

V. Timeline

Select developments in women's issues in the Gulf region since 2001

2001

Saudi Arabia ratifies the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

2002

Bahrain ratifies CEDAW.

Bahraini women vote and stand for elections for the first time ever.

2003

Sheikha Jufairi becomes the first Qatari woman to win an election in the Central Municipal Council.

Sheikha Al-Misnad becomes the first woman president of Qatar University.

May: Qatar appoints Sheikha Ahmed al-Mahmoud as Minister of Education, the first woman to hold a cabinet post.

2004

The UAE ratifies CEDAW.

March: Sultan Qaboos appoints Oman's first female minister with a cabinet portfolio, in this case the Ministry of Higher Education.

April: Bahrain appoints its first female minister, Nada Al Haffadh, who becomes minister of health.

2005

April: Saudi Arabia's top religious authority bans forced marriages.

May: Kuwait's parliament passes a bill granting women the right to vote and run for office.

June: Kuwait appoints two women to its Municipality Council, marking the first time women take up a post at the governing body.

2006

Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum creates the Dubai Women's Establishment, which is aimed at researching women's status in the workplace and promoting women's development across the UAE.

Qatar adopts Law No. 22, granting women the right to be free of physical or moral harm from their husbands.

A Bahraini woman wins a seat in the Council of Representatives after running uncontested, becoming the first female MP in the country's history.

June: Bahrain is elected to head the UN's General Assembly and Haya Rashid Al Khalifa is appointed as president, making her the first Middle Eastern woman and the third woman in history to take up the post.

2007

July: The UAE sets up the Dubai Foundation for Women and Children to offer protection and support services to women and children who are victims of domestic abuse and human trafficking.

2008

December: The Women's Union in Bahrain presents a personal status draft law to parliament.

2009

King Abdullah University of Science and Technology opens as the first coeducational campus in Saudi Arabia.

May: Four Kuwaiti women win seats in parliamentary elections, the first time since women won the right to run for office in 2005.

2010

A new labor law in Kuwait allows women to work night shifts in certain private sector industries.

Oman issues a decree eliminating the need for women to obtain their guardian's approval for getting a passport.

2011

July: Kuwait's Ministry of Justice announces it will accept applications from women for "entry-level legal research" positions.

November: A decree grants the children of Emirati women married to non-Emirati men the opportunity to apply for citizenship when they reach 18 years of age, a first in the Gulf region.

2012

Qatari women participate in the Summer Olympics for the first time ever.

UN Women releases a report noting that Kuwaiti women occupy 40 of 518 executive posts in the country.

April: A Kuwaiti court decision cancels a ministerial order barring women from entry-level jobs at the Ministry of Justice.

December: The UAE makes it mandatory to have female board members in every company and government agency in the country.

2013

January: Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah grants women seats in the Shura Council for the first time ever.

August: Saudi Arabia issues a law making domestic violence a criminal offense.

September: The UAE appoints its first female permanent representative to the UN.

2014

The UAE opens the Khawla Bint Al Azwar Military School, the first military college for women in the region.

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2015

Qataris elect two women to the Central Municipal Council.

February: Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid announces the establishment of the Gender Balance Council in the UAE, which aims to support women in the workplace.

2016

A hashtag calling for the abolishment of the male guardian system in Saudi Arabia trends on Twitter as thousands of Saudi women sign the petition.

November: Safa Al-Hashem becomes the first Kuwaiti woman to win in three consecutive parliamentary elections.

December: Oman appoints a senior female police officer to be in charge of a police department for the first time ever.

2017

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) applauds Oman's approach to family planning and reproductive health.

February: An Emirati woman named Lana Nusseibeh is elected as president of the UN Women Executive Board.

September: King Salman issues a decree allowing women to drive in Saudi Arabia starting June 2018, as well as to travel and study without a male guardian's permission.

October: The UAE announces that citizenship may be granted to the sons and daughters of Emirati women married to non-Emirati men after a minimum of six years from their birth date. The UAE as such becomes the first Gulf state to allow citizenship to pass from mother to child.

November: Qatar appoints four women to the Shura Council for the first time.

2018

Oman announces that women are allowed to drive taxis.

January: Saudi women are allowed to enter football stadiums as spectators for the first time.

June: Women begin to start driving in Saudi Arabia after a years-long struggle against the ban in urban areas.