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Promoting The Participation of Women in Political Life Opportunities and Challenges in the Arab States Region

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Some Facts and Figures

(Source: IPU)

	World Average	Arab Region
	%	%
Women Heads of State	4.7	0
Women Heads of Governments	4.2	0
Women in at Ministerial Level	16.9	7.8
Women Presidents of Parliaments	11.7	0
Women in Parliament (Lower or Single House)	18.5	9.7

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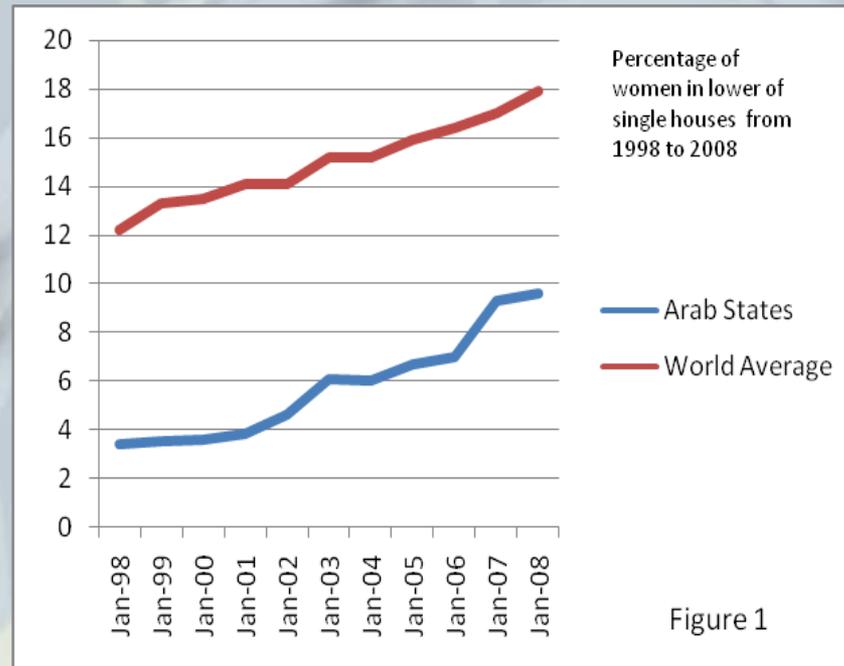


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Women in Arab Parliaments



- The Arab Region average (9.7%) is the lowest among all the other regions of the world.
- It is about half the current world average which is 18.5%
- It is also lower than the world average 10 years ago (12.2% in 1998)



Women in Arab Parliaments

- Only two countries are above the world average
- Most countries have witnessed progress. In some countries the numbers have doubled, and in some cases, tripled (Mauritania)
- Some parliaments have seen a stagnation/slight regression in the number of women MPs (Egypt and Morocco)

Country	Percentage of Women in Lower or Single House	
	Previous Election	Most Recent Election
Iraq	n/a	25.5
Tunisia	11.5	22.8
Sudan	9.7	18.1
Mauritania	3.7	17.9
Djibouti	10.8	13.8
oPt	5.7	12.9
Syria	12	12.4
Morocco	10.8	10.5
UAE	0	9
Somalia	n/a	8.2
Algeria	6.7	7.7
Libya*	n/a	7.7
Jordan	5.5	6.4
Lebanon	2.3	4.7
Comoros	0	3
Bahrain	0	2.5
Egypt	2.5	2
Yemen	0.7	0.3
Kuwait	0	0
Oman	2.4	0
Qatar*	0	0
Saudi Arabia*	0	0

* No parliamentary elections. All Members appointed by head of state



Women in Arab Parliaments

Country	Percentage of Women in Lower or Single House Previous Election	Percentage of Women in Lower or Single House Most Recent Election
Iraq	n/a	25.5
Mauritania	3.7	17.9
oPt	5.7	12.9
Morocco	10.8	10.5
Algeria	6.7	7.7
Jordan	5.5	6.4
Egypt	2.5	2



The Legal Framework

Constitution, Electoral Law and Voting System

Morocco:

- Constitution guarantees equal opportunities for both men and women
- 30-seat national list is reserved, through an agreement among political parties, to women, guaranteeing 9% of the lower house's seats for women
- Voting System: Proportional. 295 members to represent electoral districts, 30 members are elected on a countrywide basis.

Jordan:

- 6 seats are reserved for women
- Voting System: Direct election with simple majority vote



The Legal Framework

Constitution, Electoral Law and Voting System

Occupied Palestinian Territory:

-Each electoral list nominated for the elections shall include a minimum limit for the representation of women that is not less than one woman in: 1. The first three names in the list; 2. The next four names that follow; 3. Each five names that follow. (2005 Electoral Law).

-Voting System: Mixed System (Proportional Representation System and Majority)

(2006 elections: 17 women elected through the PR and 0 through simple majority vote)



The Legal Framework

Constitution, Electoral Law and Voting System

Mauritania:

-20% quota obtained by allocating one seat for a woman in each electoral district that has 2 seats. In districts with 3 seats, at least one candidate out of the top 2 on the list should be a woman, etc. (1991 Electoral Law amended in 2006).

-Voting System: Mixed System (Proportional Representation in districts with 3 seats or more, and Simple Majority in 1 and 2-seat districts)



The Legal Framework

Constitution, Electoral Law and Voting System

Iraq:

- “The elections law shall aim to achieve a percentage of representation for women of not less than one-quarter of the members of the Council of Representatives.” (Article 49 of the Constitution.)
- The electoral law requires that at least one woman should be among the first 3 nominees on the candidate list for a political entity, and at least 2 women should be among the first 6 nominees on the list and so on. (2005 Electoral Law of 2005.)
- Voting System: Proportional Representation System



Political Parties

Legislation

Political parties are not bound by law to include women in their founding members, leadership positions, and electoral lists.

Some direct results of this weak legislative framework:

- Morocco's political party law mentions the need to include women and youth but is not specific in terms of minimum percentage
- Only 3 out of a few hundred political parties in the Arab countries are headed by women (Algeria, Morocco and Jordan).
- Yemen: percentage women in leadership level does not exceed 2%.
- Jordan: Women constitute 7.1% of founding members of political parties



Political Parties

The Case of Algeria's Workers' Party

National People's Assembly (2007 elections) (Voting System: Proportional)

Number of Seats: 295

Women MPs: 7.7% (30 seats)

Women Candidates: 8.3% of the total number of candidates.

Party	Number of Seats won	Number of Women	Percentage
National Liberation Front	136	11	8%
National Democratic Rally	61	1	1.6%
Movement for a Peaceful Society	52	0	0%
Independents	33	1	3%
Workers' Party	26	11	42.3%



Political Parties

The Case of Algeria's Workers' Party

Workers' Party: **40% of candidates** were women and **headed more than 30% of the party lists.**

- These results are a reflection of the party structure, membership, and internal organization.
- They are also related to prior commitment from the WP leadership to increase the number of women in the party lists in a UNDP organized forum to increase women's representation in the National People's Assembly (two months before the elections).



Political Parties

The Case of Egypt

- 1979: Quota system in place
(30 parliamentary seats reserved for women, around 9% of the total)
- 1986: Quota system abolished but relatively high representation of women
(List Proportional voting system)
- 1990: Simple majority system

Steady regression of women’s representation in parliament, parallel to a steady regression of women candidates due to the electoral system, but mostly to lack of support from political parties.

	2000	2005	
Number of Candidates	4 200	5 000	+19%
% of Candidates (Women)	3%	2%	-21%



Some challenges facing Arab women's effective representation and participation in politics

Access and Representation in the political sphere

- Rigidity of the legal frameworks and resistance to reform (political parties, elections, equal citizenship rights to men and women),
- Rigidity of the mentalities and cultures at the level of society and across all sectors (political parties, labor unions, professional associations, ..)

Empowerment

- Little mobility within the institutions and difficult access to leadership positions
- Higher turnover (not only do women have fewer opportunities to access politics, but also fewer chances to get re-elected, strengthen their capacities, and help other women).



Opportunities for the political advancement of women in the Arab Region

- Reform of electoral framework in a number of Arab countries, and tendency in the recent years to adopt pro-women electoral systems (in some cases also quotas), either mixed proportional/majority like in oPt and Mauritania, or PR systems such as in Algeria and Morocco, the latter having a national list reserved by political parties to women.
- Try to use the tendency for having separate political party laws (Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Yemen, Jordan, and currently discussions about a new law in Lebanon) to mainstream gender equality in the national debates and introduce provisions that force political parties to change their attitudes.
- More permeability in the policy debates in the region and a perceptible openness by various stakeholders to the need to introduce positive measures, as long as they are temporary and serve to force some mentalities to change.