
MONA ELTAHAWY

Award-winning columnist and international public speaker on Arab and Muslim issues and global feminism.

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Topics

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Mona Eltahawy was born in Egypt and has lived in the U.K, Saudi Arabia and Israel and is currently based in New York. She is a board member of the Progressive Muslim Union of North America. She gained American citizenship in 2011.

She is an award-winning New York-based journalist and commentator and an international lecturer on Arab and Muslim issues.

During the 18-day revolution that toppled Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak, she appeared on most major media outlets, leading the feminist website Jezebel to describe her as "The Woman Explaining Egypt to the West".

Her opinion pieces have appeared frequently in the International Herald Tribune, The Washington Post and the pan-Arab Asharq al-Awsat newspaper and she has also published opeds in The New York Times, the Christian Science Monitor, Egypt's al-Dostour and Lebanon's Daily Star. She recently became a columnist for the major Danish daily Politiken and the online commentary site www.saudidebate.com.

In November 2011, Egyptian riot police beat her, breaking her left arm and right hand, and sexually assaulted her and she was detained for 12 hours by the Interior Ministry and Military Intelligence.

Mona Eltahawy was a news reporter in the Middle East for many years, including in Cairo and Jerusalem as a correspondent for Reuters and she reported from the region for The Guardian and U.S. News and World Report.

Since she moved to the U.S. in 2000, Ms Eltahawy's views on Arab and Muslim issues have become sought after by producers and college campuses alike. She has been a guest analyst on ABC Nightline, PBS Frontline, BBC TV and Radio, The Doha Debates, CNN, Al-Arabiya, Al-Hurra, MSNBC, VOA, Fox News' The O'Reilly Factor and various NPR shows.

Mona speaks publicly at universities, panel discussions and interfaith gatherings on human rights and reform in the Islamic world, feminism and Egyptian Muslim-Christian relations in addition to her other concerns. In November 2006, she was named Distinguished Visiting Professor at the American University in Cairo, her alma mater.

From 2003 to 2004, she was managing editor of the Arabic-language version of Women's eNews, an independent, non-profit news website that covers women's issues from around the world.

She wrote a weekly column for the Saudi-owned, London-based international Arab publication Asharq Al-Awsat from 2004 to 2006 before her articles were discontinued by editor Tariq Alhomayed for being "too critical" of the Egyptian regime.

In 2006, the Next Century Foundation awarded Mona its Cutting Edge Prize for distinguished contribution to the coverage of the Middle East and in recognition of her “continuing efforts to sustain standards of journalism that would help reduce levels of misunderstanding”. In 2003, she came in 2nd place for commentary in the Public Radio News Directors Inc. Awards.

Newsweek magazine named Ms Eltahawy one of its “150 Fearless Women of 2012”, Time magazine featured her along with other activists from around the world as its People of the Year and Arabian Business magazine named her one of the 100 Most Powerful Arab Women.

Headscarves and Hymens: Why the Middle East Needs a Sexual Revolution, is Eltahawy’s first book, published on April 21, 2015. The book is based on a controversial piece about misogyny in Arab society which she wrote for Foreign Policy in 2012, entitled Why Do They Hate Us.

Recent Speeches include:-

- United Nations University/United Nations Midday Forum, “Women in the Arab World: From Knowledge to Governance”, United Nations, NY, March 2007: Chairperson.
- Nieman Foundation Lunch lecture, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, March 2007: Presentation on moderate Muslims and the media – where are they and why don’t we see more moderate Muslims on our TV screens?
- Egyptian-American Professional Society 30th Anniversary Dinner, New Jersey, March 2007: Lecture on “Arab bloggers – Who are they and what do they want?”
- Politiken newspaper panel on Arabs, immigration and Europe, Copenhagen, Denmark, Jan. 2007: Speaker.
- Democratic Muslims of Denmark, Sharia in a modern context Conference, Copenhagen, Denmark, Nov. 2006: Chairperson and speaker at the event.
- American University in Cairo, Egypt, Nov. 2006: Public lecture on “Does a journalist change the world or does the world change the journalist?”
- Dialogues in Diversity Conference, Noordwijck, The Netherlands, Nov. 2006: Participant at dialogue sponsored by U.S. ambassador to The Netherlands bringing together American and Dutch Muslims.
- PEN Freedom of Expression in the Arab World Conference, Copenhagen, Denmark, Sept. 2006: Presentation on Egypt and the Arab media.
- Muslim Leaders of Tomorrow Conference – Integration of Muslims in the West, Copenhagen, Denmark, July 2006: Participant and moderator of panel on media coverage of Muslim issues and panel on Danish cartoon controversy with special guest, Flemming Rose, culture editor at Jyllands-Posten.
- The Doha Debates, Doha, Qatar, January, 2006: Debate on whether Arab media needs lessons from the West. The debates are chaired by former BBC broadcaster Tim Sebastian, and reach a potential audience of 270 million through BBC World TV.

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