

Women's progress uneven and facing backlash, UN rights chief warns ahead of International Day

7 March 2017 – The United Nations human rights office today launched a joint report with the African Union and UN Women detailing the progress and challenges to women's struggle for human rights in Africa, while the UN rights chief warned that the women's movement around the world is facing a backlash that hurts both men and women.

"We need to be alert – the advances of the last few decades are fragile and should nowhere be taken for granted," UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein said in a statement ahead of International Women's Day, marked annually on 8 March.

The UN High Commissioner added that it is "extremely troubling" to see recent roll-back of fundamental legislation in many parts of the world.

Such roll-backs are "underpinned by the renewed obsession with controlling and limiting women's decisions over their bodies and lives, and by views that a woman's role should be essentially restricted to reproduction and the family," he said.

While such pushbacks are carried out in the name of tradition, Mr. Zeid noted that they are often a response to segments of society calling for change.

Among examples he gave, Mr. Zeid pointed to recent legislation in Bangladesh, Burundi and the Russian Federation, which weakens women's rights to fight against child marriage, marital rape and domestic violence, respectively.

He noted also the "fierce resistance" in the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua to political and civil society efforts to open up access to sexual and reproductive rights.



High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein. UN Photo/Jean-Marc Ferré

"With the world's young population concentrated in developing nations, retrogressive measures denying women and girls access to sexual and reproductive health services will have a devastating effect," Mr. Zeid said, noting more maternal deaths, more unintended pregnancies, fewer girls finishing school and the economic impact of failing to fully include women in the workforce.

"In short, a generation without choices and a collective failure to deliver on the promises of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," he added,

referring to the internationally agreed action plan for eradicating poverty while assisting all people and maintain the health of the planet.

Meanwhile, Mr. Zeid praised women's movements in countries such as Argentina, Poland and Saudi Arabia, where women and men took to the streets to demand change, but warned that "it is time to come together to protect the important gains of the past and maintain a positive momentum."

Women as active agents of change

In Africa, women continue to be denied full enjoyment of their rights in every country, according to a new report released today entitled *Women's Rights in Africa*.

Statistics show that some African countries have no legal protection for women against domestic violence, are forced to undergo female genital mutilation, and forced to marry while still children.

According to the report, however, in Africa – as around the globe – when women exercise their rights to access to education, skills, and jobs, there is a surge in prosperity, positive health outcomes, and greater freedom and well-being, not only of women but of the whole society.

"Human rights are not a utopian fairy-tale -they are a recipe for sound institutions, more sustainable development and greater peace," Mr. Zeid wrote in the Foreword to the report.

"When all women are empowered to make their own choices and share resources, opportunities and decisions as equal partners, every society in Africa will be transformed."

Among its recommendations, the report calls on African governments to encourage women's full and productive employment, to recognize the importance of unpaid care and domestic work, and to ensure women can access and control their own economic and financial resources.

The report stresses that women should not be seen only as victims but, for example, as active agents in formal and informal peace building processes.

UN agency expanding camps around Mosul to cope with surge in displacement

UN agency expanding camps around Mosul to cope with surge in displacement

7 March 2017 –

Amid a spike in new displacement triggered by the Iraqi military offensive to

recapture western Mosul, the United Nations refugee agency is setting up new camps and expanding existing ones to shelter new arrivals, many of whom are visibly traumatized, hungry and dehydrated.

According to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), its newly opened Chamakor camp will help manage the up tic.

“[The camp] received its first 200 residents [yesterday] and more arrivals are expected [today] and through the week.” Cécile Pouilly, a spokesperson for the UN agency, said at a media briefing today at the UN Office at Geneva (UNOG).

“It is ready to immediately receive 6,600 people,” she added.

The UN agency is also building two additional camps – one to the east of Mosul and the other, south – for some 39,000 people and setting up 19 tented halls in the Iraqi Government-built Hammam al-Alil, that will serve as reception centres and transit area.

RELATED: 15,000 children flee west Mosul over past week as battle intensifies, says UNICEF

Ms. Pouilly also said that UNHCR is exploring expanding capacity in camps north of the city but is facing serious challenges finding suitable land to build the camps.

Hunger and insecurity biggest reason to flee

Hunger and insecurity have been cited as the key factors in the decision to flee by newly displaced families, who told the UN agency of armed groups attacking areas recently retaken by Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), causing sustained civilian casualties.

“The newest arrivals are in a desperate condition, visibly traumatized, hungry and dehydrated. Many arrived without shoes and wearing soaking clothes, having walked long distances to reach safety at government checkpoints,” said the UNHCR spokesperson.

“Some had left relatives behind, hoping to be reunited once they are able to find safer exit routes from west Mosul. Families recounted surviving on one meal a day – flour and water, sometimes supplemented by bread or tomato paste – over recent weeks.”

Currently there are 211,572 Iraqis displaced by the fighting in Mosul, with over 50,000 added since the beginning of the latest operations in west Mosul, launched on 19 February.

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UN migration agency reports surge in displacement from Mosul as fighting intensifies

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- [Home](#)
- [All News](#)
- Named person policy has 'run aground and should be scrapped'

7 Mar 2017



The SNP's hated named person policy "has run aground and should be scrapped", the Scottish Conservatives have said.

Education secretary John Swinney told Holyrood today that he would bring forward a new bill for state guardians in the summer, and aimed to have it up and running by 2018.

Following the policy being ruled unlawful by the Supreme Court, he added some changes would be made to the data-sharing provisions.

However, shadow education secretary Liz Smith said the policy should be scrapped and, as it stands, will only be heading straight back to the courtroom.

Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary Liz Smith said:

"This is a scheme that has run aground and the fact the delay is now at two years shows exactly that.

"If the SNP had been listening properly it would have recognised months ago that it is completely unworkable and unwanted.

"Every opinion poll on the policy has made clear that the vast majority of parents do not want it, and it's clear many professionals tasked with delivering it are extremely concerned.

"Rather than muddy the waters even further, John Swinney should scrap this policy once and for all.

"As it stands, the named person policy is heading straight back to court."

The Scottish Conservatives have repeatedly opposed the named person scheme: <http://www.scottishconservatives.com/named-person/>

[The latest NHS staff survey demonstrates again the enormous pressures facing people working in our health service – Justin Madders](#)

Justin

Madders MP, Labour's Shadow Health Minister, responding to the NHS Staff Survey 2016, said:

“The latest NHS staff survey demonstrates again the enormous pressures facing the people working in our health service in the face of Theresa May's neglect and lack of interest. The Government's endless underfunding of the NHS and demands on staff to do more and more with less is taking its toll and stretching workers to breaking point.

“The Government urgently need a plan to give our brilliant NHS staff the support they need at work. It should be a badge of shame for Theresa May that morale in the NHS is so low. The Prime Minister ought to be using her first Budget to help NHS workers so that they feel valued in their work and are able to care for patients to the best of their abilities without the fear of illness or harassment. The winter crisis would have been so much worse without the dedication of NHS staff but this survey is a clear warning that they cannot go on endlessly without more support.”

[News story: The chicken and the egg: GLD Lawyers work on the bird flu outbreak](#)

The end of last year saw the biggest outbreak of bird flu (avian influenza) in Europe, which was eventually spread to the UK's shores, wetlands and poultry premises in December by migrating wildfowl. Since then, about 250,000 poultry have died or been culled at 10 infected premises across the UK from

Lincolnshire to Lancashire.

GLD lawyers played a central role in providing legal advice to Defra to deal with operational issues. This included dealing with issues arising whenever there was an outbreak detected or poultry culled, creating a 3km protection zone and a wider 10km surveillance zone around the premises. In these zones all movement of poultry and poultry products is banned and the area is effectively quarantined and a "lock down" imposed until the risk of disease spreading disappears.

On 6 December 2016, as the threat of bird flu increased, the Secretary of State for Defra, Andrea Leadsom MP, used her power in specific disease control legislation to declare an Avian Influenza Prevention Zone. This was the first time, since its creation in 2006 that this power has been used. The Prevention Zone Declaration required all poultry in England to be kept separate from wild birds by netting or being housed. Scotland and Wales followed suit as did Northern Ireland 2 weeks later. Around 51% of egg laying hens in England are raised entirely indoors in barns or enriched colony cages so the prevention zone did not affect that part of the poultry sector. However England's higher welfare free-range sector was affected as poultry were not allowed to range free.

When under such restrictions EU law permits eggs and poultry meat from free-range systems to still be sold as 'free-range', for a fixed 12-week grace period which expired on the 28 February. During this period GLD lawyers advised on how the period operated, having regard to poultry husbandry practices, and what should be done once the 12-week grace period came to an end as the status of free-range eggs would be immediately affected. Free-range poultry meat would be affected later.

Richard Vidal who led GLD's Disease Outbreak team said:

This was a very legally challenging situation as it was the first time a Prevention Zone had been introduced.

We've been responsible for explaining how the grace period operated and the imminent need, if the initial prevention zone was extended in time, to ensure labelling of any poultry produce was correct when the grace period expired.

To achieve this it was essential that we were involved with Defra industry meetings, calling on the views of the British Egg Industry Council, British Retail Consortium and the National Farmers' Union.

The prevention zone has recently been adjusted and extended until 30 April. It has been now adjusted to create two different disease risk areas: all poultry in higher risk areas have to be housed or fully netted to prevent wild birds from having access, whilst those in remaining areas (currently around 75% of England) can be allowed to range free but strict biosecurity measures will need to be put in place by the keepers. This includes such things as the disinfection of vehicle wheels and footwear, restricted access

to poultry sheds and pens, and records needing to be kept of anyone having contact with their poultry.

This means that until the latest prevention zone is lifted the labelling of 'free-range' from those that still house their birds must not mislead consumers.