocumented. The representation of women in the structures of political parties also deserves more in-depth exploration, given the de facto function of gatekeepers to political representation they perform in multi-party systems. In addition, the present study provides some insight (drawn

from Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia) into the interplay between governments, civil society and international organizations, and its impact on women's political representation, but there is a need to assess it systematically throughout the region. Similarly, while the study analyses country-specific circumstances that have led to the adoption of personal status reform in the four case studies, there is a lack of understanding of how personal status law affects women's political representation and participation more generally. Finally, the extent of women's representation in informal and emerging processes (for example in conflict settings) should be more systematically documented.

Based on the evidence gathered and analysed within the framework of this study, and the emerging best practices identified, this publication proposes the following policy recommendations.

B. Policy recommendations

Ensuring enhanced and sustained women's representation requires a holistic and comprehensive approach to be integrated in the country's national plan to implement the 2030 Agenda framework, and in particular target 5.5, which aims to “ensure women's (...) equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political (...) and public life”. National plans should include specific targets for women's representation in leadership positions in parliament, the cabinet, the public service, the judiciary and local councils.

Addressing one barrier in isolation from the others will fail to provide sustained progress. Thus, increased women's political representation requires addressing sociocultural and institutional barriers in a regional specific

manner. Close coordination among the various national, regional and international stakeholders is central to the success of any reform programme aimed at increasing women's representation. The present section provides policy recommendations for key actors to address the barriers that have been identified as hindering women's representation.

1. Overcoming sociocultural barriers

- Adopt policies promoting work-life balance to address women's multiple roles as a key limitation for their political representation. For example, the introduction of telecommuting, flexible working hours, and maternity and paternity leave, both in the public and private sectors, helps women reconcile work obligations with their personal lives and thus increases their ability to participate in public life. It also results in higher retention rates of female employees, especially at life stages when women are more likely to be responsible for house chores and child-bearing;
- Reform education curricula from a gender-sensitive perspective to ensure the promotion of the full economic, social and political participation of women. New educational curricula should challenge deeply rooted negative stereotypes of women and girls, particularly regarding their participation in public life. This should include positive examples from the region and beyond (e.g. from European or Latin American countries that have successfully promoted the participation of women);
- Enhance the infrastructure to provide services and resources that facilitate the participation of women in public life, such as establishing safe transportation services, kindergartens and early childhood centres;
- Carry out evidence-based research to estimate the economic and social costs of the low participation of women in public life, with a view to enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of government policies in this regard;
- Undertake nationwide awareness-raising campaigns on women's representation in public life and its added value. Such campaigns should target both men and women, boys and girls, and include different dimensions, such as the economic and social benefits of women's representation in public life and enlightened religious interpretations of women's political participation. Awareness-raising campaigns should take into consideration the different educational backgrounds of citizens, as well as the setting and traditions of each country. Specific campaigns should target women to build-up their self-confidence and empower them to participate in decision-making processes, including running in elections;
- Capitalize on local media in awareness-raising campaigns, particularly State-owned media, including television and radio stations, so that they can be effectively mobilized to tackle discrimination and negative stereotypes. In particular, States should develop national guidelines ensuring that more space is allocated to discuss gender issues and women's political rights, and that gender stereotypes and negative cultural practices are challenged rather than reinforced;
- Create a safe platform for an enlightened religious discourse on women's rights, and in particular women's political rights. This should be achieved by promoting moderate religious leaders, as well as female religious scholars, who can provide alternative discourses that favour women's rights and human rights in general;

- Design and implement national accountability mechanisms for women's political participation. This should include monitoring progress and identifying impediments on the national level to hold political parties, national institutions and individuals accountable for not advancing women's political participation;
- Promote the involvement of civil society organizations, particularly women's groups, in implementing the recommendations above. In this regard, member States should consider the establishment of national women's machineries where they do not already exist;
- Create and maintain regional platforms, networks and forums to encourage the sharing of good and emerging practices to increase women's political representation from the region and beyond. These should be facilitated by international and regional organizations and include all relevant stakeholders, including member States, civil society organizations, and women's groups.

2. Overcoming institutional barriers

- Reconcile international instruments and national legislations regarding women's rights, which entails reforming the policy framework, in order to fulfil international obligations, as well as the constitutional and legal frameworks, and ensuring the enforcement of the policy framework. This process should include lifting reservations on CEDAW and operationalizing the country's commitments on a national level;
- Reform family and personal status laws and lift remaining restrictions, *de jure* or *de facto*, on women's access to education and work, or on their mobility, with a view to creating an enabling environment that will allow for an increased involvement of women in politics;
- Create a "gender equality caucus" in Arab parliaments and inter-party networks, with a view to coordinating like-minded and committed MPs to promote gender equality in the enacted legislation, hold the government accountable regarding gender equality, and ensure women's leadership in the structure of the parliament and sub-committees;
- Introduce appropriate measures, including quota systems, to reach the Beijing baseline (30 per cent) and normalize the presence of women in all structures of decision-making, including the legislative, judiciary and executive branches, as well as local governance;¹⁹⁹
- Ensure that quotas are applied in line with the spirit, and not just the letter, of such laws. This includes, for example, the introduction of "zipper-list" systems, horizontal and vertical parity on electoral lists, as well as penalties and incentives for political parties to improve women's representation on their lists;
- Undertake nation-wide studies to assess the qualitative aspects of women's political participation – for example to analyse the activity of female MPs and examine whether increased representation leads to more attention to issues affecting women or more women-friendly policies. Thematic studies should also be carried out to examine the impact of violence on women's psychology as a barrier to women's political participation;
- Carry out research to fill current knowledge gaps in areas such as: the representation of women within political parties; women's representation in professional organizations such as trade unions and employers' organizations; women's presence and leadership in the public service; women's presence in the judiciary; and women's presence in local councils;

- Conduct country-specific, evidence-based research to examine the representation of women at various levels of the power structure, shed light on specific challenges women face in each branch, and implement appropriate interventions to address these issues. Another key research area concerns the retention rates of women in the public sector and factors driving them to leave their employment and/or hindering them from reaching higher hierarchical levels;
- Improve the collection and distribution of gender sensitive indicators and sex-disaggregated data on women's political representation, including in the public service. Efforts should be made to minimize the discrepancy between government data, when available, and data provided by civil society organizations, notably through the adoption of open standards and international best practices applicable to such data;
- Create and nurture an enabling space for civil society organizations, which will eventually have direct implications for women's political representation. This entails removing any legal or operational constraints placed on civil society organizations, promoting their involvement in the development and implementation of all programmes and policies, and facilitating their "shadow reporting" on human rights issues submitted to different United Nations treaty bodies including CEDAW, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention against Torture and the Universal Periodic Review. In addition, the presence of representatives from civil society groups should be facilitated during national review processes, to enhance their ability to hold States accountable for violations of women's rights;
- Promote the representation of women within political parties, for example by requiring political parties to develop and implement programmes to reach out to women, as well as mentorship and affirmative action, including quotas, to improve their representation within party structures and leadership. Similar requirements should also be considered for trade associations;
- Establish special funds to promote women's leadership and political participation in parliamentary and local elections. Such funds should be dedicated to provide capacity-building, mentorship, awareness-raising, lobbying and advocacy activities;
- Reform the five stages of the electoral process (electoral legislation, campaigning, voting, counting and sorting votes, announcing results) from a gender-sensitive perspective, by addressing specific barriers faced by women at each stage;
- Establish guidelines to increase and enhance media coverage of women's participation in public life, for example by establishing airtime quotas for female candidates in elections and for issues affecting women;
- Increase the number of women in the media, including those covering government and political affairs, by introducing affirmative action to the process of recruitment and promotion of female journalists;
- Encourage special envoys to countries in conflict, such as Libya, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, to serve as champions to ensure that women are represented in peace negotiations, and that they participate in all stages of the State-building process, so that women's presence, concerns and perspectives are fully included.²⁰⁰

Annex

Table A.1 Breakdown of women's seats in legislatives, upper and lower houses

Country	Lower or single house				Upper house or senate			
	Elections	Seats	Women	%	Elections	Seats	Women	%
Algeria	04.05.2017	462	119	25.8	29.12.2015	143	10	7.0
Bahrain	22.11.2014	40	3	7.5	07.12.2014	40	9	22.5
Comoros	25.01.2015	33	2	6.1	(...)	(...)	(...)	(...)
Djibouti	22.02.2013	65	7	10.8	(...)	(...)	(...)	(...)
Egypt	17.10.2015	596	89	14.9	(...)	(...)	(...)	(...)
Iraq	30.04.2014	328	83	25.3	(...)	(...)	(...)	(...)
Jordan	20.09.2016	130	20	15.4	27.09.2016	65	10	15.4
Kuwait	26.11.2016	65	2	3.1	(...)	(...)	(...)	(...)
Lebanon	07.06.2009	128	4	6.2	(...)	(...)	(...)	(...)
Libya	25.06.2014	188	30	16.0	(...)	(...)	(...)	(...)
Mauritania	23.11.2013	147	37	25.2	08.11.2009	56	8	14.3
Morocco	07.10.2016	395	81	20.5	02.10.2015	120	14	11.7
Oman	25.10.2015	85	1	1.2	07.11.2015	85	14	16.5
State of Palestine	25.01.2006	124	15	12.1	(...)	(...)	(...)	(...)
Qatar	01.07.2013	35	0	0.0	(...)	(...)	(...)	(...)
Saudi Arabia	02.12.2016	151	30	19.9	(...)	(...)	(...)	(...)
Somalia	23.10.2016	264	64	24.2	(...)	53	12	22.6
Sudan	13.04.2015	426	130	30.5	01.06.2015	54	19	35.2
Syrian Arab Republic	13.04.2016	250	33	13.2	(...)	(...)	(...)	(...)
Tunisia	26.10.2014	217	68	31.3	(...)	(...)	(...)	(...)
United Arab Emirates	24.09.2011	40	8	20.0	(...)	(...)	(...)	(...)
Yemen	27.04.2003	301	1	0.33	28.04.2001	111	2	1.8

Source: IPU.

Table A.2 Women Holding ministerial portfolios as of 1 January 2017

Country	Total ministers ^a	Number of women	Number of men	Percentage of women
Algeria	30	4	26	13
Bahrain	22	1	21	5
Comoros	10	0	10	0
Djibouti	18	1	17	6
Egypt	34	4	30	12
Iraq	19	2	17	11
Jordan	28	2	26	7
Kuwait	15	1	14	7
Lebanon	29	1	28	3
Libya	20	3	17	15
Mauritania	26	8	18	31
Morocco	23	3	20	13
Oman	32	2	30	6
State of Palestine	18	3	15	17
Qatar	16	1	15	6
Syrian Arab Republic	33	2	31	6
Saudi Arabia	29	0	29	0
Somalia	30	2	28	7
Sudan	35	4	31	11
Tunisia	26	6	20	23
United Arab Emirates	30	8	22	27
Yemen	37	2	35	5

Source: IPU, with data obtained from national governments, permanent missions to the United Nations and publicly available information.

^a The total includes deputy prime ministers and ministers. Prime ministers/heads of government were also included when they held ministerial portfolios. Vice-presidents and heads of governmental or public agencies have not been included.

Endnotes

Chapter 1

- 1 ESCWA, *What is Left of the Spring? The Long Road to Social Justice in the Arab Region*, 2016a, E/ESCWA/SDD/2015/3. Available from <https://www.unescwa.org/publications/long-road-social-justice-arab-spring>.
- 2 Uhlener defines political participation as “the activities of the mass public in politics, including, for example, voting in elections, helping a political campaign, giving money to a candidate or cause, writing or calling officials, petitioning, boycotting, demonstrating, and working with other people on issues”. See Carole J. Uhlener. *Political Participation*. In *International Encyclopedia of the Social Behavioral Sciences*. Neil J. Smelser and Paul B. Baltes, eds. (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2001), p. 504.
- 3 Political representation is defined as “a process in which one individual or group (the representative) acts on behalf of other individuals or groups (the represented) in making or influencing authoritative decisions, policies, or laws for a polity. The representative is typically a legislator, but not exclusively. A growing body of research recognizes that a representative may hold any of a number of other offices (such as executive, administrator, ambassador, judge, lobbyist, party leader)”. See Dennis F. Thompson. *Political Representation*. In *International Encyclopedia of the Social Behavioral Sciences*. Neil J. Smelser and Paul B. Baltes, eds. (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2001), p. 441.
- 4 See <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/women-and-the-sdgs/sdg-5-gender-equality>.
- 5 Indicator 5.5.1 “Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments and local governments”. Available from <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg5>.
- 6 Indicator 16.7 “Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels”. Available from <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg16>.
- 7 ESCWA has eighteen member States: Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, the State of Palestine, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.
- 8 This effort has often been accomplished through the institution of so-called ‘national women’s machineries’ (NWMs). For a comprehensive discussion of the profile, role and achievements of NWMs, see ESCWA, *Against Wind and Tides: A Review of the Status of Women and Gender Equality in the Arab Region (Beijing +20)*, 2016b, E/ESCWA/ECW/2015/3. Available from https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/2283ESCWA_Women%20and%20Gender%20Equality%20in%20the%20Arab%20Region_Beijing20.pdf.
- 9 See <http://gulfnews.com/news/uae/society/uae-leader-in-gender-equality-in-region-1.1886004>.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 According to Lovenduski, State feminism is “a contested term. To some it is an oxymoron. It has been variously defined as the activities of feminists or femocrats in government and administration..., institutionalized feminism in public agencies..., and the capacity of the State to contribute to the fulfillment of a feminist agenda”. See Joni Lovenduski, *State Feminism and Political Representation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 4. For the purpose of this study, we will define State feminism as a legal, economic, and ideological strategy deployed by the State to introduce changes to society and its gender relations.
- 12 Mervat Hatem. *Economic and Political Liberations in Egypt and the Demise of State Feminism*, 1992, p. 231.
- 13 There are exceptions to this rule, for example the role played by Mervat Tallawy in Egypt.
- 14 Omayma Abdel-Latif. *In the Shadow of the Brothers: The Women of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2008). Available from http://carnegieendowment.org/files/women_egypt_muslim_brotherhood.pdf.
- 15 Critical explorations of such assumptions include Augustus R. Norton, *Civil society in the Middle East* (Leiden: Brill, 1995); and Sarah Ben Néfissa and others, eds. *NGOs and governance in the Arab world* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2005).
- 16 Chiara Bottici and Benoit Challand, *Civil Society in Revolt: From the Arab Spring to Occupy Wall Street* (Jadaliyya, 2012). Available from http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/8073/civil-society-in-revolt_from-the-arab-spring-to-oc.
- 17 Nadjé Al-Ali. *Gender and civil society in the Middle East*, *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, vol. 5, No. 2, 2003, pp. 216-232; and Islah Jad. *The NGO-isation of Arab Women’s Movements*, *IDS Bulletin*, vol. 35, No. 4, October 2004, pp. 34-42.

- 18 Individual States have also played a key role in pressuring States in the Arab region to grant women more rights (for example through the conditions of aid and funding by organizations such as USAID), however this has often been enacted by pushing for adherence to the norms and goals set through international organizations. International organizations also include regional organizations (such as the League of Arab States), but the United Nations has, on balance, played the most important role in pushing for women's empowerment and gender equality.
- 19 These include the interplay of sociocultural and institutional barriers, which are further detailed in chapter 2. As later chapters will show, the effectiveness of quota systems in durably improving the political participation of women is limited if other measures to address the above barriers are not taken. Quotas often constitute a necessary initial step, however.
- 20 See https://www.unicef.org/publications/files/UNICEF_SOWC_2016.pdf and <http://www.uis.unesco.org/literacy/Documents/UIS-literacy-statistics-1990-2015-en.pdf>.
- 21 For example, in 2016, Morocco legalized abortion in cases of rape and incest. In 2014, the country repealed a law that allowed rapists to avoid charges if they married their victims. Several countries in the region, such as Bahrain, still have such laws.
- 22 World Economic Forum, *The Global Gender Gap Report* (Cologne, Switzerland: WEF, 2016). pp. 5-20. Available from http://www3.weforum.org/docs/GGGR16/WEF_Global_Gender_Gap_Report_2016.pdf.
- 23 See <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/March04.pdf>.
- 24 For more details about election years and the number of seats held by women in parliament, see annex 1.
- 25 See Article 46 of the Constitution of Tunisia, adopted in January 2014. Available from https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Tunisia_2014.pdf and Article 11 of the Constitution of Egypt, also adopted in January 2014. Available from <http://www.sis.gov.eg/Newvvr/Dustor-en001.pdf>.
- 26 There are two types of quotas applied throughout the MENA region (albeit with country-specific variations). Legislated Candidate Quotas reserve a number of places on electoral lists for female candidates, often associated with a "zip" system where men and women are listed alternatively on electoral lists. Reserved seats guarantee a number of seats in a legislated assembly for women. See <http://www.quotaproject.org/>.
- 27 Mona Lena Krook. *Gender Quotas in Parliament: A Global View*, *Al-Raida Journal*, No. 126-127, Summer/Fall 2009, pp. 8-17. Available from <http://iwsawassets.lau.edu.lb/alraida/alraida-126-127.pdf>.
- 28 This includes deputy prime ministers and ministers. Prime ministers/heads of government were also included when they held ministerial portfolios. Vice-presidents and heads of governmental or public agencies have not been included.
- 29 Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa (UNGA President), Thoraya Obaid (UNFPA Director), Rima Khalaf, Amat Al-Alim Alsoswa and Sima Bahous (UNDP Regional Bureau for Arab States Director), Mervat Tallawy and Rima Khalaf (ESCWA Executive Secretary), and Nemat Shafik (IMF Deputy Managing Director).
- 30 The data for the proportion of women judges in the judiciary is based on reporting by member States to the OECD in 2014. There are a variety of jurisdictional settings in the Arab region. For comparison, we have retained the definition of the constitutional court as a high court that deals primarily with constitutional law. Its main authority is to rule on whether laws that are challenged are in fact unconstitutional. A supreme court is the highest court within the hierarchy of many legal jurisdictions. For instance, the Yemeni Supreme Court has eight separate divisions: constitutional (composed of seven judges including the Chief Justice), appeals, scrutiny, criminal, military, civil, family, commercial, and administrative. Each division is composed of five judges.
- 31 OECD/CAWTAR, *Women in Public Life: Gender, Law and Policy in the Middle East and North Africa* (OECD Publishing, 2014); and World Bank Group, *Women, Business and the Law 2016: Getting to Equal* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2015).
- 32 See <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/a-win-for-women-in-egypt-s-courts>.
- 33 See <http://www.arabnews.com/node/963446/saudi-arabia>.
- 34 See <https://www.stl-tsl.org/en/about-the-stl/biographies/judges-of-the-special-tribunal-for-lebanon/1175-trial-chamber-judge-judge-micheline-braidi>.
- 35 See <http://www.jordanpolitics.org/en/senate-member/65/taghreed-hikmat/7>.
- 36 See <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/02/egypt-appoint-first-female-governor-nadia-abdu-baheira.html>.
- ## Chapter 2
- 37 M. Margaret Conway. *Women and Political Participation*, *Political Science & Politics*, vol. 34, No. 2, June 2001, pp. 231-232.
- 38 Suad Joseph. *Patriarchy and Development in the Arab World*, *Gender and Development*, vol. 4, No. 2, June 1996, pp. 15-18.

- 39 Key exceptions to this trend are countries in conflict, for example the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen.
- 40 See <http://www.mei.edu/content/map/gender-gap-political-participation-north-africa>.
- 41 Linda C. McClain and Joanna L. Grossman, eds. *Gender Equality: Dimensions of Women's Equal Citizenship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).
- 42 Joseph, 1996, p. 17.
- 43 Gender-specific expectations also restrict the areas of governance in which women are active. The prevalence of women in "soft" ministries as well as the higher likelihood of finding female judges in juvenile courts illustrates this.
- 44 Rola el-Husseini, *Pax Syria: Elite Politics in Postwar Lebanon* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2012), p. 169.
- 45 In 2004, a United Nations report had already shown that in the Arab region "women are not active in politics because politics is not a safe and secure place". See United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), *Progress of Arab Women 2004* (Amman: UNIFEM Arab States Regional Office, 2004).
- 46 The assassination of British MP Jo Cox in 2016 and the misogynistic attacks against presidential candidate Hillary Clinton during the 2016 US presidential election campaign, including the "suggestion" by her Republican opponent Donald Trump that she should be killed, show the global pervasiveness of the problem. See <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/10/us/politics/donald-trump-hillary-clinton.html>.
- 47 For example, see WHRD-MENA, *The Status of Women Human Rights Defenders in Libya, 2017* (available from <https://www.awid.org/publications/status-women-human-rights-defenders-libya>) for a discussion on the impact of conflict on women activists in Libya.
- 48 See <http://archive.aawsat.com/details.asp?section=4&article=296181&issueno=9648#.W0ltdW-G000>.
- 49 See http://www.albidapress.net/press/news_view_18332.html.
- 50 See https://www.atria.nl/epublications/IAV_B00108541.pdf.
- 51 Gallup, *After the Arab uprisings: Women on rights, religion and rebuilding*, 2012. Available from <http://www.gallup.com/poll/155306/Arab-Uprisings-Women-Rights-Religion-Rebuilding.aspx>, p. 6.
- 52 Rania Salem, *Gendering the costs and benefits of the Arab uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt using Gallup Surveys* (The Economic Research Forum, 2015), pp. 9-11.
- 53 Personal interview with Amal Basha (Sisters Arab Forum for Human Rights) conducted at ESCWA, 5 April 2017.
- 54 See <http://www.amaneyjamal.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Comparative-Political-Studies-2016-Masoud-0010414015626452-1.pdf> for a comprehensive discussion.
- 55 See <http://egyptianstreets.com/2015/06/09/meet-the-nine-muslim-women-who-have-ruled-nations/>.
- 56 Gallup, 2012.
- 57 See <http://www.amaneyjamal.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Comparative-Political-Studies-2016-Masoud-0010414015626452-1.pdf>.
- 58 See http://www.idea.int/publications/wip2/upload/Arab_World.pdf.
- 59 This does not, however, imply that Islamist women do not seek to fight for their rights, including their representation within Islamist parties. See http://carnegieendowment.org/files/cmec2_women_in_islam_final1.pdf.
- 60 Suad Joseph and Susan Slyomovics, eds. *Women and Power in the Middle East* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001).
- 61 ESCWA, 2016b.
- 62 Priscilla Offenbauer, *Women in Islamic Societies: A Selected Review of Social Scientific Literature* (Washington D.C.: Library of Congress, 2005). Available from https://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/pdf-files/Women_Islamic_Societies.pdf.
- 63 Amal Basha, *Gender Equality Discourse in Yemeni Constitutions* (The Danish Institute for Human Rights, 2015), p. 24. Available from https://www.humanrights.dk/sites/humanrights.dk/files/media/dokumenter/udgivelser/research/matters_of_concern_series/as-basha_working_paper_final_with_addendum.pdf.
- 64 Campaigning is made more difficult by it being severely frowned upon, if not prohibited, to have direct contact between women and unrelated men (as reaching out to voters typically entails) in several Arab countries.
- 65 See <http://www.mei.edu/content/map/gender-gap-political-participation-north-africa>.
- 66 For a comprehensive discussion on the impact of lower rates of economic participation on political participation, see ESCWA, 2016b.
- 67 Ibid.
- 68 ILOSTAT modeled estimates, available from http://www.ilo.org/ilostat/faces/oracle/webcenter/portal/app/pagehierarchy/Page3.jspx?MBI_ID=15&_afLoop=167152606859048&_afWindowMode=0&_afWindowId=1cfq5hhg11_1#!%40%40%3F_afWindowId%3D1cfq5hhg11_1%26_afLoop%3D167152606859048%26MBI_ID%3D15%26_afWindowMode%3D0%26_adf.ctrl-state%3D1cfq5hhg11_33.
- 69 ESCWA, *Unemployment of Young Women in the Arab Region: Causes and Interventions* (Social Policy Brief, No. 8), 2016c, E/ESCWA/SDD/2015/Brief.8. Available from <https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/publications/files/young-women-unemployment-arab-region-english.pdf>.

- 70 Gender-blind processes are not always detrimental to gender equality, however. For example, there are now slightly more women than men enrolled in graduate schools preparing students for a career in the judiciary in Morocco and Tunisia, as a result of women outperforming men in gender-blind admission tests. The difference lies in the fact that there are no substantial gender inequalities in the factors that determine whether those taking the test will be successful – e.g. literacy rates, quality of education and acceptance of both genders as legitimate future members of the judiciary.
- 71 Amr Hamzawy, *Legislating Authoritarianism: Egypt's New Era of Repression* (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2017). Available from <http://carnegieendowment.org/2017/03/16/legislating-authoritarianism-egypt-s-new-era-of-repression-pub-68285>.
- 72 In response to domestic and international outcry, the government later revised the ban. Men and women aged 18-45 now have to secure government authorization before travelling overseas.
- 73 See http://www.idea.int/publications/wip2/upload/Arab_World.pdf.
- 74 Male dominance extends to organizations besides political parties, notably civil society organizations and trade associations (such as unions). As participation in such structures often facilitates the transition into a political career, the exclusion of women from such structures negatively impacts their political representation.
- 75 See <http://www.mei.edu/content/map/gender-gap-political-participation-north-africa>.
- 76 Ibid.
- 77 See http://cdn.agilitycms.com/who-makes-the-news/Imported/reports_2015/global/gmmp_global_report_en.pdf.
- 78 See <http://yemensaeed.net/news.php?id=6930>.
- 79 Interview with Nabila Al-Zubair conducted at ESCWA, Beirut, on 5 April 2017.
- 80 Interview with Afrah Al-Zoubah conducted at ESCWA, Beirut, on 5 April 2017.
- 81 OHCHR, *Human rights abuses and international humanitarian law violations in the Syrian Arab Republic, 21 July 2016- 28 February 2017*, 2017, A/HRC/34/CRP.3.
- 82 ESCWA, *Women and Participation in the Arab Uprisings: A Struggle for Justice*, 2013, E/ESCWA/SDD/2013/Technical Paper.13. Available from <https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/publications/files/women-participation-arab-uprising-struggle-justice-english.pdf>.
- 83 Rim Turkmani and others, *Hungry for Peace: Positives and Pitfalls of Local Truces and Ceasefires in Syria* (LSE-Madani, 2014).
- 84 Action Group for Syria, *Final Communiqué*, 30 June 2012. Available from <http://www.un.org/News/dh/infocus/Syria/FinalCommuniqueActionGroupforSyria.pdf>.
- 85 Hassan is a social entrepreneur and activist, with previous experience in the private sector as well as civil society. She was appointed to the Upper Chamber in 2010. In 2013, she was appointed to the Independent Elections Commission (IEC).
- 86 Interview with Samar Haj Hassan conducted on 7 April 2017.
- 87 See <http://togetherwebuildit.org/wp/womens-political-participation-our-work/>.
- 88 ACAPS, *Libya crisis profile*, June 2016. Available from <https://www.acaps.org/special-report/libya-crisis-profile>.
- 89 IFES, *Women's Political Participation in Libya: Progress and Pitfalls*, November 2013.
- 90 Human Rights Watch, *A Revolution for All: Women's Rights in the New Libya*, 2012.
- 91 Interview with Zahia Farag conducted on 6 April 2017.
- 92 Ibid.
- 93 See <http://jusoor.ly/downloads/The%20Situation%20of%20Women%20in%20Libyan%20Report%202017-08.03.2017.pdf>.

Chapter 3

- 94 See <https://pomeps.org/2016/04/14/womens-political-representation-and-authoritarianism-in-the-arab-world/>.
- 95 See <https://ema.revues.org/3033>.
- 96 Glenn E. Robinson. *Defensive Democratization in Jordan*, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 30, No. 3, August 1998, pp. 387-410. Available from <http://www.eden.rutgers.edu/~spath/351/Readings/Robinson%20-%20Defensive%20Democ%20in%20Jordan.pdf>.
- 97 Kelli M. Harris, *Personal Status Law Reform in Jordan: State Bargains and Women's Rights in the Law*, PhD Dissertation (Washington DC: Georgetown University, 2015), p. 55.
- 98 See <https://ema.revues.org/3033>.
- 99 See <http://jordanembassyus.org/politics/women-political-life>.
- 100 See <http://www.electionguide.org/elections/id/536/>.
- 101 See <http://www.electionguide.org/election.php?ID=2316>.
- 102 See <http://www.electionguide.org/elections/id/536/>.
- 103 See <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/03/jordan-women-fight-political-representation-160306101829565.html>.
- 104 See <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2016/sep/23/jordan-election-women-gain-ground-gender-gap>.

- 105 Although the process is far from complete, Jordan has undertaken steps to reform its personal status law, such as issuing Law No.6 of 2008 (Domestic Violence Protection Act), and repealing article 522 of the penal code, which allows rapists to marry their victims, in August 2017. Nevertheless, many problematic issues persist in the personal status law, which includes the laws governing marriage, divorce and honour killing.
- 106 Olivia Cuthbert. Women gain ground in Jordan election despite yawning gender gap, *The Guardian*, 23 September 2016. Available from <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2016/sep/23/jordan-election-women-gain-ground-gender-gap>.
- 107 See <http://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/258-women-running-parliamentary-elections%E2%80%99>.
- 108 See <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/profiles/mohamed-ali-alhakim>.
- 109 A technocratic minister is one who “at the time of his/her appointment to government: (1) has never held public office under the banner of a political party; (2) is not a formal member of any party”; and “(3) is said to possess recognized non-party political expertise which is directly relevant to the role occupied in government”. See Duncan McDonnell and Marco Valbruzzi. Defining and classifying technocrat-led and technocratic governments, *European Journal of Political Research*, vol. 53, No. 4, November 2014, pp. 654-671.
- 110 See <http://www.mopso.gov.jo/en/PDF%20Files/MOPSD%20executive%20plan%202017.pdf>.
- 111 See http://www.nato.int/ims/2006/win/pdf/jordan_brief.pdf.
- 112 UNDP, Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in Public Administration: Jordan Case Study, 2012a. Available from <http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/Democratic%20Governance/Women-s%20Empowerment/JordanFinal%20-%20HiRes.pdf>, p. 16.
- 113 JNCW, Gender Auditing in the Public Sector in Jordan, 2010.
- 114 UNDP, 2012a, p. 17.
- 115 UNDP, 2012a.
- 116 This is not specific to Jordan, however. A study of women in the US civil service has shown that “gender factors [are] important in the mentoring process that is so important to the development and advancement of managers. Men tend to have male mentors, and women are as likely to have male mentors, as they are to have women mentors. Nevertheless, women who found female mentors gained considerably from that relationship”. When there is a dearth of women in the higher echelons of the public service, women in middle management are less likely to find female role models or mentors that could help them climb the hierarchical ladder. See Rita Mae Kelly and others. Public Managers in the States: A Comparison of Career Advancement by Sex, *Public Administration Review*, vol. 51, No. 5, September-October 1991.
- 117 Ibid.
- 118 See http://www.dos.gov.jo/dos_home_e/main/population/gender/law/2013/10.pdf.
- 119 See <https://www.icj.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Universal-Women-and-Judiciary-Gva-For-1-Publications-Conference-Report-2014-ENG.pdf>.
- 120 See <http://www.ibanet.org/Article/NewDetail.aspx?ArticleUid=5bf4ebc7-a1f7-4d6f-8fc4-7a8aa4a84160>.
- 121 See <https://www.icj.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Universal-Women-and-Judiciary-Gva-For-1-Publications-Conference-Report-2014-ENG.pdf>, p. 36.
- 122 Ibid.
- 123 Bonnie Smith, ed. *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Women in World History*, Volume 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 662.
- 124 David and Nanes, 2011.
- 125 See <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/politics/2013/08/jordan-elections-low-turnout.html>.
- 126 See <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/WiP%20-%20Jordan%20Case%20Study.pdf>.
- 127 See <http://www.unicef.org/gender/files/Morocco-Gender-Equality-Profile-2011.pdf>, p. 3.
- 128 See http://www.quotaproject.org/CS/CS_Morocco_tahri_27_7_2004.pdf, p. 2.
- 129 Ibid. pp. 1-2.
- 130 See http://carnegieendowment.org/files/moroccan_parliamentary_elections_final.pdf, p. 1.
- 131 Hanane Darhour and Drude Dahlerup. Sustainable representation of women through gender quotas: A decade’s experience in Morocco, *Women’s Studies International Forum*, vol. 41, No. 2, November-December 2013, p. 137.
- 132 Ibid. p. 137.
- 133 Zakia Salime. A New Feminism? Gender Dynamics in Morocco’s 20th of February Movement, *Journal of International Women’s Studies*, vol. 13, No. 5, 2012, p. 105.
- 134 An explanation of this might be the PJD’s appeal to a segment of devout and educated Muslim women, which has allowed it to increase its female base and incorporate a number of women on its electoral lists. The PJD has been less forthcoming in appointing women to the cabinets it has led, however.
- 135 Darhour and Dahlerup, 2013, p. 137.
- 136 Ibid. p. 138.
- 137 Ibid. p. 140.
- 138 See <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/africa/2016/01/28/Morocco-to-hold-parliamentary-elections-on-Oct-7-government.html>.
- 139 See http://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2016/10/13/maroc-21-de-femmes-deputees-dans-le-nouveau-parlement_5013158_3212.html.

- 140 See https://www.finances.gov.ma/Docs/DB/2017/rh_fr.pdf.
- 141 UNDP, Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Public Administration: Morocco Case Study, 2012b. Available from <http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/Democratic%20Governance/Women-s%20Empowerment/MoroccoFinal%20-%20HiRes.pdf>.
- 142 Ibid.
- 143 See <http://www.mmsp.gov.ma/uploads/file/Rapport%20place%20Femmes%20Fonctionnaires-%20postes%20%20responsabilit%C3%A9%20dans%20%20FP.pdf>.
- 144 Ibid.
- 145 UNDP, 2012b.
- 146 See <http://iknowpolitics.org/fr/2010/11/femmes-droit-de-la-famille-et-syst%C3%A8me-judiciaire-en-alg%C3%A9rie-au-maroc-et-en-tunisie>.
- 147 Yasmine Berriane. The micro politics of reform: gender quota, grassroots associations and the renewal of local elites in Morocco, *The Journal of North African Studies*, vol. 20, No. 3, April 2015.
- 148 See <http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/Morocco%202010-01-22.pdf>.
- 149 The victory of the PJD in urban centers might help explain this discrepancy. Traditional families are more at ease allowing their daughters to run on an Islamist platform, and the PJD didn't emphasize rural areas, nor did it run a number of candidates there. In addition, women are more reluctant to run in traditional areas and are rarely encouraged by their families to do so.
- 150 Loes Debuysere. Tunisian Women at the Crossroads: Antagonism and Agonism between Secular and Islamist Women's Rights Movements in Tunisia, *Mediterranean Politics*, vol. 21, No. 2, 2016, p. 227.
- 151 Most parties did not achieve parity on their lists, however, as some constituencies had an uneven number of seats. In addition, several parties did not find enough women to abide by the system, owing to their failure to cultivate a culture of participation and outreach to women. See https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/rapport_national_genre_tunisie_2015_fr.pdf.
- 152 This number slightly increased thereafter, reaching 67 women, as several men resigned or died and were replaced by women who came next on the "zipper" lists.
- 153 Labidi presided over the sensitive rights and freedoms committee, charged with addressing most of the issues connected to women's rights. See http://fride.org/download/PB_189_Tunisian_women_in_politics.pdf.
- 154 See https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/rapport_national_genre_tunisie_2015_fr.pdf.
- 155 Nedra Cherif. Tunisian women in politics: From constitution makers to electoral contenders, *Frída Policy Brief*, No. 189, November 2014, p. 4. Available from http://fride.org/download/PB_189_Tunisian_women_in_politics.pdf.
- 156 See https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/rapport_national_genre_tunisie_2015_fr.pdf.
- 157 Cherif, 2014.
- 158 See https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/rapport_national_genre_tunisie_2015_fr.pdf.
- 159 Interestingly, the Prime Minister, Youssef Chahed, is the grandson of a leading Tunisian feminist, Radhia Haddad, who was one of the first women elected to Tunisia's parliament.
- 160 See https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/tunisia/19236/profil-genre-de-la-tunisie-2014_fr.
- 161 See <https://www.oecd.org/mena/governance/49356272.pdf> and <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/12552/751810PUB0EPI002060130Opening0doors.pdf?sequence=1>.
- 162 See http://www.pm.gov.tn/pm/upload/fck/File/tdr_femmes.pdf.
- 163 See <http://www.webdo.tn/2015/04/22/tunisie-parite-entre-femmes-et-hommes-dans-la-fonction-publique-16-associations-feminines-se-mobilisent/>.
- 164 See <https://anneemaghreb.revues.org/353#bodyftn33>.
- 165 Ibid.
- 166 See <http://www.webmanagercenter.com/2017/03/09/404023/tunisie-taux-de-presence-des-femmes-par-secteur-dactivite/>.
- 167 See <http://kvinfo.org/news-and-background/tunisia-gets-unique-gender-parity-election-law>.
- 168 See http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/2015-04-22_awli_survey_of_tunisian_public_opinion_february_22-25_2015.pdf.
- 169 See <https://timep.org/commentary/women-and-quotas-in-egypts-parliament/>.
- 170 In addition to MPs with an electoral mandate, the chamber also includes MPs appointed by the presidency.
- 171 See <https://timep.org/commentary/women-and-quotas-in-egypts-parliament/>.
- 172 See <http://ecwronline.org/?p=6788>.
- 173 Ibid.
- 174 Tim Large. Big surprises about women's rights in the Arab world, Thomson Reuters Foundation News, 12 November 2013. Available from <http://news.trust.org/item/20131111154729-rvne8/?source=spotlight-writaw>.
- 175 See <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2013/Dec-04/239806-is-the-reuters-ranking-of-arab-women-valid.ashx>.
- 176 Egyptian Center for Women's Rights (ECWR), Report on Egyptian woman conditions in 2012: 2012. Women get out to the streets, 2012, pp. 5-6. Available from http://ecwronline.org/pdf/reports/2013/egyptian_women_conditions_in2012.pdf.
- 177 Ibid.

- 178 See <http://ema.revues.org/3503>.
- 179 See <http://ecwronline.org/?p=6788>.
- 180 The electoral system adopted for the 2015 elections to the lower chamber is complex. 448 seats are filled through a majority system (two-round system) on an individual basis. For those seats, the candidate who wins a majority of the votes is declared elected. If necessary, a second round is held ten days after the first round. In addition, 120 seats (divided among four larger multi-constituency districts) are filled through Party Block Vote (PBV). The list that obtains the highest number of valid votes is entitled to fill all the seats in the constituency.
- 181 See <http://ecwronline.org/?p=6788>.
- 182 See <http://ecwronline.org/?p=7177>.
- 183 See <http://ecwronline.org/?p=6788>.
- 184 See <http://www.cnn.com/2012/05/22/opinion/egypt-women-election-shokalmly/>.
- 185 See <http://ema.revues.org/3503>.
- 186 Ibid.
- 187 See <https://english.alarabiya.net/en/perspective/profiles/2015/09/21/Three-beauties-join-Egypt-s-new-Cabinet-but-still-not-enough-.html>.
- 188 See <http://ecwronline.org/?p=7094>.
- 189 UN Women, 2013.
- 190 Ibid.
- 191 Ibid.
- 192 Fatima Sadiqi and Moha Ennaji, eds. *Women in the Middle East and North Africa: Agents of Change* (New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 145.
- 193 See http://www.arabruleoflaw.org/Files/PDF/Judiciary/English/P2/Egypt_FinalReportP2S4_En.pdf.
- 194 The expression “psychological or biological state of mind” is an oft-repeated sexist euphemism that refers to women’s menses, and seems to signify that women become incompetent during that “time of the month”. This pseudo-scientific view finds support in the Islamic injunction relieving women from praying or fasting when they menstruate, or what Nawal Ammar calls the “theological vision of the female gender role”. See <http://www.refworld.org/docid/42c3bd060.html>.
- 195 See http://www.refworld.org/docid/42c3bd060.html#_ftn56.
- 196 See <http://www.madamasr.com/en/2016/03/28/opinion/u/in-egypt-there-is-no-local-government/>.
- 197 The court saw these councils as a way for the then-ruling NDP to maintain its hold on power. Indeed, “the NDP had won 95 per cent of local seats in 2008, and 84 per cent of those seats were walkovers”. See <https://www.madamasr.com/en/2016/03/28/opinion/u/in-egypt-there-is-no-local-government/>.

Chapter 4

- 198 See <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2016/>.
- 199 Member States should in this regard consider developing a national action plan, drawing inspiration from the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP), which represents international best practices towards achieving gender parity within institutions and other public structures.
- 200 ESCWA, *Beirut Call for Action: Prioritizing women, peace and security on the Arab agenda, 2016d*, E/ESCWA/ECW/2016/PAMPHLET.1. Available from <https://www.unescwa.org/publications/beirut-call-for-action-arab-women-peace-security-agenda>; and ESCWA, *Arab Governance Report II: Governance and Institutional Transformations in Conflict-affected Arab Countries, 2016e*, E/ESCWA/ECRI/2016/1. Available from <https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/publications/files/arab-governance-report-2016-english.pdf> for a further discussion and policy recommendations regarding inclusive governance in conflict-affected countries.

Since 2010, the Arab region has witnessed progress in women's representation at all governance levels, including in the legislature, the executive, the judiciary, civil service and local councils. Women have also successfully engaged in new forms of political participation, such as demonstrations, constituent assemblies and constitution-drafting bodies. Nevertheless, regional representation figures remain below the global average, highlighting existing barriers to women's presence in the political sphere, and those emerging as a result of various issues including armed conflict.

Several Arab countries have achieved notable progress in increasing the political representation of women, largely by introducing policies such as quotas. However, quotas should be seen only as a necessary first step. To ensure that women's political representation improves in a sustainable manner, Arab countries should adopt a holistic approach, focusing not only on removing institutional barriers but also on tackling pervasive socio-cultural obstacles to women's presence in the political sphere. Such efforts should be implemented in full cooperation with civil society and international organizations.

