

# State of Social Media

Middle East: 2018



Damian Radcliffe  
and Payton Bruni



UNIVERSITY OF OREGON  
School of Journalism and Communication  
**ETHICS. INNOVATION. ACTION.**

# Report Purpose

---

This report is the seventh in an annual series of publications showcasing the latest developments, trends and research in social media usage across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).

Using a wide variety of academic, industry and media sources, this White Paper features key insights from social media's development over the previous year.

We hope you find these observations as rich and interesting as we do.

*Damian Radcliffe and Payton Bruni University of Oregon January 2019*

---

## Previous Reports:

**2017** [Social Media in the Middle East, The Story of 2017](#)

**2016** [Social Media in the Middle East: The Story of 2016](#)

**2015** [Social Media in the Middle East: The Story of 2015](#)

**2014** [Social Media in the Middle East: The Story of 2014](#)

**Round-ups produced by Damian Radcliffe when he worked for Qatar's Ministry of Information and Communications Technology (ictQATAR)**

**2013** Social Media in the Middle East: The Story of 2013 ([English](#), [Arabic](#))

**2012** Social Media in the MENA – 2012 Review ([English](#), [Arabic](#))

---



UNIVERSITY OF OREGON  
School of Journalism and Communication  
**ETHICS. INNOVATION. ACTION.**

# About the Authors

---



## Damian Radcliffe

Damian Radcliffe is the Carolyn S. Chambers Professor in Journalism, and a Professor of Practice, at the University of Oregon.

In this role, he undertakes a wide range of teaching, research and journalistic work, which includes writing a monthly column on technology in the Middle East for [ZDNet](#). Find him on Twitter: [@damianradcliffe](#)

Find out more: [www.damianradcliffe.com](http://www.damianradcliffe.com)

---

Damian has produced an annual report charting social media developments across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) since 2012.

Alongside holding the Chambers Chair at the School of Journalism and Communication (SOJC), he is also a [Fellow](#) of the Tow Center for Digital Journalism at Columbia University, an [Honorary Research Fellow](#) at Cardiff University's School of Journalism, Media and Culture Studies, and a fellow of the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA).

An experienced Digital Analyst, Consultant, Journalist and Researcher, Damian writes and teaches about digital trends, social media, audio storytelling and podcasting, technology, the business of media, and the evolution of journalism.

Before joining the University of Oregon in 2015, Damian previously worked full-time for The Local Radio Company, BBC, Volunteering Matters and Ofcom (the UK communications regulator). Damian lived in Doha between 2012-2014, where he worked as a researcher and analyst for Qatar's Ministry of Information and Communications Technology (ictQATAR).

Damian's Middle East expertise is evident through the wide range of publications which he has written for, and been quoted in. This includes: Al Bawaba, Al-Majalla Magazine, ArabNet, Arabian Gazette, Arabian Marketer, Arab News, Arab Weekly, ASDA'A Burson-Marsteller (Arab Youth Survey), BBC Academy / BBC College of Journalism, The Conversation, Georgetown University, Gulf News, The Huffington Post, Hurriyet Daily News (Turkey), IJNet (International Journalists Network), journalism.co.uk, MediaShift, MBN (Middle East Broadcasting Networks), Northwestern University in Qatar, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at Oxford University, The National (UAE), The Times of Oman, Your Middle East and others. <sup>3</sup>

---



## Payton Bruni

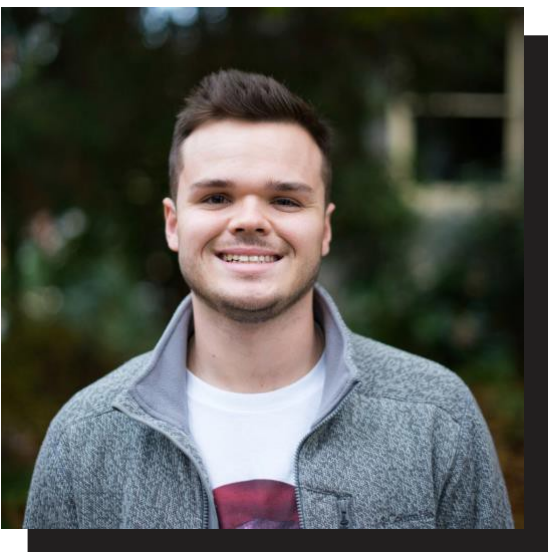
Payton Bruni is a student at the University of Oregon, School of Journalism and Communication. He currently works as a freelance journalist, Content Developer for Gather an online resource for engaged journalists hosted by the Agora Journalism Center at the University of Oregon's - and IT Professional for the Division of Student Life. In addition, he is a member of the UNESCO Crossings Institute for Conflict-Sensitive Reporting and Intercultural Dialogue at the University of Oregon.

---

With a B.A. in journalism and a minor in Arabic studies, Payton aims to work in the Middle East as a journalist. He took a step toward achieving this goal by furthering his knowledge of the Arabic language through a University of Oregon Global Education Oregon study abroad program based in Amman, Jordan. With funding from the Gilman International Scholarship and the Islamic Studies Initiative scholarship, Payton studied at the Qasid Arabic Institute in an intensive Arabic language program. He completed what the University of Oregon classifies as a year's worth of Arabic in nine weeks, and operated as a freelance journalist on behalf of the Gilman scholarship program.

On top of his work as a reporter and writer, Payton has a background in multimedia storytelling. He works as a photojournalist for Ethos Magazine, an independent student publisher, and works with KVAL CBS 13 news as a freelance sports photographer. Payton's photos have been published by the University of Oregon GEO program, KVAL news, KEZI news and the Newberry Eagle newspaper based out of La Pine, Oregon.

Samples of his work can be viewed at <https://www.paytonbruni.com/>.\*



## Corey Gedrose

Corey is a current student at the University of Oregon studying Advertising and Multimedia. He has always been interested in the creative industry and hopes to spend his career doing creative work across multiple platforms. He specializes in writing and art direction/design. Corey is responsible for the design and layout of this report.

His work can be viewed at:  
<https://www.coreygedrose.com/>

# Table of Contents

---

- Report Purpose .....2**
- About the Authors.....3**
  - Damian Radcliffe .....3
  - Payton Bruni.....4
  - Corey Gedrose .....4
- Table of Contents .....5**
- Executive Summary .....6**
- 1. Market Context: Key Growth Areas .....8**
- 2. Facebook and Twitter ..... 10**
- 3. Snapchat and Bitmoji ..... 11**
- 4. YouTube ..... 14**
- 5. WhatsApp and Instagram..... 17**
- 6. Arab Youth..... 20**
- 7. Fake News..... 22**
- 8. Censorship and Freedom of Expression ..... 25**
- 9. Yemen’s Civil War..... 27**
- 10. Social Media Influencers ..... 30**
- Links to Previous Reports..... 33**
- Endnotes..... 34**

# Executive Summary

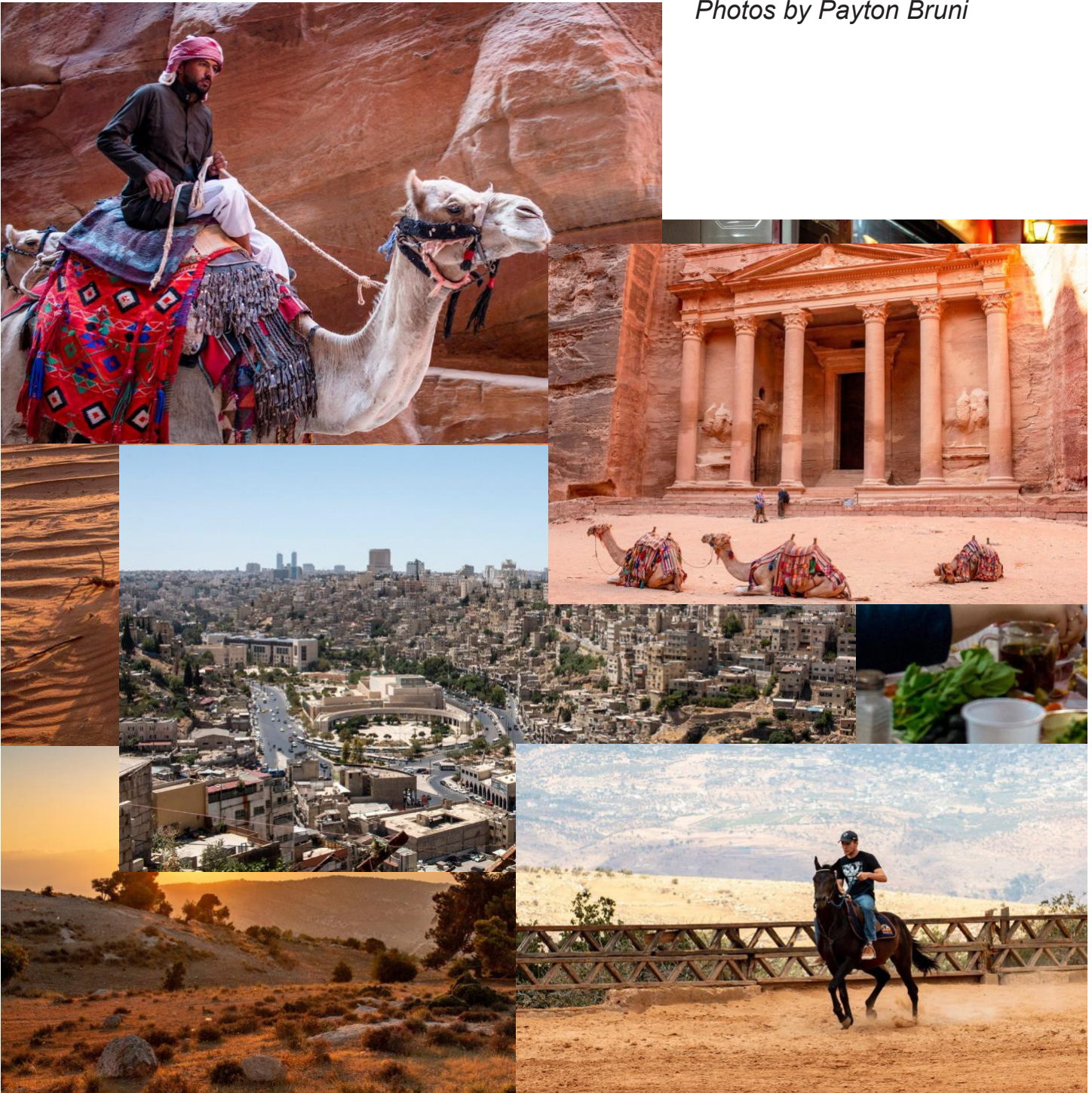
---

## Standout stats:

1. **Facebook** has 164 million active monthly users in the Arab world.<sup>1</sup> This is up from 56 million Facebook users just five years earlier.
2. **Egypt** remains the biggest national market for Facebook in the region,<sup>2</sup> with 24 million daily users and nearly 37 million monthly mobile users.
3. **Saudi Arabia (KSA)** has the highest annual growth rate of social media users anywhere in the world.
4. [Data](#) from WeAre Social and Hootsuite, revealed social media users in KSA grew by 32% vs. a worldwide average of 13% (Jan 2017-Jan2018).<sup>3</sup>
5. Less than 30% of **Twitter** users in MENA post original content.
6. Retweets mean the top 2% (0.6% overall) drive c. 75% of the **Twitter** conversation, researchers Marc Owen Jones (Exeter University) and Alexei Abrahams (Princeton) [found](#).<sup>4</sup>
7. There are about 12 million daily users of **Snapchat** in the GCC. This includes 9 million in Saudi Arabia (out of a population of 32 million) and 1 million in UAE.<sup>5</sup>
8. The number of **YouTube** channels in MENA has risen by 160% in the past three years.
9. More than 200 YouTube channels in the region have over one million subscribers. Over 30,000 channels have more than 10,000 subscribers.<sup>6</sup>
10. Almost two thirds (63%) of **Arab Youth**<sup>7</sup> say they look first to Facebook and Twitter for news.<sup>8</sup>
11. Nearly half of young Arabs (49%) say they get their news on Facebook daily, up from 35% last year.
12. 61% of **Arab Youth** say they use Facebook more frequently than a year ago.
13. In May 2018, 29% of tweets in Arabic about Qatar were tweeted by **bots**<sup>9</sup> up from 17% a year before.<sup>10</sup>
14. Of the 180 countries studied in the **Reporters Without Borders** [2018 World Press Freedom Index](#), Yemen was ranked at 167, Saudi Arabia at 169, and Syria at 177.<sup>11</sup>
15. **Egypt's new social media laws** [mean](#) social media accounts with more than 5,000 followers can be monitored, and websites must be licensed by the government.<sup>12</sup>
16. **Huda Kattan**, was ranked number one on CNN's [list](#) of the Top 10 beauty influencers in the Middle East. Her net worth is estimated at \$550 million<sup>13</sup>. She has 32.1 million Instagram followers.

- 
17. From June 1<sup>st</sup> 2018, UAE-based **social media influencers** must obtain a license for any commercially-oriented work. Licenses cost 15,000 AED (just over \$4,000) and are valid for a year.”<sup>14</sup>
18. **An Instagram post from footballer Cristiano Ronaldo, who was in Dubai for New Year’s Eve 2018, has had more than 10 million likes.** Ronaldo has 153 million Instagram followers.<sup>15</sup>

*Photos by Payton Bruni*



# 1. Market Context: Key Growth Areas

- Facebook continues to dominate social media use across the region. Across the wider Middle East and Africa (MEA) region, **265.4 million people now use Facebook**.<sup>16</sup>
- Jonathan Labin, Facebook's Managing Director for MENA and Pakistan, **stated last year that the network has 164 million active monthly users in the Arab world**.<sup>17</sup>
- Five years ago, in 2013, Facebook had 56 million users in MENA.
- **Saudi Arabia (KSA) enjoys the highest annual growth rate of social media users anywhere in the world.** [Data](#) from We Are Social and Hootsuite, revealed social media users in KSA grew by 32% vs. a worldwide average of 13% (Jan 2017-Jan 2018).<sup>18</sup>
- **Morocco, at 14%, was the only other country in MENA where social media take up during this period was above the global average.**

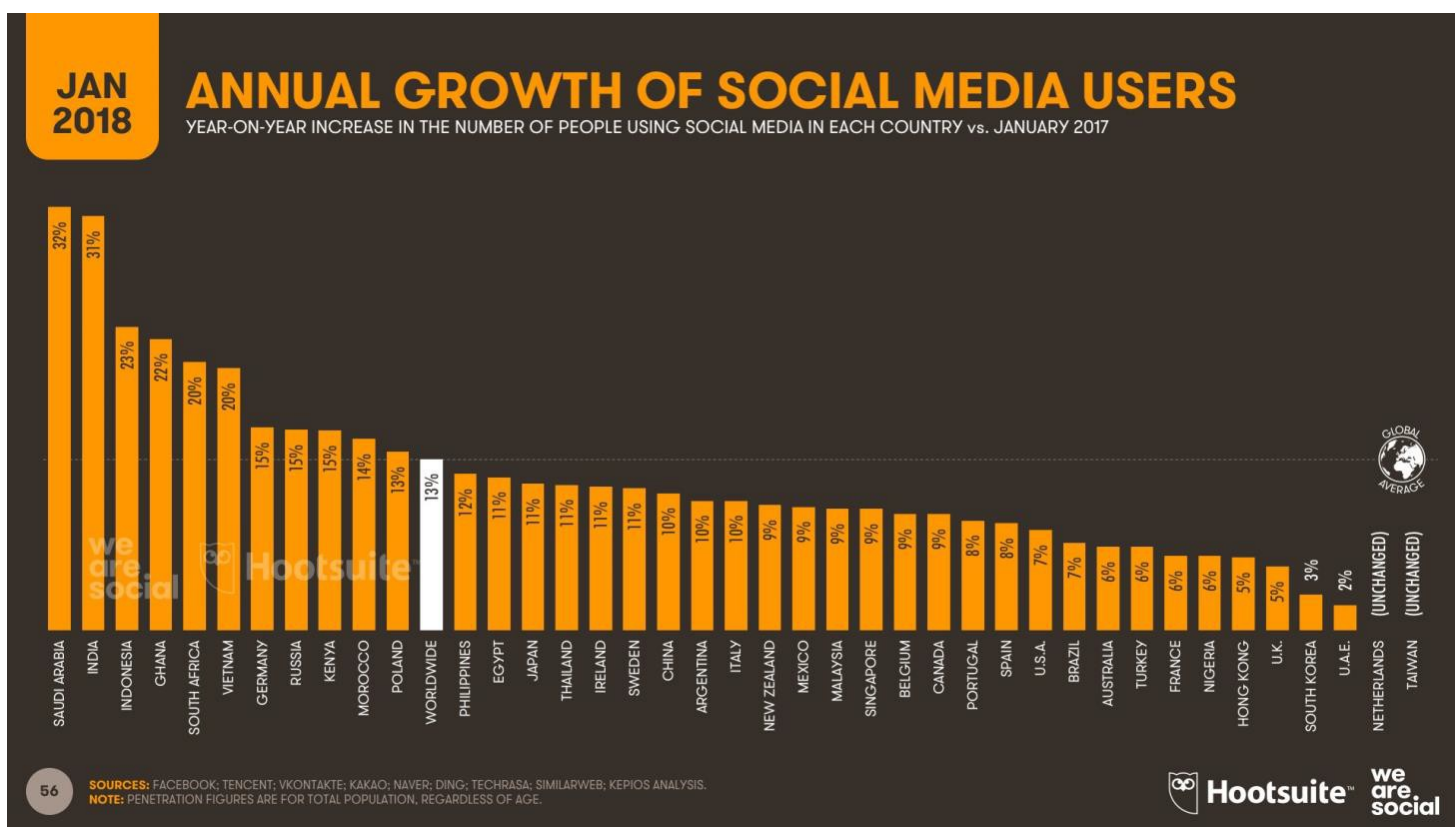
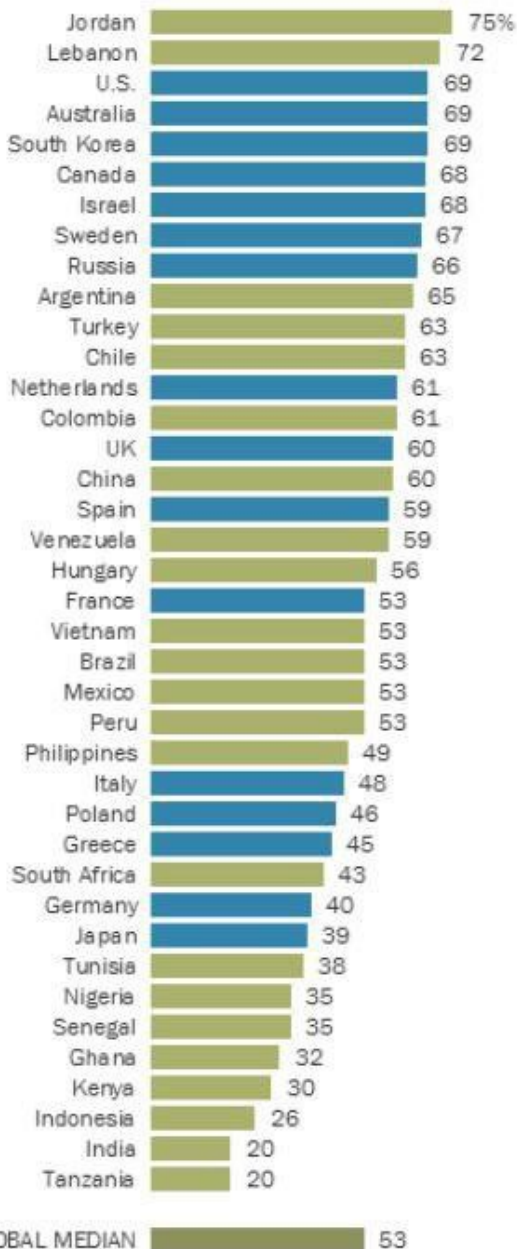


Image 1: Annual Growth of Social Media Users. Source: Hootsuite and We Are Social<sup>19</sup>



## Wide range of social network use

Adults who use social networking sites



Note: Percentages based on total sample. Countries classified as advanced economies in **blue**; emerging or developing economies are **green**.

Source: Spring 2017 Global Attitudes Survey, Q71. U.S. data from a Pew Research Center survey conducted Jan. 3-10, 2018. China data from Spring 2016 Global Attitudes Survey.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Image 2: Social Network use. Source: Pew Research Center<sup>21</sup>

- **Jordan and Lebanon have the highest percentage of adults using social media in the world.** According to a [report](#) by the Pew Research Center, 75% of adults in Jordan and 72% in Lebanon - use social media. That compares with 68% in the United States, 60% in the UK and China, and 39% in Japan.<sup>20</sup>
- Other MENA nations with high levels of social network use include Israel (68%) and Turkey (63%).
- **Both Jordan and Lebanon saw rapid uptakes in social media usage during the past two years.** Between 2015 - 2017:
- Social network use in Lebanon grew by 23%, the fastest rate in the countries Pew surveyed.
- It also increased by 15% in Jordan, the third fastest rate of growth, on a par with usage in Vietnam.

### Other interesting stats from Pew's data:

- **In Tunisia, only 16% of those aged over 37 years old use social media,** compared to 64% aged 18-36.
- **Turkey (86%) and Lebanon (90%) are among the most active social networking countries for younger users** (age 18-36).
- **Only 28% of women in Tunisia use social media, compared to 49% of men.** This was the widest gender gap in the 39 countries Pew studied.

## 2. Facebook and Twitter

- **Facebook Marketplace** rolled out to **Algeria, Egypt, and Morocco** in the first part of the year. The move meant the service was available in Arabic for the first time and brought the number of countries using Marketplace to 51.<sup>23</sup>



Image 3: Promotional image for Facebook Market.

Source: Pan Time Arabia<sup>29</sup>

- **Around 24 million people use Facebook every day in Egypt, and**
- **Nearly 37 million people access the net-work via mobile each month.**
- **Egypt remains the biggest national market for Facebook in the MENA region.**<sup>30</sup>

**Twitter released its 13th biannual [Transparency Report](#) in December 2018<sup>24</sup>.** The report, covering topics such as removal requests, contains data from the first six months of 2018. Mashable [identified](#) findings showing that **around 87% of legal demands to remove content “came from just two countries: Russia and Turkey.”<sup>25</sup>**

- Overall, 38 different countries made such requests, related to 27,811 Twitter accounts. 13,843 of these [requests](#) were in Turkey.<sup>26</sup>
- “Turkey continued to submit the most requests,” Twitter [wrote](#), “accounting for approximately 73% of the overall worldwide total.”<sup>27</sup>
- Research by Marc Owen Jones (Exeter University) and Alexei Abrahams (Princeton) [found](#) that: **“Less than 30% of Twitter users post original content, and among these, the top 2% (0.6% overall) are retweeted so much more than anyone else that they drive roughly 75 % of the conversation.”<sup>28</sup>**

# 3. Snapchat and Bitmoji

---

- Half way through the year, Snapchat [reported](#) 188 million daily users around the world.<sup>31</sup> More widely, around 300 million people [use the app](#) each month.<sup>32</sup>
- In the Middle East, Rami Saad, Snapchat’s head of international content partnerships has [indicated](#) **“there are about 12 million daily users from across the GCC with Saudi Arabia alone accounting to about 9 million. There are about 1 million active users in the UAE.”**<sup>33</sup>
- **In November, Snapchat announced that more than 30 shows, from 20 popular MENA brands, would be launching on the platform.**
- “Each Show averages five minutes in length with about 10 second frames that can be swiped like a magazine,” [explained Joseph George](#) at TahawulTech.com.<sup>34</sup>
- “Leading TV networks and entertainment studios are [already] reimagining popular series for Snapchat,” [wrote Austyn Allison](#) for Campaign Middle East.

Content can be found “across entertainment, sport and food,” she said, highlighting examples such as Scoop with Raya from MBC, as well as content from food and lifestyle television channel Fatafeat and Vice Arabia.

*“Content has been cut in the vertical, full screen format pioneered by Snapchat and which has since become the de facto standard for mobile. Each Show averages five minutes in length, has a clear narrative, and is hyper-visual with motion graphics, split screens, quick cuts, inspired by the expressive way Snapchatters talk to their closest friends.”*<sup>35</sup>

- In December, Snapchat [announced](#) that agencies **such as Leo Burnett, TBWA and Saatchi & Saatchi will be Lens Creative Partners in the Middle East.**
- [Digital Studio Middle East](#) reported that globally over 70 million people use Augmented Reality (AR) “Lenses” on the app everyday.

*“Each of those daily users average 3 minutes doing so, which adds up to 500 years of daily AR play time on the app... To date, over 250,000 Lenses have been submitted through the tool, which have been viewed by Snapchatters over 15 billion times.”*<sup>36</sup>



Image 4: Shows on Snapchat. Source: Campaign Middle East.<sup>37</sup>

- **Saudi Arabia has the world's highest market adoption of Snapchat** (i.e. percentage of the population using the app), according to [an article](#) published by OZY.<sup>38</sup>

Citing Snapchat's own data, and a report by [Ampere Analysis](#), they also revealed:

- **Snapchat usage in KSA is up nearly 30%** since last year.
- **Residents of Riyadh and Jeddah spend 35 minutes a day surfing snaps**, using "the camera, on average, 40 times a day."
- **More than a third of Saudi respondents say they use Snapchat video**, the highest percentage of the 16 countries Ampere Analysis surveyed.
- **9.4 million people use Snapchat everyday in Saudi Arabia**, according to a [Forbes article](#), out of a total population of 32 million people.<sup>42</sup>



- Bitmoji, a mobile app that allows users to create personalized emojis and avatars for social media apps like Snapchat, was one of the most downloaded applications<sup>39</sup> across the App Store in 2017, according to Apple's [annual report](#).
- In 2018, [Bitmoji released support](#) for the Arabic language enabling millions of Snapchat users in the Arab world to customize their Snapchat experience.<sup>40</sup>

*Image 5: Example of an Arabic-language Bitmoji sticker<sup>41</sup>*

# 4. YouTube

---

- **YouTube remains a media powerhouse in the Middle East. The number of YouTube channels in MENA has risen 160% in the past three years**, according to an article in [Arabian Business](#).<sup>43</sup>
- Some YouTube channels in the Middle East attract millions, even billions, of viewers.
  - **More than 200 channels in the region have over one million subscribers.** Over 30,000 channels have more than 10,000 subscribers.<sup>44</sup>
  - One popular example, the family vlogging channel [mmoshaya](#), from Saudi Arabia (“we film sketches, challenges and a bunch of other entertaining stuff”) has more than 8 million subscribers and over 4.5 billion video views.<sup>45</sup>
  - [Mo Vlogs](#), another popular channel, produced by a 21-year-old daily vlogger based in Dubai, has over 6.7 million subscribers and enjoyed more than 1.7 billion video views.<sup>46</sup>

*“In 2018, YouTube upstaged long-time leader Facebook to become the most popular social media platform in Saudi Arabia,” reported [Global Media Insight](#), a Dubai based digital interactive agency.*

- Data shared by the agency [showed](#) YouTube has 23.62 million active users, in KSA, with Facebook coming in second with 21.95 million users.<sup>47</sup>
- Despite YouTube’s wide popularity in the MENA region, the company has faced pushback in the past year for some of their actions in the region. This included:
  1. YouTube was **accused of removing evidence** of Syrian chemical attacks, according to an article by [Middle East Eye](#).<sup>48</sup>
  2. [Al Jazeera wrote](#) in September that YouTube **had suspended accounts** belonging to Syria’s public international news organization (SANA,) the Ministry of Defense, and the Syrian Presidency. The move came “after a report claimed the channels were violating US sanctions and generating revenue from ads.”<sup>49</sup>

- Elsewhere, a video from the Israeli clothing brand Hoodies [sparked negative reaction on YouTube \(and elsewhere,\)](#) amid accusations of Islamophobia, after model Bar Refaeli was seen removing a niqab before sporting a range of different clothes (accompanied by various dance/sports moves) before the ad ends with the slogan, ‘freedom is basic.’<sup>50</sup>
  - [The video](#) has, to date, been viewed by nearly a quarter of a million times, with double the number of dislikes (thumbs down) to likes (thumbs up).<sup>54</sup>
  - The BBC noted “an alternative version was later [uploaded to the company’s YouTube account](#), also featuring a Muslim woman wearing a head scarf and a Jewish man wearing a skullcap (kippah). Also the slogan “Is Iran here?” has not been used.”<sup>55</sup>



*Image 6: This Hoodies ad asks “Is Iran here?” on screen at the start. Source: BBC.<sup>51</sup>*

- Google opened a [YouTube Space at Dubai’s Studio City in March](#).<sup>52</sup> It is the tenth hub to be opened by YouTube around the globe.
- Content creators with more than 10,000 YouTube subscribers enjoy “free access to audio, visual and editing equipment, as well as training programmes, workshops and courses,” Arabian Business [said](#). “Those with more than 1,000 subscribers will have access to workshops and events hosted at the space.”<sup>53</sup>



Image 7: Tweet from Arabian Business, highlighting an article on YouTube's MENA ambitions<sup>56</sup>



# 5. WhatsApp and Instagram

---

- **WhatsApp Business has launched in Arabic speaking countries such as the UAE and Morocco.** It will be a “no-brainer” for businesses across the MENA region to utilize the messaging app, according to an [article by MENAbytes](#).<sup>57</sup> The messaging app has more than [1.5 billion](#) users around the world.<sup>58</sup>
- **The service is the third most trusted of all brands in [Egypt](#),** behind Facebook and Google, according to the latest YouGov BrandIndex, an annual ranking of global brands across 26 different countries.<sup>59</sup>
- **WhatsApp has rolled out a series of new features in recent years, including voice and video calls. However, these services are [banned - or unavailable](#) - in some MENA countries** like the UAE.<sup>60</sup> Microsoft and Apple are working with the Emirati government to change this, according to a May 2018 [CNBC report](#).<sup>61</sup>
- **In Israel, an attempted exploitation of the messaging service forced a nation-wide alert in 2018.** Hijackers attempted to gain access to Israeli WhatsApp accounts and were successful enough to warrant government action, a [ZDNet article reported](#):

*“In their alert, Israeli authorities recommend that users either use a strong password for their mobile voicemail account or enable two-step verification for the WhatsApp account and prevent the attacker from hijacking the phone number, to begin with.”<sup>62</sup>*

- Earlier in the year, Arab News [shared](#) how **Saudi users were being advised to be on their guard against cyberattacks through the messaging network.**

*“Users are advised to enable two-step verification to protect their accounts from any digital breakthroughs,” the Communications and Information Technology Commission (CITC) said. “Also do not click on any link until you have verified the source of the link, and make sure you do not disclose your personal information and phone number to any untrusted sites.”<sup>63</sup>*

- In the summer, **Etihad Airways [enabled](#) a new service allowing premium passengers to communicate with the airline via WhatsApp.** Available at Abu Dhabi International Airport, it allowed users to the airline’s agents about their flights via the app.
  - The “WhatsApp Business solution will be expanded in the future,” journalist [Adelle Geronimo](#) wrote, “to enable guests to receive important messages like flight reminders by opting into WhatsApp communications on the Etihad Airways booking confirmation page.”<sup>64</sup>

- **Footballer Cristiano Ronaldo was in Dubai for New Year's Eve 2018. An [image](#) posted to Instagram of him, his fiancée Georgina Rodriguez and son Cristiano Junior, quickly enjoyed more than 10 million likes. Ronaldo has 153 million followers on the network, his fiancée 8.5 million.**<sup>65</sup>



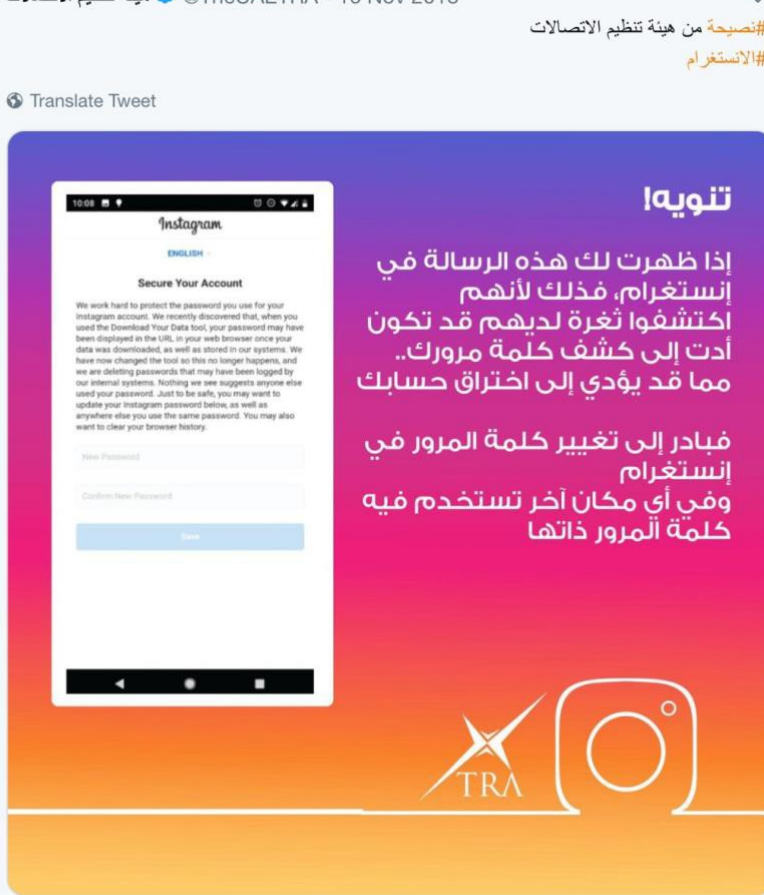
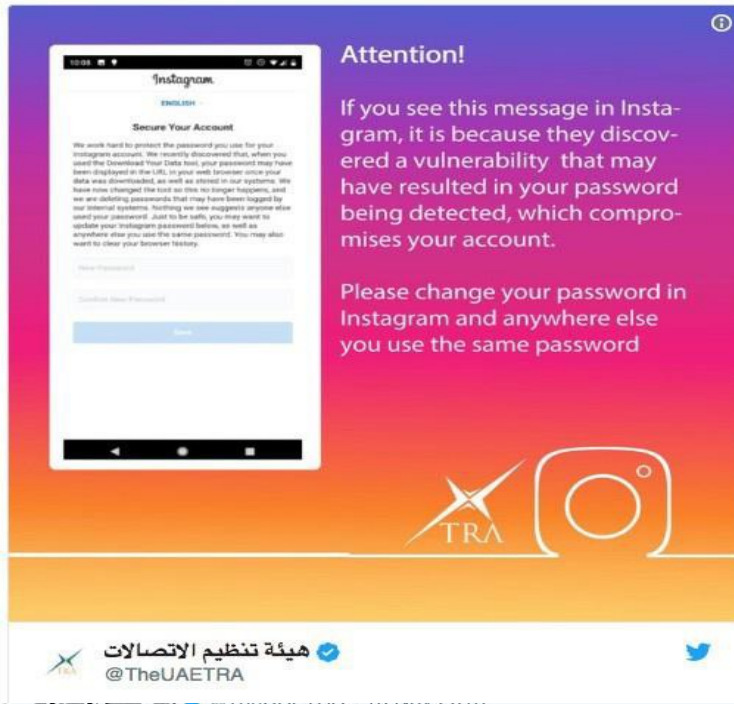
*Image 8: Image source: Instagram<sup>66</sup>*

In July, the BBC [reported](#) on the **arrest of the Iranian, Maedeh Hojabri, after she had posted videos of herself on Instagram dancing to Iranian and Western pop music.**

- “The Iranian government has strict rules governing women’s clothing and dancing with members of the opposite sex in public is banned, except in front of immediate family members,” the BBC noted, and “Ms Hojabri’s videos showed her dancing at home without the mandatory headscarf, or hijab.”
- In response to her arrest social media users shared videos and messages of support, including videos of themselves dancing.<sup>67</sup>

- Instagram users in UAE were warned by the country's Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) about a security vulnerability in the app.<sup>68</sup>
- Khaleej Times, an English newspaper which launched in the UAE in 1978, advised:
- “The TRA stressed that the vulnerability may have compromised several accounts and also urged residents to change their password on Instagram.”

Image 9. Source: TRA on Twitter<sup>69</sup>



1 33 26

# 6. Arab Youth

- “Young Arabs are now getting their news first on [social media](#), not television,” [Sunil John](#), founder and CEO, ASDA’A Burson-Marsteller, told technology website ZDNet..<sup>70</sup>

“...Our survey reveals almost two thirds (63 %) of young Arabs say they look first to Facebook and Twitter for news. Three years ago, that was just a quarter.”

- His conclusions stem from the company’s 10th annual [Arab Youth Survey](#).<sup>71</sup> Findings in the Arab Youth survey derived from 3,500 face-to-face interviews with Arab men and women aged 18 to 24, in 16 countries and territories across the region.

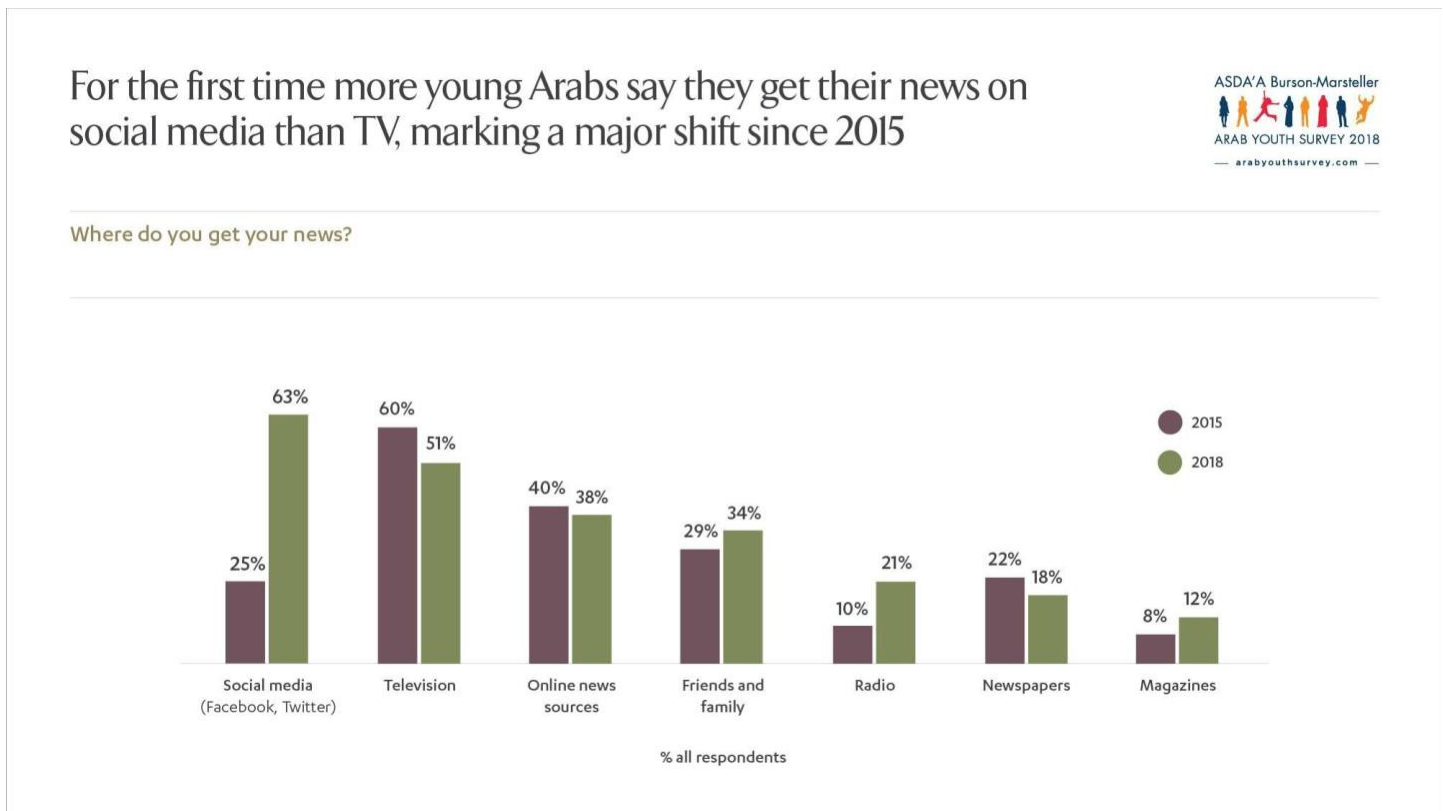


Image 10: Where Arab Youth get their news from. Source: Arab Youth Survey, 2018.<sup>74</sup>

- **Nearly half of young Arabs (49%) say they get their news on Facebook daily**, the survey also found, up from 35% last year. **61% of those surveyed also say they use Facebook more frequently than a year ago.**<sup>72</sup>
- **Despite this popularity of social media as a source for news, Arab youth reported that CNN is the most trustworthy news source (75%),** ahead of the BBC (72%). The regional satellite company MBC was ranked at 71%, the same as Facebook.<sup>73</sup>

## Young Arabs view CNN as the most trusted and Al Jazeera as the least trusted news sources

How trustworthy do you think is each of the following sources of news?

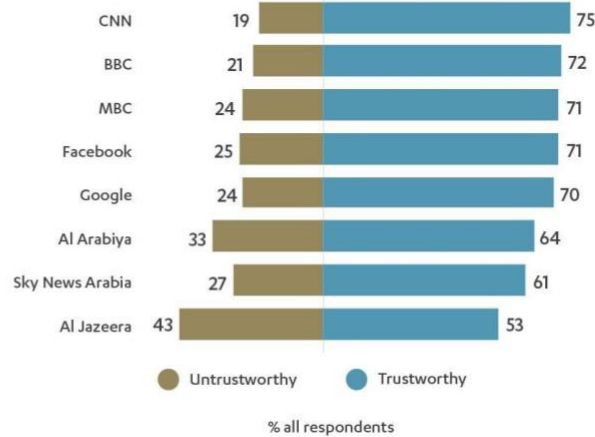


Image 11: Most trusted news channels. Source: Arab Youth Survey, 2018<sup>77</sup>

- Saudi Gazette, [reported](#) that **80% of Saudi millennials claim to visit YouTube daily... 55% consume more video online than they do on TV.**<sup>75</sup>
- [Egyptian Streets](#), an independent english language website, asked **“Is Social Media Making Egyptian Youth Less Productive?”** mirroring concerns researchers around the world have been exploring for some time.<sup>76</sup> 22 million people access in Egypt every day, they noted, with largest age group of these users is aged 18-34.

*“According to a short online survey which 50 young people between 18-24 in Egypt took, Egyptian Streets found that 90% said that they found social me- dia to have a negative affect on their productivity and 85% saw that it also impacted their psychological health. on their productivity and 85% saw that it also impacted their psychological health.”<sup>78</sup>*

# 7. Fake News

- [Analysis](#) by Reuters discovered a network of at least 53 websites which, “posing as authentic Arabic-language news outlets, have spread false information about the Saudi government and [Jamal] Khashoggi’s murder.”
  - The sites, such as Alawatanews.com, published falsified news reports, such as claims that Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman had been forced out of power. These false stories are amplified by automated Twitter bots.<sup>85</sup>



- The weaponization of bots in the region works [both ways](#). Following the disappearance, and death, of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi, **Twitter accounts - belonging to real people and bots - helped to stress denials of involvement by the Saudi government.**<sup>79 80</sup>

- In October, following an [investigation by NBC](#), Twitter suspended multiple accounts which were promoting pro-Saudi Arabia talking points related to the Khashoggi case.

*“Twitter became aware of some of the bots on Thursday when NBC News pre- sented the company with a spreadsheet of hundreds of accounts that tweeted and retweeted the same pro-Saudi govern- ment tweets at the same time.”<sup>84</sup>*

- The Qatar Insider Twitter [account](#) is an example of a social media account (and associated website) created to push a particular political agenda, Public Radio International (PRI) [reported](#).<sup>81</sup>

*“The anti-Qatar website [which is now closed, but it’s Twiter account remains active] went live last year, advertising itself as “your comprehensive source for information on #QatarCrisis.”*

- In May 2018, 29% of tweets in Arabic about Qatar were tweeted by bots, the academics Marc Jones and Alexei Abrahams [found](#).<sup>82</sup> This was up from 17% a year before.<sup>83</sup>

TQI **The Qatar Insider**   
@theqatarinsider

Follow 

#Qatar supported extremist organizations with more than \$64 billion over the years! A significant figure. #Hezbollah #AlQaeda #Taliban



**ORGANIZATIONS WITH AROUND 64 BILLION U.S DOLLARS**

**“Al-Thani’s land is a haven for terrorists**

The US Treasury exposes Al - Thani 's involvement in funding and supporting Al Qaeda

Abdullah al-Thani is accused of harboring 100 militants in his farm in Qatar and giving them passports to facilitate their movement

Abdulkarim al-Thani opened the doors of his home to al Qaeda leader in Iraq Al-Zarqawi and gave him a Qatari passport

2:52 PM - 13 Jun 2017

37 Retweets 9 Likes



1 37 9

Image 13: Tweet from The Qatar Insider<sup>87</sup>

## Writing in the Washington Post they noted:

*“While social media may ultimately act as an incubator for political opinion formation, it is more crucially the place where citizens go to find out what other citizens think — a vital ingredient to mobilizing...*

*Perhaps more than anywhere, the Gulf shows us how social media is being weaponized as a crucial delivery system for fake news, hate speech and propaganda.”<sup>86</sup>*

- **These problems are not unique to the Gulf region.** Middle East Monitor [flagged](#) a ‘fake’ photo of former Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi circulating on social media<sup>88</sup> and the New York Times [examined](#) how Facebook is being used in Libya to promote political manipulation and violence.<sup>89</sup>



Kareem AL-Shatlawy

@kimzawy

Follow



Cauliflower ear, also known as perichondrial hematoma or wrestler's ear, "a deformity of the ear caused by trauma. Cauliflower ear occurs when blood pools in your pinna after it's been hit or struck"

And that is former president Morsi



6:43 AM - 21 Nov 2018

Image 14: Tweet with a "fake" photo of Mohamed Morsi. Source: Twitter.<sup>90</sup>

- In Morocco, the [Moroccan News Agency \(MAP\)](#) "**launched an SOS Fake-news service that allows subscribers to immediately correct inaccurate information about them...**"<sup>91</sup>
- "In the new age of information wars, **technology has made the manipulation and fabrication of content simple, and some users of the social networks dramatically amplify falsehoods and spread them like wildfires**, unchecked and unstoppable," [wrote](#) the Saudi writer [Maha Akeel](#) in Arab News.<sup>92</sup>
  - Addressing efforts to tackle this, she argued: "All these codes and regulations raise questions about the possibility of controlling the flow of information in cyberspace, and whether that conflicts with freedom of expression and the right to access information. **There are also questions about who will control the information, and who decides what information is "fake" and what is true.**"



# 8. Censorship and Freedom of Expression

---

- Reporters Without Borders released their [2018 World Press Freedom Index](#), stating that “yet again” **several Middle Eastern countries were ranked to have some of the worst press freedom in the world.**<sup>93</sup> For example, of the 180 countries studied, the [report](#) placed Yemen at rank 167, Saudi Arabia at 169 and Syria at 177.<sup>94</sup>
- **Avoiding skewed reporting, or “news reports in the Middle East [which] can sometimes feel like an echo-chamber for autocrats,” can be a challenge when journalists face prosecution from government authority,** a Forbes article [reported](#).
  - The piece analyzed the challenges journalists in the Middle East face, citing the forced closure of Al Arab news in Bahrain as one example.<sup>95</sup>
  - It also explored the potential for new tools like [Inkrypyt](#), “a decentralized journalism and media content hosting platform that ensures content authenticity, resilience and censorship-resistance.”<sup>96</sup>



Image 15: Inkrypyt logo. Source: LinkedIn.

97

- **A suggested ban on WhatsApp calls in Syria had Syrians, and opposition activists who rely on the communication tool, worried.**
- An [article](#) by The National highlighted how a government enforced ban could be particularly problematic in Syrian cities, such as Raqqa, where damaged cell towers force residents to rely solely on apps like WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger to communicate.<sup>98</sup>
- **Egypt’s new social media laws attracted considerable attention during the past year.** Legislation [means](#) social media accounts with more than 5,000 followers can be monitored, and websites must receive a license from the government before they can be created.<sup>99</sup>
- **Human rights activists in Egypt have also come under scrutiny.** Activist AmalFathy was arrested and fined for “spreading fake news” in a video she posted on Facebook.

- The BBC [said](#) her video described how she had been sexually harassed, and that she had criticized the government for not doing enough to protect women.<sup>100</sup> Her case, and others, was included in a 2018 report from Human Rights Watch which identified how counterterrorism and state-of-emergency laws in Egypt were often to prosecute critics.<sup>101</sup>



Image 16: Campaigners calling for the release of Amal Fathy.

Source: Getty via BBC.<sup>102</sup>

- At the end of the year, Reuters [reported](#) that a German man had been detained in Turkey, following accusations that he had written Facebook posts calling for an independent Kurdistan.<sup>108</sup>

- In late December, [protests in Sudan](#)<sup>103</sup> were [purportedly](#) accompanied by the **blocking of major social networks such as Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp**. [Christiaan Triebert](#), Senior Investigator and Lead Trainer at [@Bellingcat](#), who tweeted about this, noted that Snapchat still appeared to be working.<sup>104</sup>

- In UAE, a **British man was arrested, and later deported**, after sending an [angry WhatsApp message](#) to a car dealer after the vehicle he purchased earlier that day broke down.<sup>105</sup>

- According to a [2018 paper](#) by Chatham House's Joyce Hakmeh "Through their cyber-crime laws, the GCC countries have sought to get a stronger grip on social media, and to stymie the potential for spillover via online platforms of political unrest from other Arab countries."<sup>106</sup>



Image 17: Tweets showing reports of social media blocking in Sudan. Source: Twitter.<sup>107</sup>

# 9. Yemen's Civil War

---

- As the war in Yemen rages on, the role, and importance, of social media has increasingly come into play in the past year..
- Maggie Michael, a Cairo based reporter for the Associated Press, has been covering Yemen's detention centers for the past couple of years. [She told NPR](#) in December:  
109

*"Houthis detain anyone and everyone suspected to be an opponent - so from journalists to rival politicians to tribesmen to normal youth who just post criticism on social media - like, even a WhatsApp group." <sup>110</sup>*

- Facebook received backlash after it removed posts from users who shared images of emaciated Yemeni children [published](#) in the New York Times. "At issue," the Times explained, "was a photograph of a starving child."

*"[The article](#) included several images of emaciated children. Some were crying. Some were listless. One, a 7-year-old girl named Amal, was shown gazing to the side, with flesh so paper-thin that her collarbone and rib cage were plainly visible."*



*Image 18: Amal Hussain, a 7-year-old Yemeni girl, whose picture sparked a strong re- sponse. Amal was photographed suffering from severe acute malnutrition. Source: Tyler Hicks/The New York Times<sup>111</sup>*

- “Yes, Tyler’s images are hard to look at. They are brutal. But they are also brutally honest,” the Times’ [Eric Nagourney](#) and [Michael Slackman](#) wrote.

*“They reveal the horror that is Yemen to day. You may choose not to look at them. But we thought you should be the ones to decide.”<sup>112</sup>*

- Facebook has since emailed an explanation to the Times and republished the initial Facebook posts.<sup>113</sup> “As our [community standards explain](#), we don’t allow nude images of children on Facebook, but we know this is an important image of global significance,” a spokeswoman said in an emailed statement printed by the Times. “We’re restoring the posts we removed on this basis.”
- More widely, writing in the conservative US publication, National Review, the journalist [Marlo Safi](#) argued that, typically, “there were noticeably few Yemeni voices given a platform within Western media coverage.”

 **Rasha Jarhum** رشا جرهوم   
@RashaJarhum Follow

#BringDevBack interviews with women IDPs I have come through call for income generation & livelihoods activities, the humanitarian plan dedicated 3% only on funding those activities. Women are tired of hanging to a life line of aid boxes, they need sustainable solutions. #Yemen



10:56 AM - 25 Feb 2018

13 Retweets 39 Likes



1 13 39

Image 19: Tweet showing #BringDevBack in action.<sup>114</sup>

- 
- “Yemeni journalists and aid workers who have been documenting the crisis on social media and through Yemeni publications were rarely afforded the opportunity to report the conditions in their country to American news outlets,” [she wrote](#).
  - “Rather, only upon the crisis’s becoming a trending news story in October did American journalists speak to Yemeni civilians or visit Yemen.”<sup>116</sup>
  - **An initiative by the French media development agency (CFI) and UNESCO, saw 12 Yemeni journalists** (known as ‘Yemen Peace Newsroom’) **report from Sweden on talks to end fighting in their home country.**
    - “They relay developments directly from the talks to potentially millions of Yemenis via Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube,” [Faisal Edroos](#) and [Afrah Nasser](#) - an award-winning Yemeni-Swedish journalist - [explained](#) for Al-Jazeera.<sup>119</sup> Content was also be distributed - and made available - to local Yemenimedia.
  - **Yemeni people have taken to Twitter to make their voice heard.** Using the hashtag #BringDevBack (Bring Development Back to Yemen), people in Yemen are using the social network to to discuss ways to move on from the war and improve the situation in Yemen, Al Jazeera [reported](#).<sup>115</sup>
  - Iranian news outlet, **Press TV, [wrote](#) in December about an online campaign using social media to call for “for a boycott of Saudi products in protest at the regime’s war crimes against Yemeni people.”**
    - Iran and Saudi Arabia are on different sides in the conflict.<sup>117</sup>
    - Press TV stated “people from Yemen, Lebanon, Palestine, Iraq, Tunisia, Egypt and several other Arab countries have mobilized on online social media platforms such as Twitter to prompt a global movement against the Saudi-led war on Yemen.”<sup>118</sup>

# 10. Social Media Influencers

The role of social media influencers in the region has garnered considerable attention this year:

- CNN’s [list](#) of the Top 10 beauty influencers of the Middle East, ranked Huda Kattan, number one.
  - With 32.1 million Instagram followers, her net worth is estimated at \$550 million<sup>122</sup> and her company - [Huda Beauty](#) - is [valued](#) at more than \$1 billion.<sup>123</sup>
- With the headline “Meet the Kardashians of the Middle East” Marie Claire [looked at](#) how “Social-media mavens in the Middle East are bucking tradition and repressive laws to seek fame and fortune online.”
  - The feature included interviews with Zain Karazon (who has more than 1 million [Instagram](#) followers), [WonderTan](#) founder [Alice Abdel Aziz](#), the Kuwaiti makeup artist Al Fahad, and the Lebanese TV and radio host [Sazdel ElKak](#).



Image 20: Popular social media influencers in MENA. Source: Marie Claire website.<sup>120</sup>

However, social media influencers in the Middle East face their own set of challenges:

- The UAE has set out to manage its booming community of social media influencers by regulating the sector, Think Marketing [reported](#) earlier in the year.<sup>121</sup> 30



Image 21. Source: Tala Samman, Instagram  
126

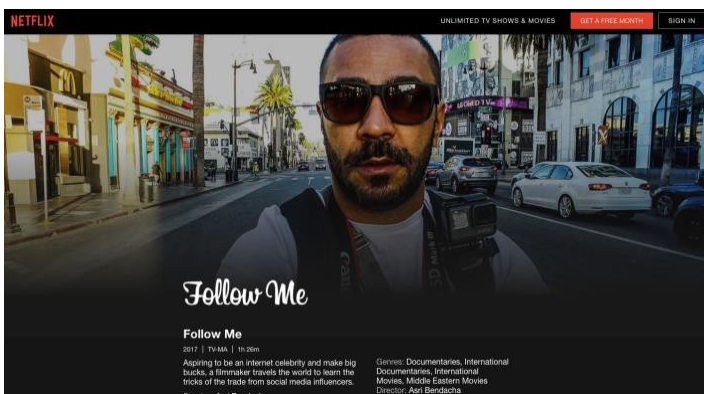
- Cairo based website Digital Boom [noted](#) that the **law to regulate the influencer marketing industry came into effect on June 1st.**
  - *“UAE-based social media influencers who are making commercial gains from their online popularity are now requested to obtain a license before the end of June 2018, that costs 15,000 AED (just over \$4,000) and is valid for a year.”*<sup>127</sup>
- **A former Miss Iraq with 3.5 million Instagram followers, [Shimaa Qasim](#), received death threats** days after another Iraqi model, Tara Fares, was killed in Baghdad, [the BBC reported](#).<sup>124</sup>
  - Tara Fares - who had 2.8 million followers on [Instagram](#) - was killed by unknown gunmen in Baghdad in September.
- The Verge produced a detailed [feature](#), looking at Fares’ past, and highlighting differences between Qasim’s experiences as an influencer in Iraq, compared to someone like [Tala Samman](#) in UAE.<sup>125</sup>
- CNN [shared](#) that **Kuwaiti social media personality Sondos Alqattan** - who at the time had 2.3 million Instagram followers - **was dropped by several global cosmetics brands after she uploaded a video criticizing new labor laws.**
  - The proposed new laws granted Filipino domestic workers a day off each week. In their coverage of the incident, The Guardian [commented](#) that “Roughly 660,000 people out of Kuwait’s population of 4 million are domestic migrant workers.”<sup>128</sup>
  - However, by September it was “business as usual” for the Instagram Influencer, with Arabian Business [commenting](#) that her followers had grown to 2.4 million.<sup>129</sup>



Image 22: Screenshot from Sondos Alqattan's Instagram account<sup>130</sup>

- Finally, Algerian filmmaker Asri Bendacha, launched a documentary about social media influencers in the region.
  - The Dubai-based filmmaker aired his film “Follow Me” on Netflix in November. “Bendacha is the first ever Dubai-based independent documentary filmmaker to be featured on Netflix,” the Dubai Media Office [tweeted](#).<sup>132</sup>
  - The documentary took 16 months from conception to final draft, Bendacha [told](#) the Khaleej Times.<sup>133</sup> You can view his film on Netflix [here](#).

Image 23: Netflix page for the documentary “Follow Me.” Source: Netflix.<sup>131</sup>





# Links to Previous Reports

---

- 2017 **University of Oregon: [Social Media in the Middle East, The Story of 2017](#)**, by Damian Radcliffe and Amanda Lam. [Download](#) from the University of Oregon Scholars Bank, embed on [Scribd](#), [SlideShare](#) and [Academia.edu](#).
- 2016 **[Damian Radcliffe: Social Media in the Middle East: The Story of 2016](#)** (Also available on [University of Oregon Scholars Bank](#), [SlideShare](#), [Scribd](#), [Academia.Edu](#), [UNESCO / United Nations Alliance of Civilizations Media Literacy Portal](#), [SSRN](#). or download it [here](#).)
- 2015 **[Damian Radcliffe: Social Media in the Middle East: The Story of 2015](#)** (Also available on [Scribd](#), [SlideShare](#), University of [Oregon Scholars Bank](#), [Academia.edu](#), [SSRN](#) and the [UNESCO Media Literacy Portal](#))
- 2014 **[Damian Radcliffe: Social Media in the Middle East: The Story of 2014](#)** (Also available on [Scribd](#), [SlideShare](#), [SSRN](#) and [Academia.edu](#))

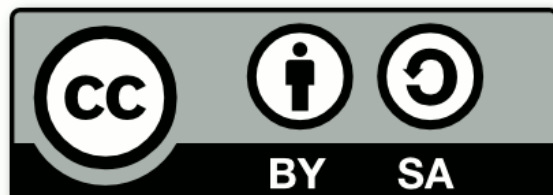
**Previous reports produced by Damian Radcliffe when he worked for Qatar’s Ministry of Information and Communications Technology (ictQATAR):**

- 2013 **Social Media in the Middle East: The Story of 2013** ([English](#), [Arabic](#))
- 2012 **[Social Media in the MENA – 2012 Review](#)** ([English](#), [Arabic](#))

---

**“State of Social Media, Middle East: 2018” by Damian Radcliffe and Payton Bruni is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.**

For more information contact Damian Radcliffe at [dradcliffe@uoregon.edu](mailto:dradcliffe@uoregon.edu)



# Endnotes

- 1 <https://www.iafrikan.com/2018/02/07/facebook-marketplace-is-now-available-in-algeria-egypt-and-mo- rocco/>
- 2 <https://menafn.com/1097670225/24-million-Facebook-users-in-Egypt-head-of-public-policies-in-ME- NA>
- 3 <https://wearesocial-net.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/DIGITAL-IN-2018-008- GROWTH-IN-SOCIAL-MEDIA-USERS-V1.00.png>
- 4 [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2018/06/05/fighting-the-weaponization-of-so- cial-media-in-the-middle-east/?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.799aba1c0fca](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2018/06/05/fighting-the-weaponization-of-so- cial-media-in-the-middle-east/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.799aba1c0fca)
- 5 <https://www.tahawultech.com/lifestyle/snap-original-shows-middleeast-snapchat/>
- 6 <https://www.arabianbusiness.com/media/400686-how-youtube-plans-to-stay-ahead-in-the-middle-east>
- 7 <https://www.zdnet.com/article/middle-east-youth-and-tech-whats-happened-since-the-arab-spring/>
- 8 <https://www.arabyouthsurvey.com/pdf/whitepaper/en/2018-AYS-White-Paper.pdf>
- 9 [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2018/06/05/fighting-the-weaponization-of-so- cial-media-in-the-middle-east/?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.9be433398f1d](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2018/06/05/fighting-the-weaponization-of-so- cial-media-in-the-middle-east/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.9be433398f1d)
- 10 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tc87B\\_hPJUI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tc87B_hPJUI)
- 11 <https://rsf.org/en/ranking#>
- 12 <http://www.arabnews.com/node/1340656/media>
- 13 <https://www.cnn.com/2018/07/23/health/gallery/middle-east-beauty-influencers/index.html>
- 14 <https://adigitalboom.com/uae-new-influencer-marketing-policy-comes-into-effect/>
- 15 [https://www.instagram.com/p/BsESC6dgQct/?utm\\_source=ig\\_embed](https://www.instagram.com/p/BsESC6dgQct/?utm_source=ig_embed)
- 16 <https://www.statista.com/statistics/244926/number-of-facebook-users-in-the-middle-east-and-africa/>
- 17 <https://www.iafrikan.com/2018/02/07/facebook-marketplace-is-now-available-in-algeria-egypt-and-mo- rocco/>
- 18 <https://wearesocial-net.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/DIGITAL-IN-2018-008- GROWTH-IN-SOCIAL-MEDIA-USERS-V1.00.png>
- 19 <https://wearesocial-net.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/DIGITAL-IN-2018-008- GROWTH-IN-SOCIAL-MEDIA-USERS-V1.00.png>
- 20 <http://www.pewglobal.org/2018/06/19/3-social-network-adoption-varies-widely-by-country/>
- 21 <http://www.pewglobal.org/2018/06/19/3-social-network-adoption-varies-widely-by-country/>
- 22 <http://www.pewglobal.org/2018/06/19/3-social-network-adoption-varies-widely-by-country/>
- 23 <https://www.iafrikan.com/2018/02/07/facebook-marketplace-is-now-available-in-algeria-egypt-and-mo- rocco/>
- 24 [https://blog.twitter.com/official/en\\_us/topics/company/2018/evolving-our-twitter-transparency-report.html](https://blog.twitter.com/official/en_us/topics/company/2018/evolving-our-twitter-transparency-report.html)
- 25 <https://mashable.com/article/twitter-transparency-report-2018/#58yTEk3d7OqV>
- 26 <https://transparency.twitter.com/en/removal-requests.html>
- 27 <https://transparency.twitter.com/en/removal-requests.html>
- 28 [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2018/06/05/fighting-the-weaponization-of-so- cial-media-in-the-middle-east/?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.799aba1c0fca](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2018/06/05/fighting-the-weaponization-of-so- cial-media-in-the-middle-east/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.799aba1c0fca)
- 29 <http://www.pantimearabia.com/two.php?additionToken=229>
- 30 <https://menafn.com/1097670225/24-million-Facebook-users-in-Egypt-head-of-public-policies-in-MENA->
- 31 <https://techcrunch.com/2018/08/07/snapchat-earnings-q2-2018/>
- 32 <https://www.omnicoreagency.com/snapchat-statistics/>
- 33 <https://www.tahawultech.com/lifestyle/snap-original-shows-middleeast-snapchat/>
- 34 <https://www.tahawultech.com/lifestyle/snap-original-shows-middleeast-snapchat/>

35 <https://campaignme.com/2018/11/22/115269/snapchat-expands-local-content/>  
36 <https://www.digitalstudiome.com/production/content-business/30956-snapchat-announces-creative-partners-for-lenses>  
37 <https://campaignme.com/2018/11/22/115269/snapchat-expands-local-content/>  
38 <https://www.ozy.com/acumen/which-country-loves-to-snap-more-than-saudi-arabia-none/88064>  
39 <https://itunes.apple.com/story/id1297105905>  
40 <http://www.arabnews.com/node/1354796/corporate-news>  
41 <http://www.arabnews.com/node/1354796/corporate-news>  
42 <https://archives.forbesmiddleeast.com/en/snapchat-rises-in-mena-as-it-give-brands-the-power-to-cre-ate/>  
43 <https://www.arabianbusiness.com/media/400686-how-youtube-plans-to-stay-ahead-in-the-middle-east>  
44 <https://www.arabianbusiness.com/media/400686-how-youtube-plans-to-stay-ahead-in-the-middle-east>  
45 <https://www.youtube.com/user/mmoshaya/about>  
46 [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC\\_hoQDD6zKcIqpIYLsFbBeA/about](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC_hoQDD6zKcIqpIYLsFbBeA/about)  
47 <https://www.globalmediainsight.com/blog/saudi-arabia-social-media-statistics/>  
48 <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/youtube-accused-removing-evidence-latest-chemical-attack-east-ern-ghouta-600879220>  
49 <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/09/youtube-shuts-pro-syrian-government-channels-180910123713025.html>  
50 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/nov/02/model-bar-refaeli-criticised-over-islamophobic-advert> 51 <https://bbc.in/2CUFzxV>  
52 <http://broadcastprome.com/news/youtube-launches-menas-first-youtube-space-at-dubai-studio-city/>  
53 <https://www.arabianbusiness.com/media/400686-how-youtube-plans-to-stay-ahead-in-the-middle-east> 54 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qERfsVL3Yls>  
55 <https://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-trending-46042657>  
56 <https://twitter.com/ArabianBusiness/status/1018482835718582272>  
57 <https://www.menabytes.com/2018-predictions-expectation-sharif-el-badawi/>  
58 <https://techcrunch.com/2018/01/31/whatsapp-hits-1-5-billion-monthly-users-19b-not-so-bad/>  
59 <https://www.zdnet.com/article/google-youtube-samsung-are-worlds-top-brands-but-how-do-they-do-in-middle-east/> and <http://www.brandindex.com/ranking/egypt/2018-index>  
60 <https://www.commsmea.com/services/18240-uae-denies-claims-of-end-to-uae-ban-on-whatsapp-calls>  
61 <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/05/02/microsoft-and-apple-could-get-skype-and-facetime-bans-lifted-in-uae.html>  
62 <https://www.zdnet.com/article/recent-wave-of-hijacked-whatsapp-accounts-traced-back-to-voicemail-hacking/>  
63 <http://www.arabnews.com/node/1307156/media>  
64 <https://www.tahawultech.com/industry/travel-hospitality/etihad-passengers-link-airline-whatsapp/>  
65 [https://www.instagram.com/p/BsESC6dgQct/?utm\\_source=ig\\_embed](https://www.instagram.com/p/BsESC6dgQct/?utm_source=ig_embed)  
66 [https://www.instagram.com/p/BsESC6dgQct/?utm\\_source=ig\\_embed](https://www.instagram.com/p/BsESC6dgQct/?utm_source=ig_embed)  
67 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-44760840> 68 <https://www.khaleejtimes.com/technology/UAE-residents-urged-to-change-Instagram-passwords---> 69 [https://twitter.com/TheUAETRA/status/1063423793698402305/photo/1?ref\\_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1063423793698402305&ref\\_url=https%3A%2F%2F](https://twitter.com/TheUAETRA/status/1063423793698402305/photo/1?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1063423793698402305&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2F)  
70 <https://www.zdnet.com/article/middle-east-youth-and-tech-whats-happened-since-the-arab-spring/>

71 <https://www.arabyouthsurvey.com/index.html>

72 <https://www.arabyouthsurvey.com/pdf/whitepaper/en/2018-AYS-White-Paper.pdf>

73 <https://www.arabyouthsurvey.com/pdf/whitepaper/en/2018-AYS-Presentation.pdf>

74 <https://www.arabyouthsurvey.com/pdf/whitepaper/en/2018-AYS-White-Paper.pdf>

75 <http://saudigazette.com.sa/article/529532/TECHNOLOGY/Saudi-millennials-watch-more-YouTube-than-TV>

76 Examples include: <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2008/07/is-google-making-us-stupid/306868/>.

[http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/127/4/800.short?casa\\_token=0t2dVAIC-F6oAAAAA%3Ap9cQG7j\\_OcUsSs2A9JeHn1joy8Qli0Og-ckAqZp8-XXZZhD9YGJcxzwIW1ThMo6RzMMMNOgS30](http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/127/4/800.short?casa_token=0t2dVAIC-F6oAAAAA%3Ap9cQG7j_OcUsSs2A9JeHn1joy8Qli0Og-ckAqZp8-XXZZhD9YGJcxzwIW1ThMo6RzMMMNOgS30) and <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0747563214004804>

77 <https://www.arabyouthsurvey.com/pdf/whitepaper/en/2018-AYS-White-Paper.pdf>

78 <https://egyptianstreets.com/2018/10/12/is-social-media-making-egyptian-youth-less-productive/>

79 [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/saudi-electronic-army-floods-twitter-with-insults-and-mist-ruths-after-khashoggi-disappearance/2018/10/19/98044874-d311-11e8-a4db-184311d27129\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.3eb59e0b45f7](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/saudi-electronic-army-floods-twitter-with-insults-and-mist-ruths-after-khashoggi-disappearance/2018/10/19/98044874-d311-11e8-a4db-184311d27129_story.html?utm_term=.3eb59e0b45f7)

80 <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/20/us/politics/saudi-image-campaign-twitter.html>

81 <https://www.pri.org/stories/2018-07-24/how-diplomatic-crisis-among-gulf-nations-led-fake-news-campaign-united-states>

82 [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2018/06/05/fighting-the-weaponization-of-social-media-in-the-middle-east/?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.9be433398f1d](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2018/06/05/fighting-the-weaponization-of-social-media-in-the-middle-east/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.9be433398f1d)

83 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tc87B\\_hPJUI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tc87B_hPJUI)

84 <https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/tech-news/exclusive-twitter-pulls-down-bot-network-pushing-pro-saudi-talking-n921871>

85 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-saudi-khashoggi-disinformation/fake-news-network-vs-bots-the-online-war-around-khashoggi-killing-idUSKCN1N63QF>

86 [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2018/06/05/fighting-the-weaponization-of-social-media-in-the-middle-east/?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.9be433398f1d](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2018/06/05/fighting-the-weaponization-of-social-media-in-the-middle-east/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.9be433398f1d)

87 <https://twitter.com/theqatarinsider/status/874746315460280320>

88 <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20181123-egypt-fake-photo-of-morsi-circulating-on-social-media/>

89 <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/04/world/middleeast/libya-facebook.html>

90 <https://twitter.com/kimzawy/status/1065254446295334912>

91 <http://www.maroc.ma/en/electronic-services/map-sos-fake-news-service>

92 <http://www.arabnews.com/node/1422136>

93 <https://rsf.org/en/rsf-index-2018-middle-east-riven-conflicts-political-clashes>

94 <https://rsf.org/en/ranking#>

95 <https://www.forbes.com/sites/dominicdudley/2018/11/21/fighting-fake-news-technology-middle-east-censorship/#20e27338634a>

96 <https://innovationlabs.harvard.edu/current-team/inkrypt/>

97 <https://www.linkedin.com/company/inkrypt/>

98 <https://www.thenational.ae/world/mena/syrians-worry-about-regime-proposal-to-ban-whatsapp-calls-1.782118>

99 <http://www.arabnews.com/node/1340656/media>

100 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-45691770>

101 <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/07/15/egypt-intensifying-crackdown-under-counterterrorism-guise>

102 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-45691770>

103 <https://www.cnn.com/2018/12/30/africa/sudan-protests-president-praises-police-intl/index.html>

104 <https://twitter.com/trbrtc/status/1075866141149577219>

105 <https://metro.co.uk/2018/01/10/british-man-jailed-dubai-sending-angry-whatsapp-message-dealer-dodgy-car-7217655/>

- 106 <https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/publications/research/2018-07-04-cybercrime-legislation-gcc-hakmeh.pdf>
- 107 <https://twitter.com/trbrtc/status/1075866141149577219>
- 108 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-germany/turkey-bars-german-man-from-leaving-country-source-idUSKCN10001>
- 109 See for example: <https://www.apnews.com/4925f7f0fa654853bd6f2f57174179fe> and <https://apnews.com/37485a888de646918dfd4e7b8de3df73>
- 110 <https://www.npr.org/2018/12/07/674467946/torture-by-yemens-rebels>
- 111 <https://static01.nyt.com/images/2018/10/25/world/africa/Yemen-xp-facebook/Yemen-slide-9NNJ-jum-bo-v6.jpg?quality=90&auto=webp>
- 112 <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/26/reader-center/yemen-photos-starvation.html?module=inline>
- 113 <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/26/business/facebook-blocks-nyt-yemen.html> 114 <https://twitter.com/RashaJarhum/status/967835624492412928>
- 115 <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/03/yemenis-launch-social-media-campaign-focus-development-180301185823373.html>
- 116 <https://www.nationalreview.com/2018/12/yemenis-describe-country-in-crisis/>
- 117 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29319423>
- 118 <https://www.presstv.com/Detail/2018/12/24/583819/Saudi-Arabia-Yemen-war-boycott-campaign>
- 119 <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/meet-journalists-give-yemenis-full-pict-181212142246676.html>
- 120 <https://www.marieclaire.com/culture/a20158364/middle-eastern-social-media-influencers/>
- 121 <https://thinkmarketingmagazine.com/uae-to-regulate-social-media-influencers/>
- 122 <https://www.cnn.com/2018/07/23/health/gallery/middle-east-beauty-influencers/index.html>
- 123 <https://www.forbes.com/profile/huda-kattan/?list=self-made-women#4aba0d833cec>
- 124 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-45706227>
- 125 <https://www.theverge.com/2018/12/19/18146869/influencer-social-media-female-dangerous-middle-east-tara-fares-shima-qasim-instagram-youtube-murder>
- 126 [https://www.instagram.com/p/Bn31kHzhcHj/?utm\\_source=ig\\_embed](https://www.instagram.com/p/Bn31kHzhcHj/?utm_source=ig_embed)
- 127 <https://adigitalboom.com/uae-new-influencer-marketing-policy-comes-into-effect/>
- 128 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jul/23/who-will-refund-me-kuwaiti-star-ignites-row-over-filipinos-days-off>
- 129 <https://www.arabianbusiness.com/culture-society/403688-weeks-after-controversy-its-business-as-usual-for-kuwaiti-influencer-sondos-al-qattan>
- 130 <https://www.instagram.com/p/BmgiKlPnpOZ/>
- 131 <https://www.netflix.com/title/81037898>
- 132 <https://twitter.com/dxbmediaoffice/status/1063420240745385984>
- 133 <https://www.khaleejtimes.com/nation/dubai/netflix-premiere-for-residents-/documentary-on-influencers>