



UN WOMEN BACKGROUND



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UN WOMEN



Introduction

“Repression of female rights in Middle East”

Delegates, the Chair of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women welcomes you to the 15th edition of the Model United Nations Instituto Oriente, 2024. We, as Chair, will be honored with your presence in our committee and pleased to guide you through this valuable model. We, as Chair, would like to thank the High Command, the Instituto Oriente, fellow Chairs and delegates for giving us the opportunity and pleasure of being an elemental part of this model.

According to the United Nations “Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, gender or any other status. Human rights include the right to life and liberty, freedom from slavery and cruel treatment, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to work and education, and many more. Everyone is entitled to these rights, without discrimination.” (*Human Rights, n.d.*)

In this edition the topic that will be discussed is Repression of female rights in Middle East, that involves entrenched discrimination, domestic violence, discriminatory laws, forced marriage, abduction assassinations and sexual harassment.

These violations of women's rights are the consequence of a misogynist culture that has been implemented in social education, causing the normalization of repression against women, violating their dignity, diminishing their participation and hindering their social, personal and labor growth. That is why millions of women around the world suffer every day for the simple fact of being born in an unfair world.

Despite the repression and the difficulties that arise, many women fought throughout history to demand their rights, creating groups, organizing demonstrations, publishing writings, among other things that every day make up the fight for an equitable world in which men, women, girls and boys can rehearse their fundamental right to life.

We, as Chair, strongly believe that it is important to give recognition and visibility to this topic to promote the study and knowledge of women's rights, the violation of these and protect the human dignity of the victims to guarantee the justice and freedom that are necessary to live in a healthy environment, promoting respect and fostering a full and dignified life.

This Chair is aware of the delicacy and importance of this topic that was previously chosen, considering the problems involved and the human rights that are violated. That is why we, as Chair, encourage our delegates to find possible solutions to address the debatable theme.

This document was made with the intention that our delegates can prepare for the sessions of the model, find safe and complete sources to have a successful research, get the necessary information and find a viable solution to the problematic that will be presented in this committee.



History of the Committee

UN WOMEN is the United Nations organization responsible for promoting women's empowerment and gender equality. As a global advocate for women and girls, UN WOMEN was created to expedite progress improving women's living conditions, as well as respond to the needs they face in the world.

This organization supports the Member States of the United Nations establishing international standards with the aim of achieving gender equality, promotes the participation of women in equal conditions in all areas of life, and also works with civil society and governments for the creation of laws, programs and policies that guarantee the execution of standards effectively, as well as being aware that they result in the real benefit of women and girls.

The Entity gives priority to these five areas:

- Accentuate women's leadership and participation.
- Involve women in all peace and security processes.
- Put an end to violence against women.
- Enrich women's economic empowerment.
- Make gender equality a central aspect in the planning and preparation of national budgets for development.

Likewise, UN WOMEN works in search of a more inclusive world with gender equality as a fundamental part of the Sustainable Development Goals, coordinating the work of the United Nations system in favor of gender equality in all debates and agreements regarding the 2030 Agenda.

Gender equality is not simply a basic human right, in fact its achievement has numerous socioeconomic consequences. The empowerment of women's role stimulates favorable economies and elevates productivity and growth. However, gender inequality is still common in society. Women face obstacles getting decent jobs and often deal with job discrimination and large wage gaps, they can not access basic education, medical care and they continue suffering discrimination and violence in all parts of the world.

Presence in history

Throughout the years, the United Nations has faced different challenges in its struggle for the support and promotion of gender equality in the world. Among these challenges, inadequate funding and the absence of any element of impetus that would guide the activities of the United Nations in related disputes.

In July 2010, the United Nations General Assembly founded the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN WOMEN) in order to regulate such challenges.

After this fact, the Member States of the United Nations took a historical step by hastening the organization's movement in relation to the empowerment of women and gender equality. The creation of UN Women took place in the United Nations reform program, which brought together resources and mandates that would generate a much greater impact.



It is supported and based on the work of four elementary bodies previously independent of the United Nations system, which has as their main objective to focus on the empowerment of women and gender equality, Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI) and United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

Long term

Situation of the Middle East:

The Middle East emerged after World War II, when the Ottoman and Persian Empires divided into independent nations. Islam is the majority religion in this part of the world but in no country does it represent the entire population because Judaism and Christianity are also professed. It is important to mention that there are different ways of professing different religions and to understand that there are different currents of thought and religious interpretation, but the misinterpretation of religious ideas cannot be an excuse to violate rights of women, as has been done for more than 20 years.

Female repression in laws:

There are some laws related to patriarchal traits that leave women at risk of gender based violence. Some examples related to marriage are: "The marriage of minors is authorized in certain cases, with the consent of the guardian and the mother" (Belhassen, 2016); "A woman must take care of the comfort of her husband and his "psychological and sensory repose" and must supervise and maintain the conjugal dwelling" (Belhassen, 2016).

With respect to divorce women have to go to a court and prove that their husband has an illness, either physical or mental, that he can not supply financial support or that he has dangerous behavior.

Social movements:



Women from all backgrounds desired democracy, social justice, freedom, dignity, and equality from Tunisia to Bahrain, from Egypt to Syria. Women journalists, bloggers, and activists roused the public and informed them what was going on. Through the demands they created, these disturbances

reaffirmed the fundamental universality of human rights.

Authorities fighting for control arrested, imprisoned, executed, and tortured both men and women in each nation. But different kinds of violence have been directed at women including sexual harassment, "virginity test" and abduction.

A 26 year old blogger from Cairo named Asmaa Mahfouz published a video on Facebook on January 18, 2011, inciting people to march in Tahrir Square against the Mubarak regime.

The following day, Tawakkol Karman, a 32 year old activist and writer, encouraged Yemenis to rebel against their corrupt authorities while participating in a demonstration in Sana'a in support of the Tunisian people.

In Tahrir Square on March 9, 2011, the armed forces arrested 18 female protesters. They were verbally humiliated, violently assaulted, and cruelly treated while being taken to the Egyptian Museum. After that, they were taken to the military Hykestep prison facility, where seven of them, including Samira Ibrahim, were stripped and had to submit to "virginity tests" performed by male armed forces doctors. The practice was eventually acknowledged by a number of military workers, including Major General Abdel-Fattah Al-Sisi, the chief of Egypt's military intelligence, who claimed that the tests were carried out so that women could not afterwards claim they had been forced sexual intercourse. In a video that was uploaded to the internet, Samira testified against the armed forces in a complaint that she had filed. Samira's petition was approved by Cairo's administrative court on December 27, 2011. The court decided that "virginity tests" were prohibited. As of March 2012, trials involving numerous armed forces doctors that were accused of executing the tests were still pending. They were charged with "acts in breach of public decency."

Economic impact:

Women's participation in politics and economy reinforces women's civil, political and economic rights. Likewise, the participation of women strengthens democracy, the economy and sustainability. It is not just about doing the right thing, but parity and equality help society to be more prosperous. Women make a very significant contribution to economies, whether in businesses, on farms, as entrepreneurs or employees, or working as unpaid domestic caregivers. On the other hand, they suffer disproportionately from poverty, discrimination and exploitation. Another aspect to consider is that the bulk of domestic tasks falls on women, so they usually have little free time to take advantage of economic opportunities.

In the Middle East and North Africa, women have progressed in the economy, following global trends, and have positioned themselves at higher levels of business management. But its potential remains untapped, leading to significant lost opportunities for the region's economic development.

The MENA region has the lowest representation of women in management and leadership positions in the world, despite this, the

representation of women in chambers of commerce is increasing, especially as numerous chambers have created business committees (as in the GCC countries, Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Jordan, the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Yemen). Its objective is to support women entrepreneurs and respond to their needs.

Short term

Situation of the Middle East:

Women and girls in the Middle East continue to be victims of social and political abuse.

Despite the advances in the fight for rights, the thought that is passed from generation to generation is the one that considers women as an inferior being with no capacity to grow.

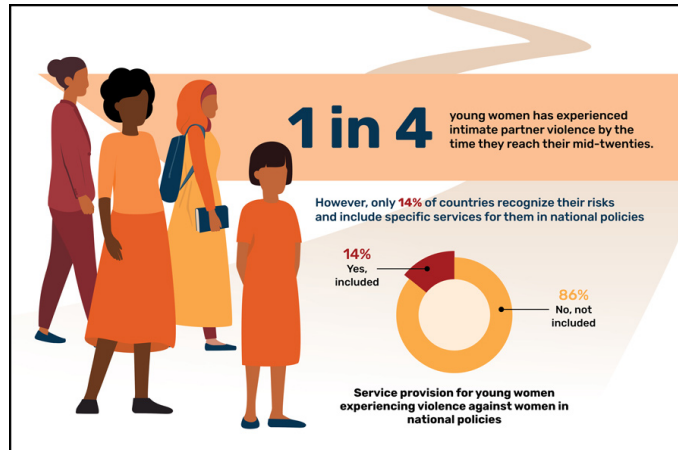
It is important to remember that in Middle Eastern countries religious ideas are the basis of the social and political structure, preventing women from being able to fully exercise their rights with rules like do not leave home without a man of her family, go out with her head or body completely covered or the rule that allows a man to punish a woman with physical violence if she does not comply with any type of rule.



Female repression in laws:

A 2021 report by The World Bank found that, on average, women have just three-fourths of the rights afforded to men under the law and in recent years the laws governing family life were those most likely to contain discriminatory provisions.

The laws in recent years have not changed in their entirety for the empowerment of women, there have been advances but a more superficial area, the fight for women's rights continues but in regions of the Middle East these changes are minimal.



Social movements:

In the past couple of years the women in the Middle East have raised their voice through social media to ask for equality and equity. On March 8th, 2023 five Iranian girls danced without their hijab, the video gained the world's attention and even a famous actress, Nour, said "We have never seen that level of social media activity to move a movement forward when it comes to Iran" but later on the girls were detained and forced to give a public apology.

In September, 2022, Mahsa Amini was murdered in the hands of Iran's "morality police" for violating the traditional dress code, this circumstance unleashed many protests around the country and the Iranian government detained more than 20,000 protesters and assassinated over 500.

In Kuwait and Lebanon the "Barbie" movie was banned for threatening the traditional values in the countries.

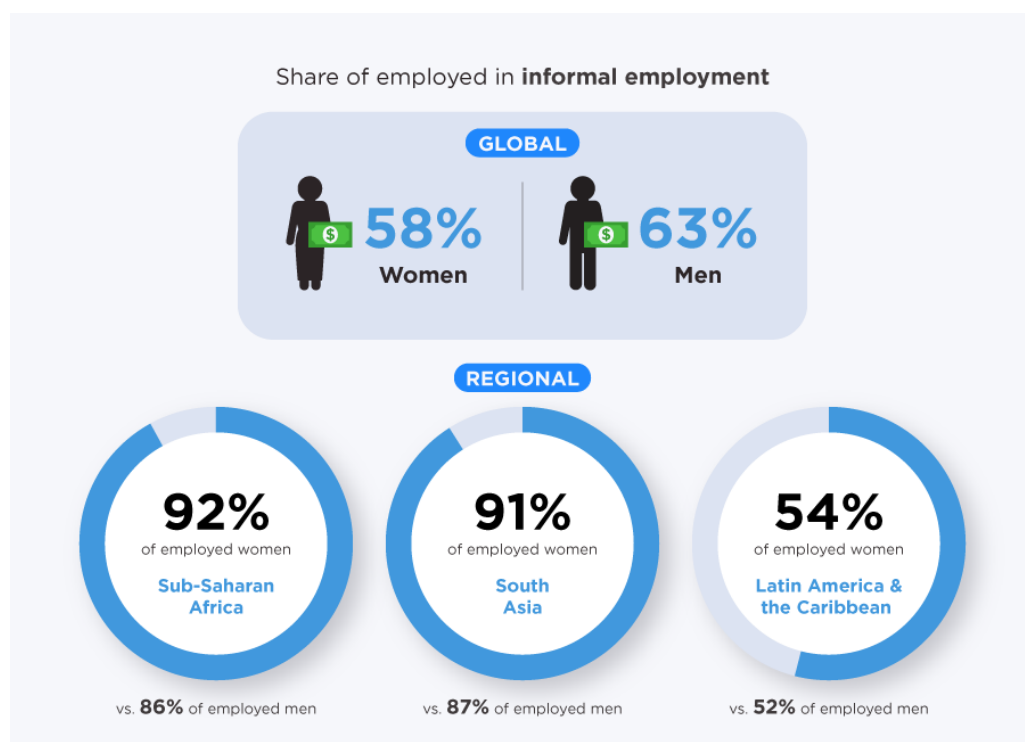
Economic impact

The issue of women's employment in MENA goes beyond gender equality issues. Violence in all its forms, domestic and sexual harassment on the street, on public transport or in the workplace, is a factor in the availability of employment for many women. In recent years, several Middle Eastern countries have adopted laws to eradicate violence against women, but their enforcement is weak. Family inheritance remains unequal, with sisters and widows receiving a

smaller share than male relatives. Such legal decoupling puts women at a financial disadvantage.

On the other hand, in recent years, women in the Middle East and North Africa have taken unprecedented steps as a vital part of the region's labor force. They are also becoming more visible in the public and private sectors, from roles in policy making and diplomacy to entrepreneurship and corporate leadership. Their progress is momentous, but the region is yet to tap the full potential of women in the workforce. Only 40% of women of working age in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries are employed, compared to 64% in the OECD¹. In Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, the three largest economies in the region, less than 20% of all senior managers are women.

In January 2022 a survey of 1,500 women between the ages of 18 and 35 was carried out in the countries of Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, and it was concluded that these countries are home to around 81 million women and have a combined GDP of around \$2 trillion.



Position of the United Nations

The United Nations have always worked so that human rights are fulfilled in all countries that are part of the organization, through treaties, programs, peace agreements, regulations and postulates.

The organization is divided into different committees to address the issues in a more specialized way and thus reach better resolutions. The committee focused on the dignity and well-being of women is UN WOMEN and through time this committee has sought and dealt with different issues in favor of women around the world.

The most recent action plans that the United Nations have proclaimed are the “Millennium Development Goals” which are eight human development purposes set in 2000 and with the intention of fulfilling them by 2015, within the purposes related to the well-being of women are “Promote gender equality and empower women” and “Improve maternal health” and the proposals that are currently proclaimed are seventeen that are in the “Sustainable Development Agenda” and the purpose directed for women is “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”, this seventeen proposals are planned to be fulfilled by 2030.

The UN WOMEN impact in 2020 has been 262 legal reforms, 590 women's organizations supported to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 and 107 million people benefited from initiatives with a gender perspective.

Also UN WOMEN follow the “UN Women’s strategic plan, 2022 - 2025” containing objectives and approaches to support efforts to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

United Nations resolutions:

UN Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security (2000)

Recognizing that military conflicts affect women in different aspects and proclaims the importance of women being taken into account for decisions on conflict resolutions, the UN Security Council made seven additional resolutions on women, peace and security. Taken together, the nine resolutions represent an important advance to improve the situation of women in countries with extreme violence and armed conflicts, such as the countries of the Middle East.

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (PFA)

The Fourth World Conference on Women took place in September 1995. It was distinguished for its great diversity and different global origin,

however, there was a common goal: gender equality and the empowerment of women around the world. The representatives of 189 different governments managed to negotiate commitments of historic significance, and at the end of the conference, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was produced, considered the most progressive plan ever to promote women's rights.

The platform for action made extensive commitments around 12 areas of special concern, such as: Women and economy, Women and poverty, Violence against women, Women and health. Thinking of all women and girls, making it possible for them to exercise their freedoms and options, and making their rights come true, including living without violence, attending school, participating in decisions and having an equitable remuneration at work.

The Beijing process increased the activism and visibility of women's movements worldwide. On the 20th anniversary of Beijing, new opportunities were presented to give new life to the previously established commitments, strengthening political will and mobilizing the general public.

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

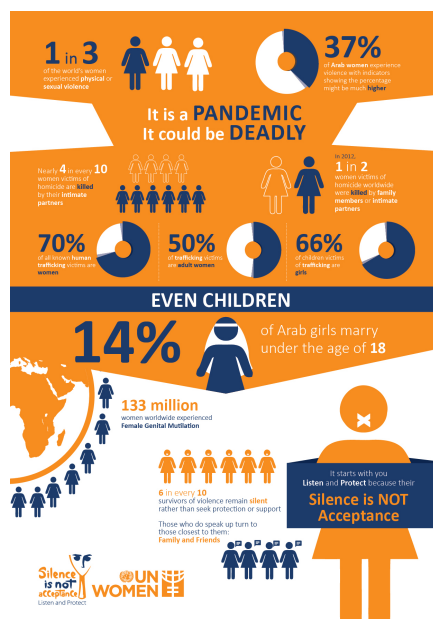
Its purpose is to promote universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms without distinction of any kind, including any distinction based on gender, following the "women's bill of rights" and seeking full development for women and girls of all the world.



Controversy points

Why is it a controversial topic?

Gender violence has been a problem around the world for decades, but in recent years women's rights have been a very relevant issue with an urgency for change and it is noticeable in daily life as well as in the media, such as news, newspapers, social networks, movies, television series, books, among others. Every day society can see women fighting against the injustices that society and even their own governments put in front of them. But in developing countries, like in the Middle East, progress in fighting for rights is hampered because the role of women in Eastern society is a complicated issue due to cultural and religious influences. They have suffered and continue to suffer discrimination and restrictions on their freedoms and rights, which is often attributed to their religious beliefs, but culture also has a great influence. However, no type of religion or belief should be a form of discrimination or an excuse to violate an individual.



Unfortunately, women in Middle Eastern countries face a series of cultural, legal, social, economic and political obstacles, but it is important to mention that this is not a consequence of religion in its entirety, since the ideas of discrimination can be because of the misinterpretation of the Koran and the cultural influences of this region, for example, in the Islamic religion women are below men in many aspects, girls become adults before boys so they can get married even if they do not want to, genital mutilation is really common, the husband posses the family authority and his wife is his "servant", women can not go out of her house without the company of a man and they cannot let

a man into their house, they cannot work or find work without their husband's approval, man can demand sexual intercourse and if woman disobeys he can force her and a husband can hit his wife without asking or explaining a reason, among other unfair and demeaning things.

The point of controversy enters when these discriminatory actions and attitudes are defended by the right to religious and professional freedom, but on the other hand many rights of the UDHR (Universal Declaration of Human Rights) are opposed.

Why is a debate generated and what positions can be found?

In all issues related to a defendant and a victim, there are always two or three positions, those who are in extreme opposition, those who justify it and seek explanations, and those who do not take any side but listen to the problem and look for the good in common.

As we, as Chair, mentioned before, in developing countries the rights of women are not respected and they experience a high level of gender violence on a daily basis, even most of the time they are not even taken into account, but rulers or religious leaders justify and approve it with the excuse of religion, as the case of 2021, in which countries like Afghanistan, the Taliban regime took capacity and since then women have been increasingly restricted with rules that limit them to occupying social roles, prohibiting human rights, such as freedom of expression and education, things that affect the healthy and full development of girls, women and mothers.

The biggest problem in developing countries is the backward system based on religion that keeps women in a difficult position to speak out against their culture and in favor of their rights, but in many countries of the world, especially in developed countries, progress in finding viable solutions for fair treatment between men and women has been more accepted and normalized.

All these facts have resonated around the world; men and women from all over the world are fighting to find a change so that women are treated equally in these countries and to reach an equitable and just society.



Objectives

Representing the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women, this Chair is looking for the delegate's best abilities to find a viable solution to eliminate the repression of female rights in developing countries, but more specifically in the Middle East.

With that being mentioned before, the Chair asks its delegates to come up with resolutions for:

- To find in which aspects religion affects women's rights.
- Which specific laws have a negative impact on women's education in developing countries.
- Which countries approve of forced marriages?
- Find out programs that helped developed countries to find gender equality and try to find a way to apply them in developing countries.
- Detect in which field are women being more oppressed and find a way for women to reach their personal fulfillment in these fields.
- Why is gender inequality stopping developing countries from evolving into a better country?
- In which jobs can women participate in developing countries?
- Raise awareness of the situation of women in the Middle East, as well as the causes and consequences of discrimination and gender inequality in this region.
- What can the governments of developing countries do in order to respect the religious rules but, at the same time, improve female rights.
- Which laws can developing countries implement to protect female rights, such as gender-based violence and discrimination.
- In which government positions can women be and what can they do in countries in the Middle East to promote active participation in decision-making process.
- Which forms of education can be implemented in order to promote gender equality in developing countries.
- In which jobs are women more at risk for gender-based violence and discrimination.
- Why in the last couple of years the situation of the women in the Middle East has resonated and which developed countries are trying to help.
- Which healthcare institutions restrict access to women and what can they do in order to improve women's health.
- Reduce women's disadvantages since it hinders their progress when factors such as employment and health remain unchanged.

- Why domestic violence is allowed as long as it is their husband?

Our objective, as a Chair, is that at the end of this model, our delegates conclude the topic with a possible solution to eradicate gender inequality in the Middle East, therefore the main idea is to encourage them to use all of their best abilities in order to reach their full potential, and, with this, come up with revolutionary ideas to improve the situation of women that day by day are fighting against their government and traditional ideals from their countries.

Conclusion

The information presented in this document is intended to arouse the curiosity of our delegates, so that they take the initiative to find out and understand what other women experience on a daily basis, and keep in mind the inequalities that exist in our world.

The role of women and how they are seen depending on the part of the world they are in, is impressive and our mission as agents of change is to fight for human rights to be fulfilled and taken into account everywhere, to reach a society full and fair.

It is important to emphasize that we, as Chair, are not against religious profession freedom, we, as international committee, simply consider that no type of freedom should be used to denigrate the dignity and rights of someone else, nor should it be an excuse to justify acts that take advantage of vulnerability.

The main objective of this chair is to make this model a unique and memorable experience, starting from discipline and perseverance, following the protocol to the letter, and leaving valuable experiences and learnings to each member of this committee. We, as UN Women, expect the best of our delegates and aspire to act as a great team, with responsibility, dedication, love and passion.

Thank those who have taken the time to read this document and we, as Chair, hope that it will be very useful for you to continue expanding your mind and get involved in the constant struggle for the creation of a better world.

Countries

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Middle East/ Asia)

Just as in most Middle Eastern countries, in Saudi Arabia, women live in a guardianship system, that is, they cannot make decisions about themselves and they are made by a man in their family who is called "guardian", decisions as simple as studying, living alone, getting married, getting out of jail or taking medical treatment, have to be authorized in advance by the "guardian".

This system has made progress in recent years, as well as the right to vote, to create a company without the guardian's authorization, to drive, to go to sporting events or to travel if they are over 21 years of age, great advances but insufficient for a country with years of cultural segregation.

Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (Middle East/ Asia)

This country has had a complicated history, in the last three decades the country has been occupied by Soviet troops and international forces led by the United States or ruled by militant groups, as well as the Taliban.

When thinking of an Afghan woman, people think in bodies covered from head to toe or a woman who cannot leave her house without a man, but the reality is that this was not always the case, Afghan women had rights and freedoms that were respected equally, they could study, travel or dress without any type of restriction, but all this changed with the arrival of the Taliban, since when they came to lead they used their version of the Islamic Sharia law that made women lose rights such as studying, working, going out, showing their skin in public or getting involved in political and public situations.

Republic of India (Asia)

Despite the constant fight for women's rights, the situation in India for a woman continues to be vulnerable and discriminated, with data such as that 27% of women marry before the age of 18, 60% of women are full-time housewives and that only 23% of women have the opportunity to grow and seek employment.

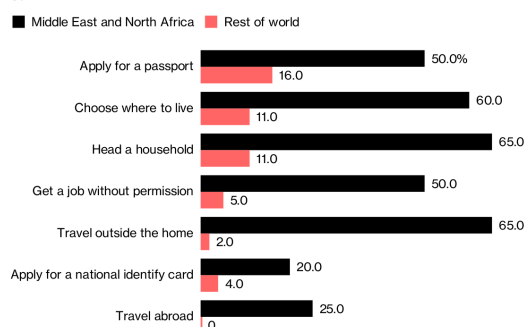
This type of data is only a little of what Hindu women live every day and reminds us that a military regime or an unfair political system is not necessary for women to suffer violence, sometimes cultural issues are the main causes of violence and inequality.

List of countries

1. Argentine Republic (America)
2. Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (America)
3. Canada (America)
4. Federal Republic of Nigeria (Africa)
5. French Republic (Europe)
6. Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (Middle East/Asia)
7. Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (Middle East/ Asia)
8. Islamic Republic of Pakistan (Asia)
9. Kingdom of Denmark (Europe)
10. Kingdom of Morocco (Middle East/ Africa)
11. Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Middle East/ Asia)
12. New Zealand (Oceania)
13. People's Republic of China (Asia)
14. Republic of Finland (Europe)
15. Republic of India (Asia)
16. Republic of Iraq (Middle East/ Asia)
17. Republic of Lebanon (Middle East/Asia)
18. Republic of Turkey (Middle East/ Europe-Asia)
19. Republic of Yemen (Middle East/ Asia)
20. Russian Federation (Europe/ Asia)
21. State of Israel (Middle East/Asia)
22. State of Kuwait (Middle East/ Asia)
23. Syrian Arab Republic (Middle East/ Asia)
24. United Arab Emirates (Middle East/ Asia)
25. United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (Europe)
26. United Mexican States (America)
27. United States of America (America)

Restricting Women's Agency

Share of countries and territories where women can't legally do things men can



Source: World Bank Group's "Women, Business and the Law 2018" BloombergQuickTake

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