



WOMEN IN LAW ENFORCEMENT IN THE MENA REGION



SUMMARY REPORT



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Police officers wield significant authority and public trust, making it essential to build fair, inclusive, and equitable institutions that protect all communities. A more gender-diverse police workforce strengthens legitimacy and public confidence, and improves community relations. Beyond equity, increasing women's participation is an operational imperative, linked to better service delivery, improved responses to sexual and gender-based violence, and higher reporting rates by victims and survivors.

As the **first study of its kind examining women's participation in law enforcement in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, and Tunisia**, this regional overview presents unique data from the countries, highlighting long-term trends and promising practices in line with international standards, with the potential to drive institutional change. At its core, it amplifies the voices and perspectives of women police officers, recognising their contributions to security, showcasing diverse efforts to advance their meaningful participation, and providing a platform for experience-sharing that aims to continue to inspire.



Morocco



Algeria



Tunisia



Palestine



Egypt



Lebanon



Jordan

International, regional, and national legal and policy frameworks

Governments are increasingly **aligning national laws with international gender equality frameworks**.

Several countries have **established or strengthened national gender institutions, and adopted national strategies on gender equality and women's empowerment**.

Country	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women	National action plan on Women, Peace and Security
 Algeria	22 May 1996	No
 Egypt	18 September 1981	No
 Jordan	1 July 1996	Yes
 Lebanon	16 July 1997	Yes
 Morocco	21 June 1993	Yes (<i>not available publicly</i>)
 Palestine	2 April 2024	Yes
 Tunisia	20 September 1985	Yes

Gender mainstreaming expanded into the security and law enforcement sectors through dedicated strategies, units, and action plans.



HIGHLIGHT 1:

Jordan's Public Security Directorate Gender Mainstreaming Strategy and Implementation Plan

Jordan's Public Security Directorate adopted its first Gender Mainstreaming Strategy for 2021–2024, supported by a Strategic Training Framework for Gender Advisers and Gender Focal Points across national security training centres. The strategy seeks to institutionalize gender mainstreaming as a core element of security sector policies, strategies and operations.

Key objectives include:

- Coordinating gender integration across all departments;
- Providing specialised guidance;
- Promoting gender awareness through training and outreach;
- Monitoring relevant national and international developments, and
- Strengthening institutional and individual capacities across operational, leadership, and technical functions.



HIGHLIGHT 2:

Tunisia's Ministry of Interior Sectoral Plan for Mainstreaming Gender

Tunisia's Ministry of Interior developed a sectoral plan for mainstreaming gender as part of the implementation of the 2018 National Plan for the Inclusion and Institutionalization of Gender.

It focuses on:

- increasing women's recruitment in the security sector;
- ensuring equal opportunities in appointments, leadership, training, and international assignments;
- improving working conditions and support systems for women;
- identifying and addressing gender-based discrimination in legal and regulatory frameworks;

- strengthening women's professional capacities and participation in decision-making, and
- changing mindsets through training and awareness-raising.

In 2023, the Ministry of Finance introduced a "Gender Card" requirement for all annual performance project documents, including those for National Security, the National Guard, and Civil Protection. This tool requires programme owners to document achievements, challenges, and financial estimates specifically programmed to reach the strategic gender objectives set out in the sectoral plans.

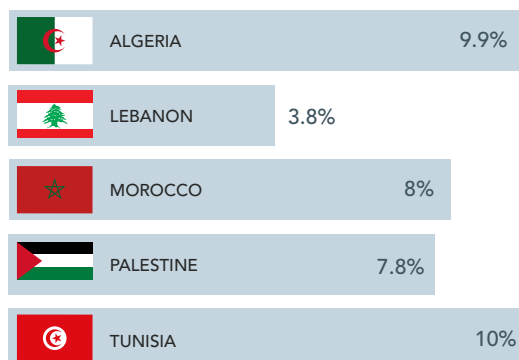
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Trends and statistics on the growing presence of women in law enforcement in the region

The **recruitment of women police** has become a **measurable benchmark of progress**, with many agencies setting numerical targets through strategies or action plans. Today, women police account for a small but growing percentage of the total personnel in the agencies in the region:



WHEN WERE THE FIRST WOMEN OFFICERS RECRUITED?

1



JORDAN
1972

6 women recruits joined the Police College

2



ALGERIA
1973



TUNISIA
1973

The first cohort of 30 women graduated in official uniform from the Tunisian National Security Service and worked in various positions.

4



EGYPT
1985

Although women joined the police force in 1975, relevant recruitment competitions were not opened until 20 years later, in 1997, with the creation of two new categories in the national security forces: police medics and police assistants.

3



MOROCCO
1975

5



PALESTINE
1994

In 1994, there were less than 100 women whereas in 2023 there are approximately 700 women officers across all ranks and departments.

6



LEBANON
2001

When the General Directorate of Internal Security announced its need to recruit specialized officers, the announcement did not specify 'men only' as had been the custom in the past. As a result, women were able to apply, and two female candidates were among the ten candidates appointed in 2001 out of total personnel of around 23,000 at the time. It wasn't until 2011 that the General Directorate expressed a desire to recruit more women.



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Empowering women in law enforcement from recruitment to progression

Diversifying the policing ranks

Law enforcement agencies are **prioritizing women's recruitment to improve inclusiveness, reflect community demographics, and meet specific operational requirements**, including searches, investigations involving women and children, victim support, and protective duties.

Regulatory reforms and targeted communication campaigns can significantly influence recruitment and promotion outcomes, as demonstrated by Morocco's initiatives, which led to a substantial rise in the number of women applicants to law enforcement careers between 2019 and 2023, as well as greater representation of women in leadership positions.



HIGHLIGHT 3: Morocco's Recruitment and Promotion Strategies



WOMEN IN THE MOROCCAN NATIONAL SECURITY SERVICE

The admission of women into the Moroccan police as social counselors and nurses. 1956

1975 The creation of two new roles for women police: paramedics and police assistants.

Graduation of the first class, consisting of **10 women officers in official uniform**, assigned to traffic units, urban patrol units, and juvenile units. 1998

1999 Strengthening the presence of women within the national police with **the graduation of 103 uniformed women officers**.

The revised National Security Personnel Statute allows women to advance through all police ranks. 2001

2019 Amending the statute of national security personnel to allow holders of advanced degrees in various specialties to join the police, thereby doubling the number of women police officers.



HIGHLIGHT 4: Expanding Women's Roles in Egypt's Security Sector

Egypt's Ministry of Interior has recognised the vital role women play in advancing security and has increased the participation of women officers across all sectors of the ministry. A key milestone was reached in 2018, when the Ministry began admitting a greater number of women to the Police

Academy and the Security Assistants Institute. Since then, women officers have undertaken advanced training programmes to enhance their physical and operational capabilities, opening new opportunities for participation in specialised units, including special forces and VIP protection assignments.

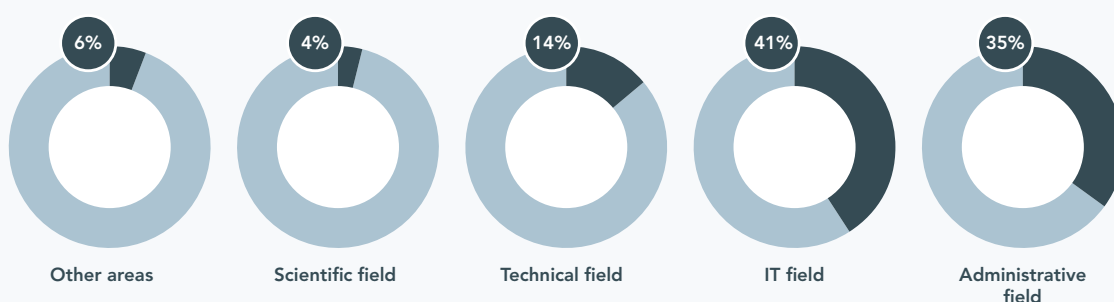
From administration to the frontline

While large numbers of women remain in lower ranks and administrative functions, their deployment to operational and investigative roles has increased.

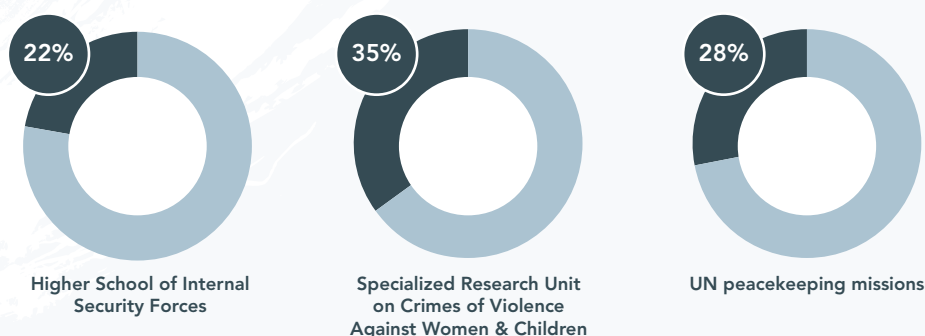
- The establishment of community policing initiatives, gender-based violence units, and female-special-forces teams have been key accelerators for women entering operational and specialised policing roles.

- The UN target of 30% women by 2030 has created concrete incentives for national police services to expand deployment pipelines, and has encouraged countries to prepare, train, and nominate more female officers for international service.

Breakdown of women police officers in Morocco by specialization



Representation of Tunisian women officers in various sectors



HIGHLIGHT 5: Paving the Way for Women in Peacekeeping

Police organization in the region have made visible progress in advancing women's participation in peacekeeping, driven largely by UN targets, including the goal of 30% women by 2030. Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, and Tunisia have expanded deployment pipelines. Key milestones include Tunisia's rise in its female peacekeeping contingent from 13% to 23%, Jordan's first formed women police unit, and Egypt's deployment of

the first all-women Search and Detect team in a UN operation, along with the 2021 opening of a dedicated peacekeeping training center.

These achievements demonstrate how **clear numerical targets can create meaningful opportunities for women** to contribute to international peace and security.



We need to change women's mentality and encourage them to pursue employment opportunities in non-traditional, more operational roles."

Woman officer, Tunisia

However, many barriers remain, especially for deployment to non-traditional roles. These include not only family responsibilities, cultural expectations, and stereotypes, but also women's own hesitancy toward operational work due to perceived risks or social norms.

Women as leaders in law enforcement

Women remain underrepresented in leadership, limiting their influence on institutional policies.

Those who do reach senior ranks are largely concentrated in administrative rather than operational command positions.

- Law enforcement agencies are adopting specific initiatives and carrying out institutional reforms to tackle the underrepresentation of women in

leadership positions. For example, recent reforms and strategies in Morocco, Jordan, and Tunisia show that when promotion systems and leadership pipelines are built intentionally, women's advancement in law enforcement becomes achievable.

- Aside from formal measures, informal professional networks, mentorship, sponsorship, and peer support are crucial for women's career growth.

THE HIGHEST-RANKING WOMEN OFFICERS AS OF 2024



ALGERIA

General Police Controller, Central Director of Health, Social Activity and Sports



EGYPT

Assistant Minister of Interior / Secretary for Human Rights Sector



LEBANON

Colonel, IT Department



JORDAN

Brigadier, Commander of the Women's Police



TUNISIA

Brigadier General, Director of the National Security Framework Academy



PALESTINE

Brigadier, Director of Family and Juvenile Protection Directorate



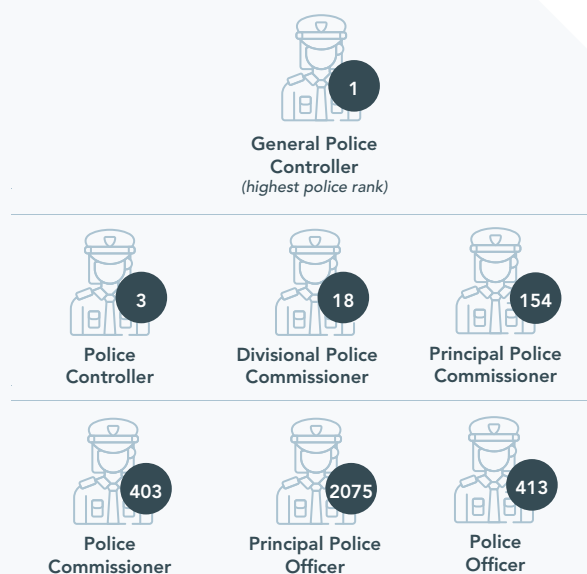
MOROCCO

(uniformed and non-uniformed)
Security Commander, Head of Traffic Division B and General Supervisor, Head of the IT Project Tracking Department



Women in leadership positions in Algeria, Lebanon, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia

ALGERIA



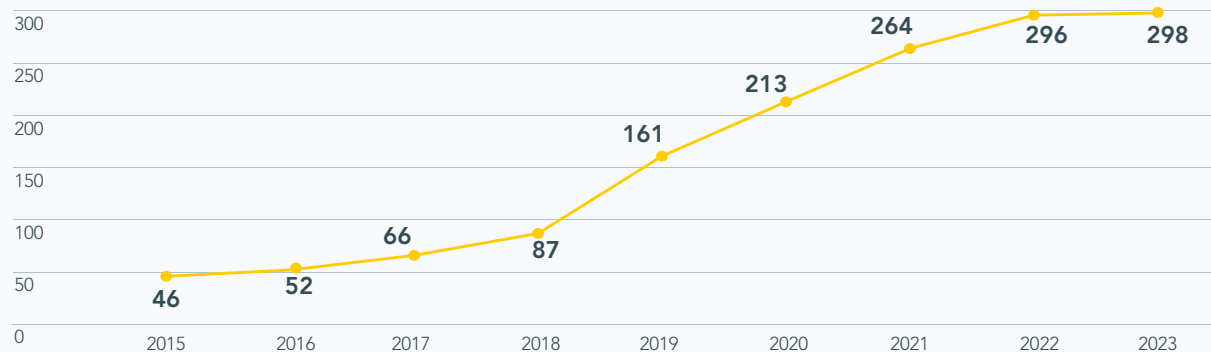
LEBANON



JORDAN



The evolution of Moroccan women officers in decision-making positions



Distribution of the number of policewomen in 2023



HIGHLIGHT 6:



A national network advancing women's roles in the Palestinian Civilian Police

Palestine is the only country in the region to have established a formal national network for women police officers. Comprising around 360 members, the network aims to build capacity, empower women for leadership and decision-making roles, share experiences internationally, and raise awareness of equal rights.

Building Inclusive and Gender-Responsive Police Institutions through Training

- Unequal access to technical and leadership training further restricts women's eligibility for promotion, underscoring the need for equal participation in specialized and leadership courses.
- Various countries are addressing these barriers through dedicated facilities (Jordan), online and roving training (Algeria), and quotas to ensure women's participation (Tunisia).
- Many women police advocate for setting clear minimum thresholds for trainings, especially for international opportunities where women are often overlooked.
- To foster an inclusive organizational culture, training on gender equality and human rights must be mandatory and recurrent for all personnel, rather than ad-hoc or dependent on international partners.



HIGHLIGHT 7:

The Tunisian National Police Academy's efforts in terms of capacity building and training

In 2023, the Tunisian National Police Academy conducted a survey to understand why few women participated in training across the National Security, National Guard, and Civil Protection sectors. Covering 28% of women officers, the study identified personal, professional, and organizational barriers, including family responsibilities, limited awareness of opportunities, gender-based discrimination, and logistical obstacles. Recommendations included mobile and online training delivery, quotas, annual action plans and numerical targets, and efforts to increase the numbers of women in decision-making roles. These measures aim to gradually raise women's participation in training courses to 25% by 2025, providing a model for addressing barriers to professional development.





Moving forward

Selected recommendations

- Continue aligning national and institutional policies with the relevant international policy and treaty frameworks.
- Strengthen recruitment efforts to increase women's representation in law enforcement.
- Increase efforts to deploy women in specialised and high-prestige areas of work.
- Ensure women are represented on promotion panels and create leadership and mentoring pipelines.
- Expand women's access to specialised technical training through targeted support measures, including participation targets or temporary quotas, and flexible delivery models such as modular, online, and roving training.
- Maintain visibility of this area of work through regular reporting, publications, and initiatives tracking the progress of women in law enforcement.

Over the past decades, countries in the MENA region have made steady progress in advancing women's participation in law enforcement through legal, policy, and institutional reforms, gender strategies, training programmes, and targeted recruitment. While representation overall remains below 10%, with even lower numbers in leadership and specialised roles, targeted initiatives increased numbers, broadened deployments, and created pathways to leadership. Sustaining and building on this progress requires continued commitment from national institutions and international partners to embed women's participation into recruitment, training, deployment, promotion, and organizational culture.

As we look to the future, international organizations and bilateral partners have a key role to play in advancing women's participation in law enforcement. Their support through targeted financing, technical assistance, and sustained political commitment is essential to ensuring that this agenda remains a deliverable priority and that the progress achieved in recent years translates into lasting institutional change.



INTERPOL