

MENA Women's News Brief

This is a special edition of the MENA Women's News Brief that will highlight reports, remarks, and opinion pieces written in celebration of International Women's Day 2015.

International Organizations and Foundations

Amnesty International

March 8: Global backlash against women's rights is having devastating toll

"Two decades after the adoption of a landmark global agreement on gender equality, a vicious backlash is threatening to strip women and girls of their rights, said Amnesty International ahead of a major UN meeting in New York. 'We are calling on governments worldwide to make good on their decades-long promises to protect the rights of women and girls,' said Lucy Freeman, Director Gender, Sexuality and Identity Programme at Amnesty International."

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/articles/news/2015/03/global-backlash-against-womens-rights-is-having-devastating-toll/>

Clinton Foundation and Gates Foundation

March 9: The No Ceilings Initiative Releases its Full Participation Report and Data on the Status of Women and Girls

"Former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, Gates Foundation Co-Chair Melinda Gates and Clinton Foundation Vice Chair Chelsea Clinton joined global and community leaders for the official release of the No Ceilings Full Participation Report and data visualization site NoCeilings.org."

<https://www.clintonfoundation.org/press-releases/no-ceilings-initiative-releases-its-full-participation-report-and-data-status-women>

The website is available here: <http://noceilings.org/>

The report is available here: <http://noceilings.org/report/report.pdf>

Human Rights Watch

March 5: Include Women, Girls With Disabilities in Anti-Violence Efforts

"All governments should ensure that women and girls with disabilities are included in gender-based violence prevention and response programs,' Human Rights Watch said March 5. Ahead of International Women's Day, March 8, 2015, Human Rights Watch has published a resource on gender-based violence designed for people with disabilities."

<http://www.hrw.org/news/2015/03/05/include-women-girls-disabilities-anti-violence-efforts-0>

The resource is available here:

http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/related_material/Gender%20based%20violence%20ETR%20final.pdf

Inter-Parliamentary Union

March 5: Determined action needed for gender parity in parliament despite 20 years of progress

“Although the percentage of women MPs in the world has nearly doubled in the past 20 years, ambitious and concerted political action is needed globally to overcome the slow pace of progress to equality,” says the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).”

<http://www.ipu.org/press-e/pressrelease201503051.htm>

United Nations

March 6: Urgent action required in five key areas, says Beijing summary report

“Presented at the opening of the Commission on the Status of Women on 9 March, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, the UN Women Executive Director, highlighted the key findings of the new report *The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action turns 20*, which sheds a critical light on how far we’ve come 20 years after the adoption of this landmark blueprint for advancing women’s rights.”

<http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2015/3/urgent-action-required-in-five-key-areas-says-beijing-summary-report#sthash.9XBoR6Mr.dpuf>

The report is available here:

http://www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2015/sg%20report_synthesis-en_web.pdf

March 9: Governments commit to scale-up investments in women’s empowerment

“Government ministers and representatives today issued a political declaration with actions to achieve gender equality and women’s empowerment by 2030. During the 59th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, governments pledged to take concrete action and efforts through six specific strategies: do more to strengthen implementation of laws; bolster institutions vital to women’s empowerment; transform discriminatory norms and stereotypes; close resource gaps; boost accountability; and enhance capacities and data to track progress.”

<http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2015/3/governments-commit-to-scale-up-investments-in-womens-empowerment#sthash.S5Sx4fEb.dpuf>

March 10: Sluggish progress on women in politics will hamper development

“The Women in Politics 2015 Map launched by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and UN Women today shows that although the numbers of women in executive government and in parliament continue to inch forward, the slow rate of progress will severely check global development plans due to be adopted later this year.”

<http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2015/3/press-release-sluggish-progress-on-women-in-politics-will-hamper-development#sthash.qWUzwkaa.dpuf>

Companies and Research Institutions

Accenture

March 8: Inspirational Statistics On International Women's Day

“According to Accenture’s annual research, survey results from more than 3,600 participants (54 percent) in 60 countries revealed an equal number of men and women asked for a promotion this past year. This number is particularly significant not only because the number was equal for men and women but because the percentage also represents a sizable jump from last year.”

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/vickisalemi/2015/03/08/inspirational-statistics-on-international-womens-day/>

The Accenture report is available here: http://www.accenture.com/us-en/company/people/women/Pages/insight-2015-womens-research-listen-learn-lead.aspx?c=car_rmiwdfy15_10000062:otc_0215

Gallup

March 4: Nearly 2 Billion Women Worldwide Are Struggling, Suffering

“While International Women's Day on Sunday, March 8 will focus mostly on how the world thinks women are doing, it's important to understand how the women of the world think they are doing. The best way to find this out is to ask them. 61 percent of women polled said they are ‘struggling.’”

http://www.gallup.com/poll/181790/nearly-billion-women-worldwide-struggling-suffering.aspx?utm_source=alert&utm_medium=email&utm_content=morelink&utm_campaign=syndication

Varieties of Democracy, University of Gothenburg, Sweden, and University of Notre Dame, USA

March 10: Women's rights in the Middle East – new data show both improvement and impasse

“On International Women's Day 2015, researchers at the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Institute share brand new findings on the development of women's rights in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). This briefing shows that although women's rights and their empowerment are still much wanting across the region, positive trends can be noted in particular countries.”

http://www.yourmiddleeast.com/culture/womens-rights-in-the-middle-east-new-data-show-both-improvement-and-impasse-iwd2015_30412#.VQBajDjQDpA.gmail



Countries

Egypt

November 2014: Egypt's National Report For Beijing+20

“Egypt has exhorted great efforts to enhance the status of the Egyptian women through implementing a series of actions aimed at enabling and empowering them politically, economically and in social areas. These actions included the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, in addition to implementing the necessary legislative reforms that serves this objective, as well as taking actions aimed at changing the biased societal values and concepts that have negative implications on women and their role as an active player in the development of the nation.”

http://www.uneca.org/sites/default/files/uploads/egypt_beijing_review_report.english_version_final.pdf

Iran

March 10: Iran VP addresses UN meeting on women

“Iran's Vice President for Women and Family Affairs Shahindokht Molaverdi delivered her address in 59th Session of the Commission on Status of Women. ‘The Islamic Republic of Iran's 20-year Vision Plan, as a multi-disciplinary document, has set out provisions on the ways and means on enhancing social justice, legitimate freedoms, protection of humans' dignity and rights, social and judicial security, health, welfare, food security, social security, equal opportunities, appropriate distribution of income, acceptable sound environment and strengthening the institution of family, with no poverty, corruption and discrimination,’ she said.”

<http://en.mehrnews.com/detail/News/106245>

Israel

March 8: International Women's Day 2015 - Israeli statistics

“At the end of 2013, there were 2,986,000 women aged 15 and up living in Israel. Life expectancy was 80.3 years for men and 83.9 for women. Women constituted 57.8 percent of people employed in academic professions in 2014.”

<http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/AboutIsrael/Spotlight/Pages/International-Women-Day-2015-Israeli-statistics.aspx>

United Arab Emirates

June 2014: The National Report of the UAE on Beijing+20

“The UAE, since its endorsement of the recommendations of the 4th International Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, has worked on developing national strategies, plans and programs of actions in order to implement the Beijing Platform for Action.”

<http://www.escwa.un.org/sites/BeijingPlus20/docs/UAEEn.pdf>

United Kingdom

March 3: House of Commons Library: International Women’s Day 2015 Background and statistics

“In the United Kingdom, on average, women working full-time earn 9.5 percent less than men. Although women make up 51 percent of the population in the UK, only 23 percent of MPs, 25 percent of judges and 21 percent of Financial Times Stock Exchange 100 company directors are female.”

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/research/briefing-papers/SN02936/international-womens-day-2015-background-and-statistics>

Newspapers

The Independent

March 6: The statistics that show why International Women’s Day is still important

“International Women’s Day is fast approaching and this year’s theme is 'make it happen.' And we do need to make it happen; in the workplaces where women still earn less than men; in the offices where women are rarely promoted; in the countries where women are regularly sexually abused and forced into marriage, and for the girls who are still forced to undergo female genital mutilation. Here are just a few of the many reasons why we still need International Women’s Day.”

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/international-womens-day-2015-the--shameful-statistics-that-show-why-it-is-still-important-10091504.html>

Opinions/Analysis

December 2014: ‘Beijing+20: Looking Back and the Road Ahead’

By Various Authors

“In celebration of the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (Beijing+20), the Middle East Program and the Women in Public Service Project at the Wilson Center are proud to

share pieces from women who have been instrumental in realizing the goals of the Beijing Platform for Action in different parts of the world with the publication *Beijing+20: Looking Back and the Road Ahead*.”

<http://wilsoncenter.org/publication/beijing20-looking-back-and-the-road-ahead>

March 6: Expansion or Contraction? Women’s Rights in the MENA Region in 2015

By Various Authors

“On the occasion of International Women’s Day 2015, the Middle East Program at the Wilson Center invited a cross-section of women activists, politicians, academics, and entrepreneurs to give us their views on the situation for women in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).”

<http://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/expansion-or-contraction-women%E2%80%99s-rights-the-mena-region-2015>

March 6: Why educating girls should be a priority for Arab states

By Maysa Jalbou, Non-resident Fellow, Brookings Institution and former CEO, Queen Rania Foundation

“Current efforts fall short for far too many girls and young women. More targeted initiatives, funding, research, and advocacy for education for girls and women in MENA should be among the top priorities of the Beijing +20 meeting next week and MENA’s post-2015 development goals. Educating girls and women is one of the best investments Arab states can make in their social and economic well-being.”

<http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/education-plus-development/posts/2015/03/06-international-womens-day-jalbout>

March 7: International Women’s Day 2015: Reflecting on Beijing+20

By Julia Gillard, Former Prime Minister, Australia

“More women work and know the benefits of economic independence. We can see some female faces amongst the leaders of giant global companies. There is also more prospect of this new generation of girls becoming political leaders than ever before. Twenty years ago, only 11 percent of parliamentarians were women. This figure has now risen to 21 percent.”

<http://english.alarabiya.net/en/views/news/middle-east/2015/03/07/International-Women-s-Day-2015-Reflecting-on-Beijing-20-.html>

March 8: In Muslim Men’s Protests, Support for Women’s Choice About Veiling

By Haleh Esfandiari, Director of the Middle East Program, Woodrow Wilson Center

“The times they are a-changing—at least a little and in a positive way. Ahead of International Women’s Day, March 8, a group of Afghan men last week showed their solidarity with women who want relief from imposed forms of Islamic dress. The men put on burqas, the garment worn in public by almost all Afghan women.”

<http://blogs.wsj.com/washwire/2015/03/08/in-muslim-mens-protests-support-for-womens-choice-about-veiling/>

March 8: Women's equality isn't a zero sum game. It's vital for peace and prosperity

By Ambassador Melanne Verveer, former United States Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues and Mayesha Alam, Associate Director of the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security


“There is a plethora of data which demonstrates that women’s economic participation grows economies, creates jobs and builds inclusive prosperity. As essential as women’s equality is for growth, it is often

stymied by discriminatory laws, customs, and structural barriers that restrict women from full participating in the formal economy. In no country is the gender equality gap completely closed.”
<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/mar/08/international-womens-day-equality-prosperity>

By Julia Craig Romano



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