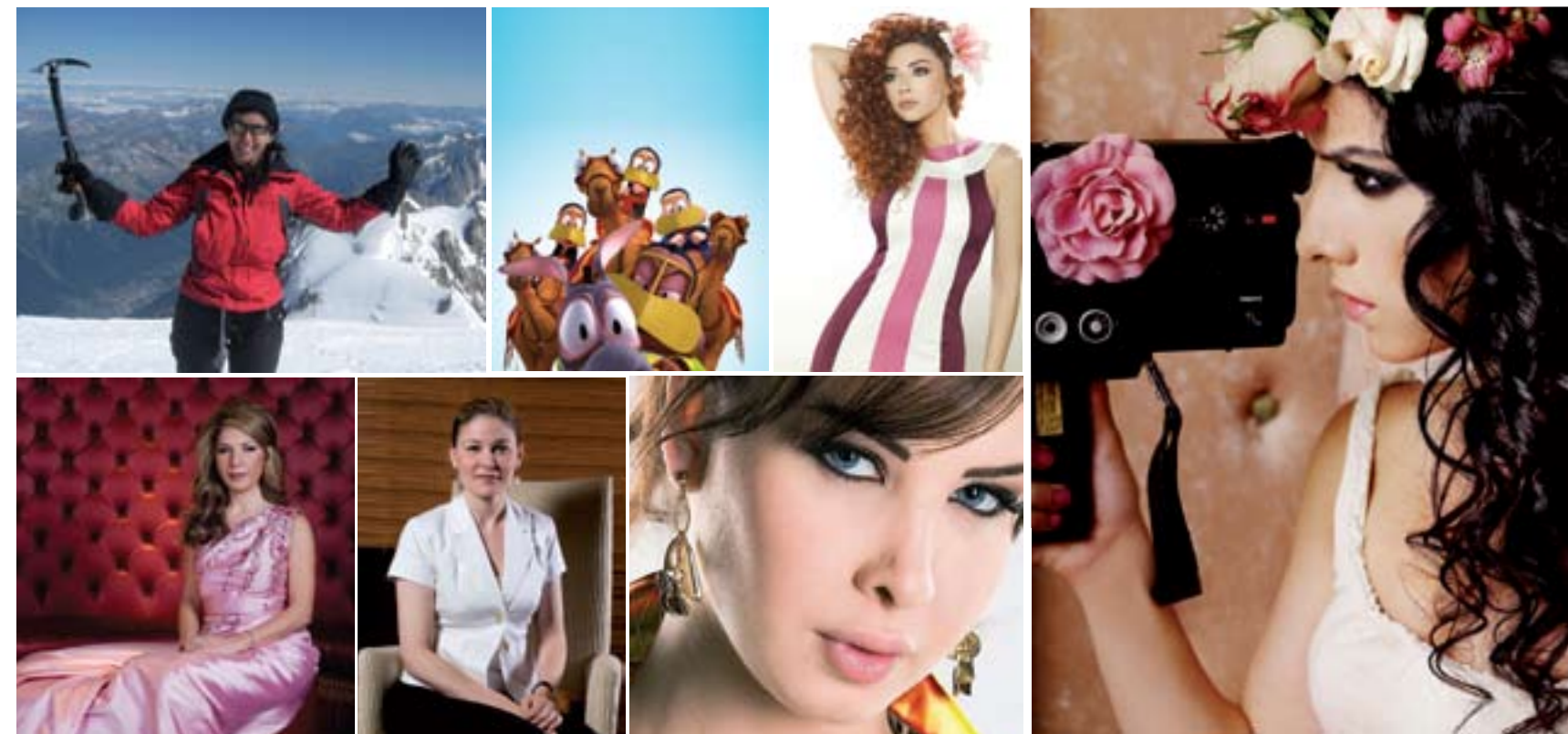




30 Awesome Arabian Women

Every year, **Arabian Woman** brings you a round-up of successful, empowering and inspirational Middle Eastern women from across the world. In ode to International Women's Day, this year, our comprehensive list is a little different. Instead of focusing purely on women who have won accolades and awards and already garnered a lot of media interest for their achievements, we also want to highlight those women who have kept themselves under the radar, but are equally inspiring. From social advocators to business moguls, celebrities to royals, **AW** brings you 30 Awesome Women. Prepare to be empowered!



Power Women

HE Sheikha Lubna Al Qasimi

HE Sheikha Lubna Al Qasimi has far too many accolades under her abaya to list, but to name a few, 'The Wall Street Journal' recognised Sheikha Lubna as one of its '50 international women to watch', calling her



'one of the Mideast's highest-profile movers and shakers'. In the same year, she became the first Arab woman to receive the Italian 'Stella Re' prize, awarded annually to just one woman throughout the world, who strives to make a difference to contemporary society and culture through her innovative work, dedication and ideas. In 2008, the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce awarded her with the 'Industry's Ladies Organisation International Woman Achiever Award', in appreciation of her role in personal and professional development of women in the UAE and the world. So what exactly does she do? Amongst many things, Sheikha Lubna's appointment in the UAE government in 2004, to manage what was then the UAE's newly-merged economy and planning portfolio, was a historic event for the UAE, as she became the first woman ever in the country to assume a cabinet position.

HH Sheikha Mozah bint Nasser Al Missned

Also known as the Queen of Qatar, HH Sheikha Mozah bint Nasser Al Missned has been actively engaged in education and social reform in her native country, and has played a major role in spearheading various national and international development projects. She currently serves as Chairperson of Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development, a private non-profit organisation founded in 1995. She is also the President of the Supreme Council for Family Affairs, a government institution with the aim of strengthening the role of the family in society, and Vice Chair of the Supreme Education Council, which oversees the on-going comprehensive reform of Qatar's K-12 education system. In addition, she is Chairperson of the Sidra Medical and Research Centre project to build a premier academic medical centre in Qatar, Chairperson of the Silatech initiative to address the growing challenge of youth

employment in the Middle East and North Africa region, and Chairperson of the Arab Democracy Foundation based in Doha. With honorary doctorates awarded to her, as well as countless awards, it's not surprising that she was included in the Forbes list of '100 most powerful women in the world'.



Muna AbuSulayman

Muna AbuSulayman is essentially responsible for Prince Alwaleed bin Talal's fortunes. The Executive Director of his foundation, member of the C-100 Executive Committee, recipient of numerous awards, the first female Saudi UNDP Goodwill Ambassador, WEF Young Global Leader, WEF Global Council member on Faith and top media personality has recently added another recognition to her (already long) list. She has also recently been chosen as one of the 'Leaders of Tomorrow' by the American Society for Muslim Advancement. Her experience and knowledge from her various local, regional and international work on contemporary issues, ranging from Islam/West dialogue to



domestic violence, has made the mother-of-two an icon for Saudi women across the globe.

Amna BinHendi

She's one of the brightest business stars to come from the UAE, and in 2008, was included in one of Forbes magazine's annual line-up of stellar movers and shakers in the Arab world. Amna BinHendi, the heir to the



BinHendi empire, and the newly-appointed CEO, is different from her contemporaries. After all, how often do you hear that a 27 year-old daughter is managing a company with annual revenues that amount to over the multi-million dollar scope. It's even more surprising, given statistics that reveal that many of these family businesses barely survive, that only five per cent of them make it through to third generation management. However, Mohi-Din BinHendi, Chairman and founder of the BinHendi Enterprises, in a decision that proved everybody wrong, selected the very best person (his daughter) to take his multi-faceted retail business to the next level.

Laila Suhail

Laila Suhail was awarded the 'Government Excellence Award' by HH Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, for gathering high sponsorship amount in DSF 2001. She is also accredited with acceding the highest targeted sponsorship revenues in 2005, and catapulting the DSF/DSS brands to a higher level. Her achievements and hard work have granted her unequalled access to the dynamic retail sector, which was evident when she was appointed as a facilitator, retail sector participation in the 'Dubai Cares'



campaign that ended with being the most successful charity campaign in the history of the region.

Ingie Chalhoub

President and managing director of the Etoile Group that boasts some of the world's most famous designers (including Calvin Klein, Carolina Herrera, Karl Lagerfeld and Dolce & Gabbana), Chalhoub has been one of the Middle East's pioneers in bringing luxury fashion brands like Valentino, Chanel and Ungaro to the region. At the forefront of a multi-billion dollar industry and owning more than 60 per cent of the luxury goods market



in the GCC, she is determined to keep on pushing the boundaries of fashion. She was the first retailer to open a multi-brand boutique in the Mall of the Emirates, when she launched Etoile la Boutique, a sub-brand within the Etoile Group, and more recently,

she also won the 'Emirates Woman Business Award' in 2008.

Huda Janahi

Founder and Chief Executive of Global Group, Bahraini Huda Janahi is an inspiration for all Arab businesswomen. Named by President Bush as "an inspiring example for the whole region", she was also described by the UNIDO as a 'Leader Entrepreneur'. With numerous awards to her name, including 'Investor of the Year 2005' and



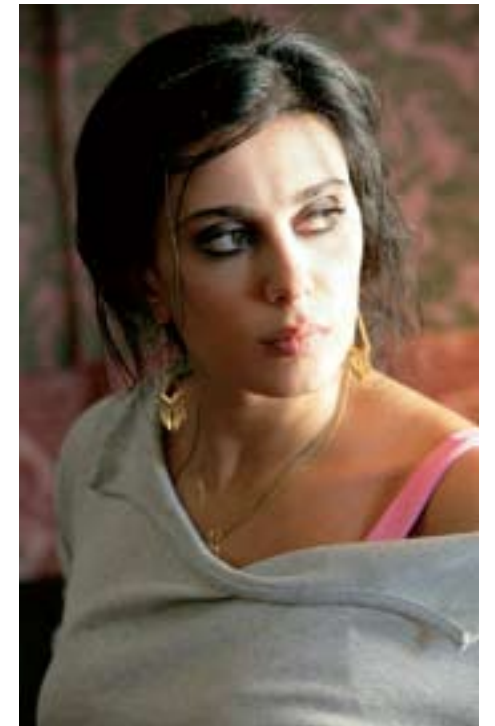
'Young Business Leader 2005,' she was also recently presented with the 'Young Innovative Entrepreneur Award 2008'. Forbes Magazine has also named her among the 50 most powerful Arab businesswomen for two successive years. Global Cargo & Traveller's Services was created in 2001, and in just four years, grew from a small entrepreneur business to the high-scale organisation it is today.

The Creatives

Creativity is not only powerful, it is also innate - although it can be developed, it cannot be taught. These women have explored the artisan within and produced works of sheer beauty.

Nadine Labaki

Having made a name for herself directing music videos for stars such as Nancy Ajram and Nicole Saba, Nadine Labaki's influence just got bigger - her first movie has garnered international success. Actress, director, and recently voted as one of the most influential



Arabs, she studied media at Saint-Joseph University in Beirut, and her school film project, '11 Rue Pasteur', was awarded first prize for short films at IMA's Biennale du Cinéma arabe in Paris in 1998. Her feature film, 'Caramel', was an international sensation at film festivals, and later achieved box office success. It garnered Labaki much acclaim as both a director and actress, and put her on Forbe's 10 Directors to Look Out For list. In addition, it has earned her the No 5 spot on Arabian business's 100 Most Influential Arabs, which also effectively made her the most influential Arab woman on the power list.

Leila Kanaan

The youngest music video director and filmmaker in the Arab world, 25 year-old Leila Kanaan has already directed video clips for stars such as Haifa Wehbe, Yara, Nancy



Ajram and Myriam Fares. Often deemed as too evocative and sensual, the Lebanese-born beauty takes pride in her sensuous and soft style – after all, it's her sensitivity and capacity for mood creation and innovation that has made her one of the most demanded directors in the Arab world. Aside from her skills in producing music videos, Kanaan has also produced two short films: 'My Father's House' and 'After the storm', which were shown in international festivals all over the world, and have won several awards. In 'My Father's House', Kanaan depicts her native country and parents' home as an oriental madhouse, where obsessions, the fullness and intensity of life, fears of war and downfall all come together in a Babylonian-like fashion.

Nayla Al Khaja

Nayla Al Khaja has come a long way since becoming the first female Emirati film director. Now CEO and Founder of D-Seven, a marketing and design agency, founder of D-Seven motion pictures and 'Best Director' at the 2007 Dubai International Film Festival, Al Khaja is also working on projects that portray the UAE culture in a positive light. Speaking at conferences on 'Bridging Cultures' and the like, she is passionate about cross-cultural dialogue, and using



media as a tool to show off her own. She has also founded the very first film club in the UAE – a forum where new and accomplished directors are able to showcase their work, attend panel discussions and answer questions from the audience.

The Newbies

These young women have refused to let their age be a barrier to their dreams. Starting out with passion and determination, they're the ones to look out for.

Aiisha Ramadan

Unpretentious – and friendly to boot – young and up-and-coming designer Aiisha Ramadan, at just 25, has already showcased at various international and regional fashion shows. Her shows have taken her to Jordan, Qatar, Kuwait, Morocco, Cairo and Pakistan, and she was recently invited to showcase



at events in Qatar and Miami. Ramadan has also won the coveted 'Young Designer of the Year' award by Swarovski and was later commissioned by Nokia to create a futuristic collection inspired by the Prism 7900 handset. Although fashion design is her passion – she already has her own atelier, Corset Fashions, in Sharjah – she works for MBC as a stylist as well.

Nadia Zaal

Nadia Zaal is one of the region's newest and most dynamic business minds. Still



in her 20s, she is the CEO of Zaya, a joint venture between Tasameem and Assas Real Estate, whose combined portfolio exceeds USD 15 billion. Steering the direction of Zaya, she also sits on its board and oversees all aspects of the company through the executive team. Zaal was also the driving force behind the USD 2 billion Al Barari project, the first Dubai-based mixed-use development to target the premium segment of the real estate market. She has extensive experience in project development, structuring and funding in the GCC's energy sector, having led one of the region's largest IPOs for the Abu Dhabi National Energy Company. She also sat on the board of Taweelah Asia Power Company, which closed the largest energy financing deal in the Gulf. With her business acumen and determination to succeed, this Emirati businesswoman is going places.

Amna Fatani

When Amna Fatani started a campaign to preserve heritage sites earlier this year, her father received hateful text messages telling



him that he has no shame. Unfazed by the criticism, Fatani recently appeared in a local Saudi newspaper, wearing a Palestinian keffiyeh during her participation at the Saudi-British Youth Forum in Jeddah. Again, she was faced with similar reactions. The first comment by a reader was, "let her cover herself up, and worry about her religion first". Born and raised in the UK, 21-year-old Fatani and her family moved back to their native KSA in 2000. Always interested in community work, she joined groups such as Izzaty Islamy, and through her media appearances, she has succeeded in raising awareness on many campaigns, including the preservation of national heritage. However, her journey has also been controversial. Fatani is determined to continue her fight to serve KSA and the negativity only strengthens her resolve.

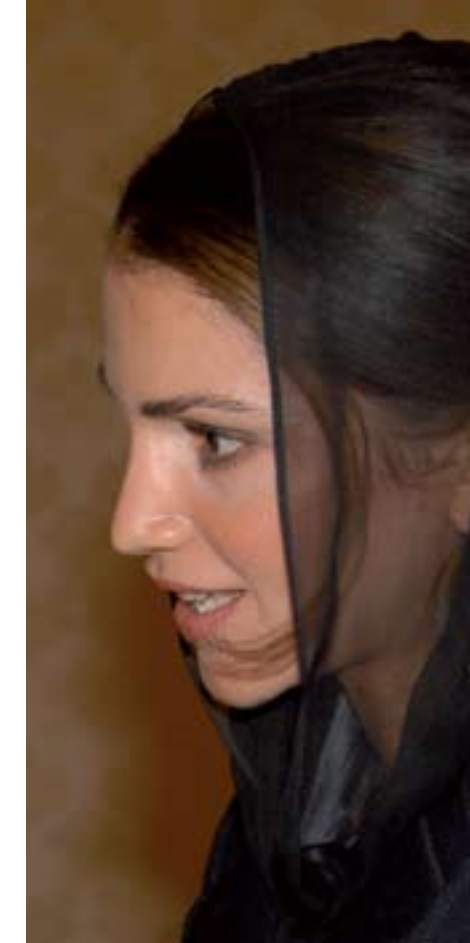
The Heroes...

From sparking controversy for their daring attitude to risking their lives,

these active women have overcome obstacles and fought hard to try and make the world a better place.

HH Queen Rania of Jordan

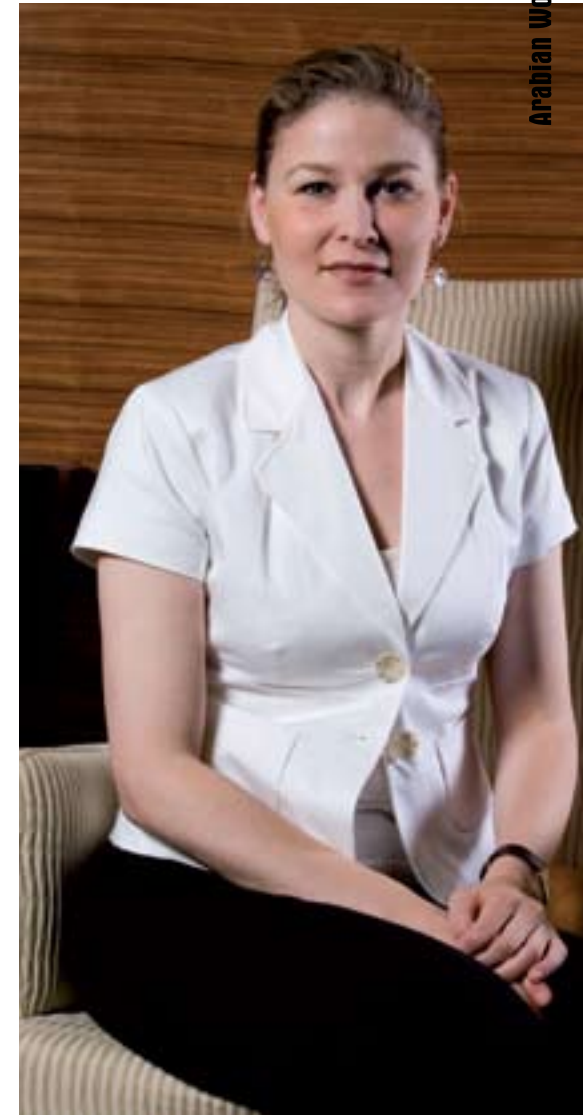
No awesome women list is complete without HH Queen Rania Al Abdullah. When the Palestinian crisis recently struck, she met with UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon during his visit to Amman to discuss the crisis. During the meeting, she noted the



UN's efforts in calling for an immediate end to the violence, but said that more pressure needs to be put on Israel. She also told the Secretary General that Jordan is ready to expand the efforts of the Jordanian Hashemite Charity Organisation in coordinating aid passing through Jordan but that Israel must open the crossings to allow the passage of aid and aid workers. Proactive, passionate and generous, Queen Rania is famous for her charity, her elegance and her decorum, and is a true role model for all women across the world.

Hala Gorani

CNN reporter and anchor Hala Gorani is not fearless – but that hasn't stopped her from risking her life to bring news to the public. Early this year, she presented 'The Middle East Challenge', a special hour-long programme that took an insightful and thought-provoking look into the problems and promise facing the Middle East. As one



of CNN's most experienced international journalists, she has reported from every country in the Middle East, including KSA, Iraq, Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian territories. She was instrumental in CNN International's coverage of the Israel-Hezbollah conflict in 2006, for which CNN won an Edward R Murrow Award. In 2005, she was one of the first television reporters on the ground in Amman, Jordan, after al Qaeda suicide bombers attacked two hotels. Earlier that year, she also covered the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza.

Maryam Behnam

Author, social advocate and public servant are just a few titles that can be used to define Maryam Behnam, who, at 88-years-old, is a respected, fearless, no-nonsense social advocate for women's empowerment in the Gulf. Behnam has challenged the way women think, their status and their role in society, especially their position in Islam according to the Qur'an and the Sunnah through her numerous books and articles on the subject – a position that is sometimes considered controversial. She doesn't write her books for financial gain either, but rather to encourage social debate and dialogue.



Behnam's generosity doesn't end with a cheque in the post to her numerous charities – she's also been known to open both her heart and home to orphans. Twenty-two years ago, she adopted a young girl, who although has grown up, still maintains a strong relationship with her. Generous, wise, and extremely intelligent, she is quite simply, awe-inspiring.

Mody Al Khalaf

Saudi writer and educator Mody Al Khalaf is determined to do what she can to instigate change, regardless of the consequences. From women's rights to national ID cards, Al Khalaf fears nothing when it comes to airing her concerns about her country. As the Professor

of Linguistics at Riyadh University, and head of the female department of the Ministry of Higher Education, Al Khalaf's first article, which appeared in the Arab News in 2003, highlighted the amount of unemployment in KSA. The huge response from viewers and debates that ensued finally resulted in more female departments in government organisations to reduce unemployment rates amongst women. Al Khalaf is a shrewd, intelligent advocate of justice – not just for women, but her land as a whole. Without being rude or violent, she has found a way to communicate her ideals with an intelligent articulacy that has already borne fruit, and will continue to do so.



and family problems, including poverty, violence, dropout, unemployment and murder in the name of 'family honour'. She has also been running a Young Women Centre in a mixed town (both Arabs and Jews) for five years. In 2006, seven women were killed there, including a 15 year-old girl who was murdered by her own brother because she wanted to finish high school and refused to get married. In such an environment, Salaiame-Egbariya is even more driven to continue her social work, and she hopes that the renamed Seven Women Centre will foster social change by training community members to challenge pre-conceived ideas regarding gender roles.

The Entertainers

These gorgeous girls have rocked the Arab world of entertainment with their talent, their beauty and their brawn.

Myriam Faris

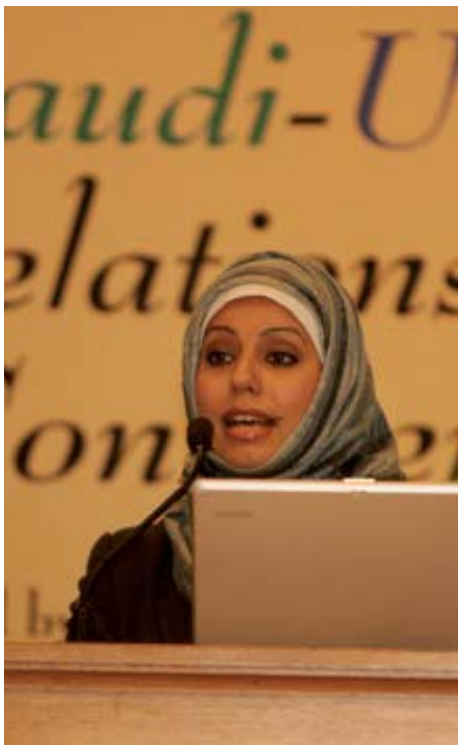
This Lebanese bombshell, who despite having reached international stardom for her fresh vocal and dancing talent, is yet to undergo plastic surgery, be plastered on the cover of gossip magazines or earn a notorious diva reputation. The 25-year-old jack-of-all-trades not only sings and dances but writes and choreographs as well. Watching her perform can be intoxicating, and although she's not overtly sexy, her tumbling curls, cheeky smile and seductive eyes make for an irresistible combination. Working in collaboration with perfume creator Mahmoud Saïd, Faris also created and launched a unique fragrance for men and women named after her first hit 'Ana

Dr. Hedia Baccar

In a region rife with turmoil, it's easy to forget about animal rights and welfare. And that's where Dr. Hedia Baccar comes in. Senior advisor for the International Fund for Animal Welfare, Middle East, Dr Baccar is responsible for coordinating awareness-raising campaigns and initiatives about various animal rights issues. Born and raised in Tunisia, Dr. Baccar has always been involved in animal rights and has worked with many different UN departments. She was recently involved in the campaign to preserve the lives of endangered species in the UAE.

Samah Salaiame-Egbariya

As a Palestinian and a citizen of Israel, Samah Salaiame-Egbariya is driven by her studies in social work, women's issues, and human rights. She has worked within Arab communities for 12 years, partnering with young women, men and families in mixed towns in Israel. She has seen social





'humble and sincere' by fans. She's dominated the media for almost two decades, and in her mid-thirties, she is still as beautiful as she was when she won Miss South Lebanon at 16. With her finger in every pie – from singing to modelling, acting to designing her own, very glamorous, jewellery range – Wehbe is just getting bigger and bigger.

Nancy Ajram

To-be-mother Nancy Ajram started with singing golden oldies with her grandmother at just eight. She then went on to study vocal and music theory with the best music teachers in Lebanon.



wel Shouk', which, incidentally, was one of the most requested videos in Lebanon.

Haifa Wehbe

Dripping in scandals, entangled in rumours and shamelessly relishing the spotlight, Haifa Wehbe continues to be a bit of a contradiction – she holds charity concerts for children, supports women with breast cancer and is dubbed



Despite being under 18 at the time, she was also a member of the syndicate of professional artists in Lebanon because of her exceptional talent. Now, at 26, with three albums, the title of a spokesperson for Damas Gold, and a host of prizes under her belt, Ajram has become a household name in the entire region and well-known internationally. Combining traditional Middle Eastern values with a Western style, Ajram is also known for her more modest approach, especially compared to her more explicit fellow Lebanese female singers.

Nawal el Zoghbi

This self-proclaimed, dazzling diva has had a musical career spanning over 15 years. Known as one of the highest selling Arabic artists of all time, Nawal el Zoghbi has sung about everything; from the usual love songs to political music about Palestine and the liberation of Lebanon, and is just as much an activist as she is an artist. Her life wasn't always about glitz and glamour though. Zoghbi struggled through a frowning family, who initially opposed the 'seedy' lifestyle of a musician. She fought her way through a war-torn background, as well as a culture



that wasn't yet open to a star flaunting her sexuality. Despite this, she has risen up to the challenges life has thrown her way, and is seen as an inspiration in the region.

Hanan Turk

It takes immense strength and self-confidence in oneself to do what Hanan



Turk did. Her decision to wear the hijab stirred up an interesting buzz in the film industry and among her fans. However, what makes her gesture remarkable is that she has embraced this positive change even though the implications will most probably include a lull in her career. We salute this woman of substance for her iron-strong confidence in her faith.

The taboo breakers

Last, but not the least, here are the women who rejected taboos, moved out of their comfort zones and showed the world that Arab women aren't as docile, oppressed and withdrawn from society as many assume.

Rajaa AlSanea

Knowing quite well that her novel would never be allowed to be published in her native land, in 2005, 25-year-old AlSanea sent 'Girls of Riyadh' off to



liberal Lebanon instead, and also got endorsement from her idol, Ghazi al-Gosaibi, a former UK ambassador and now a Saudi government minister, further legitimising it. Banned in KSA, 'Girls of Riyadh' received a phenomenal response, and at one time, black market copies of the book were being exchanged for as much as USD 600. Of course, she also received a lot of hate

mail and criticism. Currently residing in the US, completing her Post Graduate degree in dentistry, AlSanea is proud of her Muslim and Saudi heritage, and even continues to wear her hijab abroad. Her intention, she says, was never to expose her society, but rather to talk about issues that needed to be addressed.

Nada Zeidan

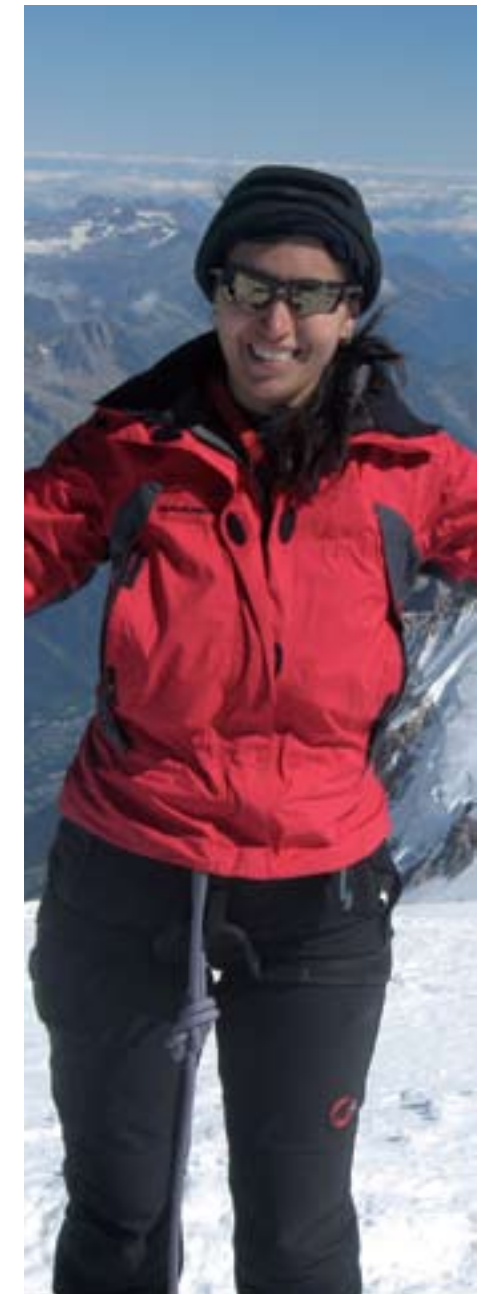
At a time when women in KSA are yet to get behind the wheel of a car, Nada Zeidan went far beyond her fellow Gulf sisters in KSA when she became



the first woman from the Gulf to race professionally in 2004. And when Qatar needed a face to front their bid for the 2016 Olympics, they turned to her. Clearly a woman who sets her own standards, Zeidan keeps on adding to her impressive portfolio, and remains an icon for all Arab women. And global recognition has deservedly come her way. That's because not only is she the first woman from the Gulf to race professionally, but she was also the first Qatari, the first Arab, and the first Muslim female to compete in the archery competition at the 14th Asian Games, held in Busan, South Korea.

Suzanne Al Houby

Palestinian female mountain climber Suzanne Al Houby is an extraordinary woman who has achieved extraordinary



things. On August 1, 2005, she became the first Arab woman to climb Mount Elbrus, the highest point of Europe. But the credits don't stop there. In 2002, Al Houby was the first Palestinian woman to conquer Kilimanjaro, the highest peak in Africa, before successfully climbing Mont Blanc in France in 2004. In addition, she also reached Everest Base Camp in Nepal in 2003. She may be off the radar but her achievements are as current as they are awesome.

Wadad Mougharbel

When Technogym and Fitness First, two giants in the health industry, were deciding which trainers to send to the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing, Wadad Mougharbel was up there at the top of the list. Not only was she the only female trainer from the Middle East, she was



the only trainer from the region, period. The former national basketball star has a Masters in physical therapy and has been a professional basketball player since she was 12 years old. She was also a member of the Lebanese National Basketball Team and played at the national level for over 10 years, competing at various international competitions, including the Asian Games in Doha. As the first woman sent to train athletes at the Olympics, Mougharbel has shattered many stereotypes, and she revels in this, as she believes that it's important for Arab women not to let preconceptions about them get in the way of their dreams.

Mona Al Marri

Mona Al Marri effortlessly carries four designations and responsibilities on her shoulders – Chairperson of the Dubai Press Club, CEO of JWIN, Chairperson

of the Dubai Women's Establishment and Vice-President of Dubai Ladies Club. She symbolises the new face of the UAE woman, ready to take on challenges.



Having held key international and regional positions, including the Secretary General of the International Association of Press Clubs, the Executive Director of the Arab Media Forum and the Secretary General of the Arab Journalism Award, she has also won the award for Outstanding Contribution to Community Outreach at the Middle East Women's Achievement Awards. Al Marri has also been named as the 'Best Government Employee for Achieving Excellence in Government Performance' in the Dubai Excellence Awards.

The Freej ladies

Okay, so they're fictional. But as the most-watched cartoon series in the UAE, and the very first cartoon depicting traditional Emirati life, these four women cannot be ignored. The Middle East's first 3D animated series, Freej is the brainchild of Mohammed Saeed Harib, and tells the tale of four old national women living in a secluded neighbourhood in modern day Dubai. Um Saeed, Um Saloom, Um Allawi and Um Khammas all try to live a peaceful life in the midst of the ever-expanding city around them, but the city's boom

unveils new social issues every day that they tackle in their simple way. No issue is too hard to crack over a good cup of coffee at Um Saeed's house, the oldest and wisest, who loves reciting poetry and old traditional sayings. Um Khammas is the rebellious one, a three-time widow, still stronger than ever with her dictating personality and her own business – a catering service and traditional music band. Um Saloom is the kindest member of the quartet - suffering from temporary memory loss, she never leads and always tags along. Um Alawi is the tallest one, and the most educated. Addicted to all kinds of gizmos and gadgets, she has her own mobile phone and laptop, and is a close follower of the stock market. Together they make for a hilarious group and addictive viewing!



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