

THE MIDDLE EAST EXPLAINED

STUDENT VIEWING GUIDE

Video: Women in the Middle East

Key Figures and Concepts

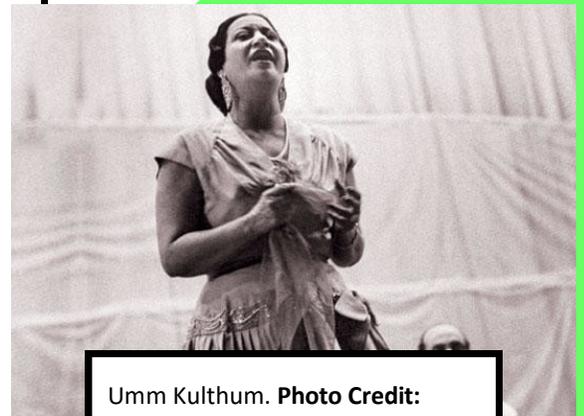
Shirin Ebadi (1947-): Shirin Ebadi is an Iranian lawyer, former judge, and human rights activist. She became one of Iran’s first female judges in the late 1960s, advancing to become the first woman to achieve Chief Justice status. She was dismissed from her position after the Islamic Revolution in 1979 along with other female judges. In the 1990s, she continued her work as a lawyer. Throughout her career she has advocated for the rights of women, children, and political prisoners in Iran despite being imprisoned many times for her activism. Ebadi was awarded the 2003 Nobel Peace Prize for promoting democracy and human rights, becoming the first Iranian and the first woman from a Muslim country to win the award. She continues speaking out against human rights abuses and advocates for legal reforms in Iran.

Umm Kulthum (unknown – 1975): Born at the end of 19th century, Umm Kulthum was a prominent Egyptian singer and influential figure. Nicknamed the “Star of the East,” she began singing at an early age with her family and her unmatched voice soon gained popularity. Umm Kulthum worked hard to be accepted in the traditionally male-dominated entertainment circles in Egypt, quickly becoming one of the most popular musicians across the Arab world. She used her voice to influence politics and change in Egypt supporting Egypt’s independence as well as Gamal Abdel Nasser’s presidency. After Egypt’s defeat in the 1967 war, she performed domestic and international concerts, donating the proceeds of her performances to the Egyptian government. She was an extremely respected figure and served as a cultural ambassador of the Arab world. Umm Kulthum died in 1975, but the legacy of her voice lives on in Egypt and beyond.

Güler Sabancı: (1955– a) Güler Sabancı is a prominent Turkish businesswoman and well-known philanthropist. After graduating with a degree in business administration, she worked her way up in her family company to become the first woman to run Sabancı Holding in 2004. Started by her grandfather in the 1930s, the company is one of the largest industrial conglomerates in Turkey. Sabancı was the first female member of the Turkish Industry and Business Association, and she has acted as an economic representative for Turkey throughout the world. Since becoming chairwoman of Sabancı Holding, she has expanded it into a worldwide business empire. Sabancı is also a leading philanthropist and is dedicated to the empowerment of girls and women. In 1994, she founded Sabancı University in Turkey and she also serves as chair of the Sabancı Foundation, Turkey's largest private charity.



Shirin Ebadi. Photo Credit: © Jeffrey Scales



Umm Kulthum. Photo Credit: Getty Images



Güler Sabancı. Photo Credit: World Economic Forum

Comprehension Chart: Women in the Middle East
