



## **“Radicalization of the Middle East: A Secular Perspective through Women and the UN Post-2015 Development Agenda”**



Photo: Edward Foster – March 14, 2015

### **“HISTORICAL RIGHTS AND WRONGS: WWI, TURKISH SECULARISM AND RELIGIOUS CONFLICT”**

**13-14 MARCH, 2015**

**ATRIUM, 2<sup>ND</sup> FLOOR, RIVER BUILDING,  
CARLESTON UNIVERSITY  
OTTOWA, CANADA**

**SESSION 3: MIDDLE EAST RADICALIZATION: SECRETARIAN OR SECULAR DEVELOPMENT? (March 14)**

*Presented by*

**BİRCAN ÜNVER, Founder-President, The Light Millennium and Head  
NGO Representative at the United Nations Department of Public Information**

**<http://www.lightmillennium.org>**

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to start by sincerely thanking **Prof. Özay Mehmet** for his time and attention, and the **Carleton University/Modern Turkish Studies Initiative** for giving me this opportunity to speak in front of you.

I'm here not only to share my observation and experience on the aforementioned title of this presentation, but also to learn from various distinguished experts from different regions of the world and interact with a wide audience on the overarching concept of the conference.



**Radicalization of the Middle East: A Secular Perspective through Women and the UN Post-2015 Development Agenda** Bircan Ünver, The  
Light Millennium - <http://www.lightmillennium.org>  
NGO Representative at the United Nations Department of Public Information

A brief introduction of The Light Millennium – LM:

LM is a non-religious, non-political, not-for-profit (501-c-3), non-governmental (NGO), independent public benefit **multi-media and culture organization**. Is associated with the [United Nations Department of Public Information](#) since December 12, 2005. Formed in 2001, based in Queens, New York. *On the Web since August 1999.*

LM's Turkish counterpart and sister organization, **IşıkBinyılı.Org**, was formed in İstanbul, Turkey in January 2010.

*We are for:*

Fostering global connectivity towards the World Peace,  
Freedom of Expression,  
Encouraging Intellectual Productivity,  
Girls-Women Rights,  
Sustainable Human Developments,  
Cultural Diversity,  
Advancing Culture of Peace.



Since 2000, the organization has been e-publishing, producing television programs, and collaborating for events with major universities and non-profits in/around New York City. Since its association with the United Nations Department of Public Information, the organization actively served on the New York-based UN-DPI-NGO Conferences' Planning Committee, and collaborated with other UN entities such as UNESCO, Alliance of Civilizations, and some of the member states of the UN including Turkey, Sri Lanka, Macedonia, Kazakhstan, El Salvador, and many UN-associated NGO's. LM has been an active member of *the Global Movement for the Culture of Peace* at the UN since January 2013.

*I will try to build up my presentation based on this background.*

Bircan Ünver, The Light Millennium - <http://www.lightmillennium.org>  
NGO Representative at the United Nations Department of Public Information

As conceptual ground, I'd like to start with the following two quotes:

- **“Secularism is a principle that involves two basic propositions. The first is the strict separation of the state from religious institutions. The second is that people of different religions and beliefs are equal before the law.”**  
—Secularism.org.uk
- **“We must unite. Violence against women cannot be tolerated, in any form, in any context, in any circumstance, by any political leader or by any government.”**  
—Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, United Nations

Radicalization of the Middle East: A Secular Perspective through Women and the UN Post-2015 Development Agenda

The Light Millennium - <http://www.lightmillennium.org>

NGO Associated with the United Nations Department of Public Information





"Humankind is made up of two entities: man and women. How could it be possible for the whole to progress if we let one half progress and neglect the other?"

*Mustafa Kemal ATATÜRK*

## A Secular Perspective through Women and the UN Post-2015 Development Agenda O V E R V I E W

Based on some existing dogmas and religious practices, “**gender equality and girls and women rights**” have been deliberately undermined both in the poorest and some richest countries in the world for too long. These dogmas, “*tore*”, customary, traditional, religious, and inherited practices have put young girls’ and women’s lives at risk within their families and communities to the extent of being killed, recognized as “*honor killings*”.

Although Turkey has been a secular *Republic and Democratic* country through the *Louvanne Peace Treaty* and formed by **Mustafa Kemal Atatürk** (1881 – 1938) in 1923, it still couldn’t overcome these issues fully. On the contrary, the situation has been worsened during last decade or so! Why?

In order to understand the problem, we need to look at what has made Turkey what it is today, and what has been done to Turkey; how its enlightenment process was blocked and twisted, and how the “*separation of powers*” and the secular and democratic political structure is tried to be reverted to an Islamic state! One of the Republic’s core roots was the **Village Institutions** (*Köy Enstitüleri*), and they were completely closed down prior to 1950, about 12 years after Atatürk’s departure from this world.

# VILLAGE INSTITUTIONS OF TURKEY

**The very first implemented Universal Education program for girls and boys!**

In 1927, when Latin script was introduced in Turkey, **82.5 %** of the male population and **92.5 %** of the women population was illiterate. [\*]

The Village Institutions (V.I.) (1940-1950\*) was one of the core visions and successfully implemented programs of Atatürk's for the newly formed modern country in order to overcome critical social problems through an enlightenment process, through education and teachers.

Accordingly, teachers of the V.I.s could return to their villages and educate their countrymen and women in every corner of the country. Thus, V.I.s met the country's urgent NEED, in particular, following the introduction of the Latin script in 1927. It was also its first kind in the Middle East and Islamic World in terms of "girls and boys" attending a school together. The students were selected from the country's poorest children in order to provide them a teaching career in the form of "**free universal education**". This example alone is far ahead of the present times' Millennium Development Goals and the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda for 2030 of the United Nations.

The V.I.s educated and graduated **1,308 women and 15,943 men** (total 17,251) as **young teachers** during its very short life-span. That alone has strengthened the country greatly and provided fundamental human resources to continue to nourish for many decades even after the institutions' complete extinction.

In this context, the extinction of the V.I.s might be considered as **one of earliest and harshest attack against the infrastructure of modern secular Republic of Turkey.**

[\*] Source: <http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.2307/1186471?sid=21106102000243&uid=3739832&uid=4&uid=2&uid=3739256>

## **VILLAGE INSTITUTIONS, *continued...***

The Village Institutions were never considered to be re-opened and no government could fully overcome serious social issues as honor killings, domestic violence, and related consequences - reactions within family, relatives, village, town, city, and the country at large!

These practices have been some of the **unnamed and unpunished key fundamental barriers** in front of the basic girls/women rights and human developments in Turkey, in the Middle East, and the developing countries. The “full development process” and “human developments of Turkey” have been blocked since the extinction of the V.I.s.

According to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP-2007 & OECD-2008 Report page#17), **“women represent more than 70% of the world’s poor –population- due to unequal access to economic opportunities in both developed and developing countries”**. To that extent, although Turkey had presented a remarkable model during the first 15 years of its formation, and a foundation for human development and self-reliance and national level sustainability, it was completely dismantled by cutting off one of the most important components of the new secular country.

To add on the UNDP’s report, despite technological achievements and women being in the work force and all levels of society, particularly in the developing countries, and despite the UN’s MDGs from 2000 to 2015, only **3% (\*)** of women in the world owns property!

In this picture, **how could Turkey, the Middle East, and developing countries, and the world at large, be safe, and secure; and how could development be human centered in a sustainable and healthy environment?**

**It has become more evident that no one can be safe and sustain life for long unless the entire world political structure is transformed into a secular, democratic, free, human development-centered, transparent, and accountable one!**

**(\*)** According to International Center for Research on Women (<http://www.icrw.org/what-we-do/property-rights>) and Huffington Post ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/soraya-chemaly/women-own-1-of-the-worlds\\_b\\_1076715.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/soraya-chemaly/women-own-1-of-the-worlds_b_1076715.html)), this is only 1% or less than 1%.

# Women Rights in the Middle East

## According to the *Free Middle East*:

- Women's personal autonomy is severely limited due to deeply rooted patriarchal family systems in the Middle East. For example, in most Middle East nations, it is **exceedingly difficult for a woman to file for divorce, polygamy is often legal and socially acceptable, and there are even laws that ignore "honor killings" for disobediences of perceived unfitting conduct.**  
For example, in Turkey, according to the Prime Ministry's Human Rights Report, in Istanbul alone, there was one honor killing every week and UNICEF estimates that as much as two thirds of all killings in the Palestinian territories were honor killings.
- In Egypt, often considered one of the more liberal countries in the Middle East, UNICEF found that from 1997 to 2007, 96 percent of women between 15 and 49 have experienced female genital mutilation. In Palestine, Iraq, Jordan, Yemen, and Oman female genital mutilation is also an issue.
- **Source:** [http://www.freemiddleeast.com/blog/free\\_middle\\_east/the-bleak-reality-of-women%E2%80%99s-rights-in-the-middle-east-and-how-far-the-arab-spring-must-go/477](http://www.freemiddleeast.com/blog/free_middle_east/the-bleak-reality-of-women%E2%80%99s-rights-in-the-middle-east-and-how-far-the-arab-spring-must-go/477)

# WOMAN'S PLACE IN TURKEY

## AS A SECULAR EMERGING NEW DEMOCRATIC COUNTRY IN 1921

Based on the overarching theme of this conference and the “**Radicalization of Middle East**” angle as the key theme of this particular panel, I’d like to briefly introduce to you **Halide Edip Adivar** (1883-1964) from a less known perspective, who was also far ahead of her time not only in Turkey or the Middle East but in many parts of the world.

It is also very relevant to this very date, in particular, from the United Nations Millennium Development Goals’ (MDG#3) **Gender Equality and Empowerment Women** aspects. Halide Edip Adivar was the very first Turkish woman novelist, educator, activist, and nationalist. She also travelled and lectured in Europe and the United States from 1927 to 1937, and served in the Turkish Parliament from 1950 to 1954, and taught in Istanbul University as a professor of English.

**Clarence K. Streit**, in his book “**The Unknown Turks: Mustafa Kemal Paşa, Nationalist Ankara / Daily Life in Anatolia, January-March 1921**”, edited by **Prof. Heath W. Lowry** and published by Bahçeşehir University Press (Istanbul, 2011), states the following:

“The Nationalists are contemplating nothing less than sending a woman, **Halide Edib Hanım**, as **Turkish ambassador to the United States when relations are resumed between the two countries**. When I heard of this at Ankara, I made a point of asking various Turks whom I met what they thought of such an appointment. **None of them made any objection, and a number were outspoken in their approval of it. When I interviewed Mustafa Kemal Paşa I asked him if it were true that such a nomination might be made.**

# WOMAN'S PLACE IN TURKEY

## AS A SECULAR EMERGING NEW DEMOCRATIC COUNTRY IN 1921

*Atatürk's response to Clarence K. Streit was:*

**“We have women in Turkey who are as capable as men of occupying such high posts as that of ambassador. Halide *Hanım* is one of these women, and it is certain that she could fill the office perfectly. The occasion to nominate an ambassador to the United States, however, has not yet presented itself to us.”** (the U.S. appointed its very first Ambassador to Republic of Turkey in 1927!)

Based on **Streit's** first-hand accounts in Turkey in 1921, this is a very powerful evidence about **Atatürk's vision and plans to create a sustainable human-centered development and society on equal ground for women and men.** The founding father of Turkey was far ahead of the United States and western world at the time as illustrated by an important reference according to the *American Ambassadors* (2004), which indicates **President Harry Truman** appointed the first female ambassador in **1949**.

(<https://www.americanambassadors.org/publications/ambassadors-review/fall-2004/women-and-diplomacy>).

TURKEY, considering **Universal Education and Gender Equality and Women Rights** perspectives, and women's ever increasing role and importance in the modern Turkish society in the 1920's and 1930's, was a bonfire in the Middle East, developing countries and the Islamic world!

# NUMBER OF THE WOMAN AMBASSADORS AT THE UNITED NATIONS IN 2015

Despite the UN-Women (2011), despite the 2000 Millennium Development Goals for the 2015, despite the Secretary General Ban Ki Moon's championship for "**gender equality and empowering women**", and despite the ongoing process towards the **Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals for 2030** to be approved during the upcoming 70<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations' General Assembly in September 2015;

**do you know how many woman ambassador and "permanent representatives" hold the ambassadorial position at the United Nations out of the 193 member states as of March 2015?**

According to the UN's Blue Book (*the latest available version is dated December 2014*), there are **only 35 woman ambassadors** at the United Nations. And, out of **the 35 woman ambassadors, only 4 of them** are representing the **Middle East and Arabic countries**, which are:  
**Jordan, Oman, Qatar and United Arab Emirates.**

Despite Turkey has the **Right to Vote** for women since 1930, and despite Turkish women have the **right to be elected** since 1933, Turkey has not have had any woman ambassadors at the United Nations or in the United States to this date. However, there were **only 13 woman diplomats in the world of 1933, where Turkey and Nicaragua** were among the leading countries for ***gender equality and women empowerment***.

## Radicalization: WOMAN LANDSCAPES IN TURKEY - 1

With intense violence towards women and murders of women, Turkey, once again, has faced the *International Women Day* with a terrible score (March 8, 2015).

In 2014, **294 women** were murdered, **30 thousand women moved to shelters**, and 28 percent of these women were under **25 years of age**.

**At least 57 women were killed since January 1, 2015.**

Despite the changes in legislation, court decisions, order of protection for women in the form of keeping men out of the house, and despite the “**emergency button**” for such terrifying moments, violence against women cannot be prevented and murders of women cannot be stopped.

Özgecan Aslan’s brutal killing led to a series of major social protests both in Turkey and abroad. Consequently, it was expected that it would be a milestone to stop such future killings, but it did NOT. According to “*Güne Bakış*”, after Aslan’s brutal killing on February 22, 17 more women were killed in Turkey (dated: March 8, 2015).



## Radicalization: WOMAN LANDSCAPES IN TURKEY - 2

In order to draw attention to ever-increasing violence against girls and women in Turkey, *Women of Izmir* exhibited a memorial titled, *The Most Painful Wall*, for the *International Women's Day* on **March 8**, which presents names of **1169 girls and women who were murdered in Turkey since 2008**.

The *Most Painful of Wall* is open to public for a month in Konak, Izmir.



<http://www.diken.com.tr/kadinlar-turkiyenin-en-aci-duvarini-ordu/>

## Radicalization: WOMAN LANDSCAPES IN TURKEY - 3

Christina Asquith, in her report titled, “Turkish Men Get Away With Murder” in *New York Times* on February 23, 2015, writes:

“In 2014, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that Turkey had failed to investigate the suicide of a woman known to be abused by her husband. The judges found that “discriminatory judicial passivity in Turkey **created a climate that was conducive to domestic violence.**”

“A worrisome consequence is the rising number of perpetrators who apparently plan their crime with the intention of landing a sentence reduction. In December, 28-year-old Arzu Boztaş of Ankara was shot in her arms and legs by her husband. He then turned himself in, she believes, having planned his attack with the intention of appealing for a sentence reduction, **based on cases he had learned about.**”

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/24/opinion/ozgecan-aslan-and-violence-against-women-in-turkey.html? r=0>

As Asquith states in her report, the perpetrators have been encouraged for their crimes “**with the intention of landing a sentence reduction**” in Turkey. Despite the **Turkish Legal Code**, the authorities by the encouragement of both the government and religious affairs undermine it. In the case of “**honor killings**”, a total ignorance or protection within the family and community supported the criminals for several decades.

The defining indication of this very unfortunate and horrifying outcome has been implemented by AKP’s **three consecutive terms in power** towards the removal of “**separation of powers – secular structure of Turkey**” by merging the **state affairs with religious affairs** in the name of “**freedom of religion**” and “**radicalization of Turkey**” since 2002. Women have been used for changing the regime, and they have been heavily victimized during the constant retrogression of Turkey.



A reminder to President Erdoğan via Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon of the United Nations, where Turkey also served for two years on the Security Council:

“We must unite. Violence against women cannot be tolerated, in any form, in any context, in any circumstance, by any political leader or by any government.”

# World Economic Forum Gender Inequality lists Turkey at 125th among 142 countries

In her Al-Monitor report, Tulin Daloğlu brings it to our attention that it is as if there is an deliberate effort in signing of and/or ratifying the UN's International Treaties but not keeping up with it.

In her report, Daloğlu quotes President Erdoğan by saying: “President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan also said that **men and women can in no way be considered equal.**”

President Erdogan's statement [**highlighting the inequality between men and women**] **therefore contradicts all the international agreements that Turkey is a signatory of regarding gender equality**, the [joint statement](#) [by 57 women organizations] said.

**World Economic Forum Gender Inequality lists Turkey at 125th among 142 countries. Erdoğan's statement is nothing but proof that he would not implement any policies that would produce gender equality.”**

However, these sort of practices –NOT keeping up with the initial commitments, treaties/agreements— do not cause any penalty or consequences for the responsible member state signatories and/or relevant governments by the UN General Assembly or the Security Council or international community at large!

**Source:** <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/12/erdogan-women-men-not-equal-turkey.html##ixzz3TCTFpOxS>

# TUNISIA IS A RAISING STAR IN THE ARAB WORLD!

Turkey is holding **132<sup>nd</sup> place on the MDG #3 Gender Equality rank** in the world. This alone is a strong evidence on how Turkey has been rapidly forced away from a secularist well-established state to an Islamic state since 2002.

In contrast to Turkey, although the idea of the "Arab spring" has left a sour taste and negative ripple effects behind, there is a shining start for secularism and democracy for girls and women rights and equality as well as for Tunisia at large, according to the ***Conversation*** in the following report, dated December 24, 2014: **"Election complete, Tunisia is still a ray of hope for the Middle East** [...] The cradle of the Arab spring is once again leading the way. With the peaceful [election of Beji Caid Essebsi](#), **Tunisia, the first Arab country where popular protests proved to be enough to get rid of an autocrat, has just shown the world that an orderly management of a revolution was always an option on the table.**

In four short years, [Tunisia](#) has gone through the entire cycle of ousting an **apparently lifelong president, electing a constituent assembly, producing a new constitution, and organizing a round of fully democratic legislative and presidential elections."**

Source: <http://theconversation.com/election-complete-tunisia-is-still-a-ray-of-hope-for-the-middle-east-35800>

## **“Tunisia’s new Constitution: a breakthrough for women’s rights**

**Date :** 11 February 2014

“Tunisia’s new Constitution has captured international headlines. It enshrines many rights for women and is step in the right direction, according to many Tunisians.

**Sana Ben Achour**, women’s rights activist and law student, stresses that this Constitution is the first in the Arab world to give all Tunisians, women and men, the right to be presidential candidates. Similarly, she says that “Article 46 is proof of an impressive advance. From the outset, it safeguards the rights won by Tunisian women by referring to the Code du Statut Personnel (Personal Status Code) of 1959. Back then, the Code established a rights and freedoms panel unheard of in the Arab world. These included the right to divorce, to marriage by mutual consent and also the banning of polygamy.”

**Source:** <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2014/2/tunisias-new-constitution#sthash.j64j2OEF.dpuf>

# Voting Rights for Women in the Middle East

- **TURKEY – 1930**
- SYRIA – 1949
- EGYPT – 1956
- TUNISIA – 1959
- ALGERIA - 1962
- IRAN - 1963
- MOROCCO – 1963
- LIBYA – 1964
- LEBANON - 1952  
(An educational requirement was dropped in 1957).
- YEMEN 1970
- IRAQ - 1980
- SAUDI ARABIA – 2015 STILL IS NOT PROVIDED.
- KUWAIT – 2005
- ETHIOPIA - 1955
- SOMALIA - 1960



Voting Rights for Women in Turkey were secured 14 years before France (1944); 15 years before Japan (1945); 16 years before Italy (1946); 17 years before China (1947); 22 years before Greece (1952); and 41 years before Switzerland (1971).

In this context, the United States was the pioneer of Voting Rights for Women (1877) and Canada provided it in 1917.



"Humankind is made up of two entities: man and women. How could it be possible for the whole to progress if we let one half progress and neglect the other?"

*Mustafa Kemal ATATÜRK*

### According to UNDP's MDG Report on Turkey (2008)

"Women in Turkey are greatly under-represented in the political decision-making process. In terms of **women's representation in parliaments worldwide, Turkey ranks 107<sup>th</sup> among 175 countries** (source: UNDP, 2008). **Currently, women's representation in politics in Turkey remains below the average of European, American, Pacific and African countries, both at the parliamentary level (9.1%) and at that of local government (less than 2%).**"

This also clearly indicates that moving away from secularism, enforcing more fundamentalist religion-based life style in social life and working environment, as well as more control and suppression on girls and women hindered the progress of Turkey, which **used to be ahead of many countries in 1933!**

# UNITED NATIONS MEMBERSHIP

- **TURKEY – 24 October 1945**
- **EGYPT – 24 October 1945**
- **SYRIA – 24 October 1945**
- **LEBANON – 24 October 1945**
- **IRAQ – 21 December 1945**
- **SAUDI ARABIA – 24 October 1945**
- **ETHIOPIA – 13 November 1945**
- **IRAN – 24 October 1945**
- **YEMEN – 30 September 1947**
- **LIBYA – 14 December 1955**
- **MOROCCO – 12 November 1956**
- **TUNISIA – 12 November 1956**
- **SOMALIA – 20 September 1960**
- **ALGERIA – 8 October 1962**

# UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY & FIVE PERMANENT MEMBERS OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

The General Assembly, comprised of all **193 Members** of the United Nations, provides a unique forum for multilateral discussion of the full spectrum of international issues covered by the Charter.

[www.un/ga.org](http://www.un/ga.org)

The permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, also known as the **Permanent Five**, include the following five governments:

**China**

**France**

**Russia**

**The United Kingdom**

**The United States**

# UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

## Article 1.

**All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.** They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

## Article 2.

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

## Article 3.

Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

-- UN General Assembly on 10 December 1948

Source: <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/history.shtml>

## Brief introduction of the 2000 United Nations' Eight Millennium Development Goals to be achieved by 2015:

•The Millennium Declaration which enshrines eight time bound and measurable goals along with a roadmap to address key issues of human development by 2015.

These goals became known as the Millennium Development Goals:

- (1) Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger;
- (2) Achieve universal primary education;
- (3) **Promote gender equality and empower women;**
- (4) reduce child mortality;
- (5) **Improve maternal health;**
- (6) Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases;
- (7) Ensure environment sustainability and
- (8) Develop a Global Partnership for Development.



While two specific MDGs are dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment, MDG3 and MDG5, it has been gradually acknowledged that **gender equality is not only a goal in its own right; it is a prerequisite to the achievement of all goals.**

Radicalization of the Middle East: A Secular Perspective through Women and the UN Post-2015 Development Agenda

The Light Millennium - <http://www.lightmillennium.org>

NGO Associated with the United Nations Department of Public Information



# Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) to be achieved by all the MEMBER STATES of the United Nations by 2030



*Description of this goal from the UN Sustainable Development website:* “Rio+20 reaffirmed the commitment to strengthen international cooperation to address the persistent challenges related to sustainable development for all, in particular in developing countries. In this regard, it reaffirmed the need to achieve economic stability, sustained economic growth, **the promotion of social equity and the protection of the environment, while enhancing gender equality, women’s empowerment and equal employment for all, and the protection, survival and development of children to their full potential, including through education.**”

Yet as proposal; the 2000 MDGs Eight Goals increased to 17 goals which are still in negotiation process to be approved during the 70<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly in September 2015. In the Post- 2015 Agenda; MDG Goal#3 transferred to Goal# 5 as: ACHIVE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS

Source: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgsproposal>

**Radicalization of the Middle East: A Secular Perspective through Women and the UN Post-2015 Development Agenda**

The Light Millennium - <http://www.lightmillennium.org>

NGO Associated with the United Nations Department of Public Information



*The following sections are taken from the opening speech by Executive Director of UN Women Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, at UN Women Executive Board's 2015 first regular session on 9 February, in New York, which are very relevant to Syria, Yemen and South Sudan as well as from the UN's Post 2015 Development Agenda perspectives within the context of gender equality and women rights issues:*

**“We continue to extend support to Syrian women in the area of livelihood and psychosocial support targeting displaced women. We work with women from all sides of the divide.**

We have also recently established a presence in Yemen, a truly challenging country to be a girl or a woman.

UN Women's programming in South Sudan has expanded significantly since last year, and we thank the Governments of Denmark, Japan and Sweden for their support.

In my recent meeting two weeks ago with the very impressive South Sudan Women for Peace, we were asked to assist with the consolidation of an inclusive front of women for peace.

...

Civil society has declared its commitment to this time bound fight to end gender inequality.

**We call for Planet 50:50 by 2030.**

*(UN-Women was formed in July 2010)*

**Source:** [www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2015/02/un-women-executive-director-inaugurates-first-regular-executive-board-session-of-2015#sthash.pbJg5D16.dpuf](http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2015/02/un-women-executive-director-inaugurates-first-regular-executive-board-session-of-2015#sthash.pbJg5D16.dpuf)

# POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

Ms. **Mlambo-Ngcuka** of the UN Women further emphasizes the importance of women rights as an integral part of the Post 2015 Sustainable Development Agenda towards the ultimate success:

**“gender equality is pre-requisite for the success of the sustainable development goals.”**

“The post-2015 development agenda is an unmissable chance to bring together all countries to make a universal, transformative deal and effectively fight inequalities, poverty, vulnerability and environmental degradation, so that all countries make progress in the three pillars: development, peace and security, and human rights.

A strong, dedicated gender equality goal, complemented by gender-sensitive targets and indicators in other goals must be part of the post-2015 agenda.

**Four components of the post-2015 development framework are being negotiated in the UN General Assembly:**

the declaration,

the goals and targets,

the monitoring and review,

and means of implementation and global partnership.

All must contribute to the achievement of gender equality, the empowerment of women, and the realization of women’s and girls’ human rights.

...

**There is a greater responsibility for men in their dominant leadership roles to make far-reaching contributions.”**

**Source:** <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2015/02/un-women-executive-director-inaugurates-first-regular-executive-board-session-of-2015#sthash.pbJg5D16.dpuf>

# INTERNATIONAL TREATIES AND COMMITMENTS ON GIRLS & WOMEN RIGHTS

- Women Rights and Gender Equality have been declared in several international treaties. The most relevant to this presentation “women perspective”, is the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). It is also called the **international bill of rights for women**. Out of 194 Member States of the United Nations, **187 Member States have ratified it**.
- 7 – The number of countries that have NOT ratified CEDAW, including the **United States, Iran, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan** and two small pacific Island nations (**Palau and Tonga**).
- Accordingly, except above mentioned four Islamic countries (South Sudan both Christianity and Muslim), CEDAW is ratified by Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and many other Islamic countries.



*Continued...*

## INTERNATIONAL TREATIES AND COMMITMENTS ON GIRLS & WOMEN RIGHTS

- Despite there are several other fundamental international commitments for girls and women equal rights, development and peace for all women everywhere beside the CEDAW such as:
- **The 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action**
- The convention on the **rights of the Child** which enshrines some provisions **which protect women's rights (the girl child) such as protection from early and forced marriage and the rights to education.**
- The unanimous adoption of the **United Nations Millennium Declaration** and the **Security Council Resolution 1325** on women, peace and security in 2000.

Then how come these countries have not kept their commitment and promise on the CEDAW since 1979 that was not only to the UN but also to their own peoples and nation? If they had, we would not have faced the ever-escalating and ongoing radicalization in Turkey and the Middle East at large during the last 15 years!

# UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL – Res# 1325

## Landmark resolution on Women, Peace and Security

- The Security Council adopted [resolution \(S/RES/1325\)](#) on women and peace and security on 31 October 2000.

The resolution reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace-building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction and stresses the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security.

Resolution 1325 urges all actors to increase the participation of women and incorporate gender perspectives in all United Nations peace and security efforts. It also calls on all parties to conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, in situations of armed conflict. The resolution provides a number of important operational mandates, with implications for Member States and the entities of the United Nations system.

- **Source:** <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/>

Besides all the aforementioned international key treaties, commitments, agreements, in order to become a member state of the UN, each country must be agreeing on and willing to support the UN's Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In this sense, the key question is: **HOW COME most of the UN Member States, in particular the ones from the Middle East and Islamic world, have been failing to keep their commitments and promises to their own peoples and nations?**

And, HOW COME it has gotten worse for girls and women in Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Sudan, and Yemen since 2000 ?

Except for Somalia, Iran, Sudan, South Sudan, these are the very same countries who have ratified the CEDAW, Security Council's #1325, and more recently and importantly, the 2000 Millennium Development Goals including the goals #3 and 5.

All these countries, who have been failing to keep their commitments, act as if their signatures and/or ratifications do not mean anything or have any value or they have no responsibility to the UN or their own peoples/nations or the international community.





**“As a nuclear power - as the only nuclear power to have used a nuclear weapon - the United States has a moral responsibility to act.”**

**Barack OBAMA  
President of the United States**

## **P R O P O S A L**

**A proposal to the United Nations from an NGO perspective: The UN will be able to fully realize all the international treaties, MDGs, and the upcoming Post-2015 SDGs, only if a big penalty is imposed on countries who do not keep their commitments despite having signed and/or ratified the UN Resolutions, Conventions, and Treaties!**

In conjunction with this, the UN Security Council must be reformed in a similar structure to the UN General Assembly, or the UN General Assembly must be further empowered in the same fashion as the UN Security Council.

If these ideas seem unrealistic, then it will be very difficult, if not impossible, to achieve the MDGs as well as the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals in this increasingly worrisome political climate of the world that has been shaping not only the present time but also several decades to come!

**As a result, the decade-long “radicalization” process and the negative current political climate for girls and women in the Middle East and the Islamic world may further hinder the ability to achieve the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.**

**Radicalization of the Middle East: A Secular Perspective through Women and the UN Post-2015 Development Agenda**

Bircan Ünver, The Light Millennium - <http://www.lightmillennium.org>

NGO Representative at the United Nations Department of Public Information

## CONCLUSION:

- In this current violent, divided, tense, unjust, and unequal environment, an overarching **URGENT ACTION PLAN** towards the **GLOBAL SECULARIZATION** Process must be extensively promoted through the UN System. In another words, **“state and religious affairs” must be separated globally through a global Agenda such as the 2000 MDGs and Post-2015 SDGs.**
- Only **‘a global secular democratic political structure’** will provide a safe, secure, and healthy environment for girls’ and women’s equality and basic right to live against **“dogmas/local customs, tradition, inherited and religious values”**.
- The **Earth and the Humanity** will be safe and sustained only when the **entire world's political structure is transformed into a secular and true democratic political system in transparency .**
- Fundamentally, whatever this plan might be called, **it should embrace and promote the separation of powers along with all forms of religions and sects and provided rights on the equal grounds.**
- However, it should **not tolerate any religion's superiority over others under no circumstances!**
- **WOMEN**, despite making up **more than 50 % of almost each and every country’s population**, have become a **minority and marginalized** in their society in terms of equal rights, education, property rights, and have been secondary in decision making mechanisms within family, work-place, society, government, media and corporate world!

**Radicalization of the Middle East: A Secular Perspective through Women and the UN Post-2015 Development Agenda**

Bircan Ünver, The Light Millennium - <http://www.lightmillennium.org>  
NGO Representative at the United Nations Department of Public Information



With all above said, I'd like to conclude with the following quote by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, who has been always a shining inspiration to who I am today, and this presentation as well:

***“Humanity is made up of two entities: man and woman.  
How could it be possible for the whole to progress if we let one  
half progress and neglect the other?”***

***Thank You for your attention.***

Special Thanks To:

**Prof. Özay Mehmet, Prof. Murat Saatçioğlu, Bilgin Büberoğlu  
Council of Turkish Canadians & Carleton University | Faculty of Public Affairs**

**Figen Bingül**

**Barış Ünver**

Please visit us at:

**[www.lightmillennium.org](http://www.lightmillennium.org)**

E-mail to:

**[contact@lightmillennium.org](mailto:contact@lightmillennium.org)**



OPEN CALL FOR PARTICIPATION AND COLLABORATION

# MY ACTION PLAN

*A New Initiative by*

The Light Millennium - <http://www.lightmillennium.org>

## What is *YOUR* Action Plan towards the United Nations Post-2015 Development Agenda?

The Light Millennium INVITES you to present YOUR ideas, work, action plan, and visions towards the United Nations' Sustainable 'HUMAN' Development Goals in order to make them visible and available globally. We are seeking your collaboration and partnership!

This project was launched by The Light Millennium during the 65th Annual DPI/NGO Conference, in a *Workshop* in the Trusteeship Council Chamber - United Nations, New York on Aug. 28, 2014.

**Bi-annual submission deadlines: May 31 & October 31**

For your submission or to join the TASK FORCE, *please email:* MYACTION@LIGHTMILLENNIUM.ORG

For the full text of the project, please visit **The Light Millennium's** website at:

<http://www.lightmillennium.org/myaction/list.html>

*For your question or inquiries, please e-mail us at:* MYACTION@lightmiLLeNNium.Org

Twitter #myaction2030 – Facebook: **What is my action Plan?**

**UN Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals (Open Working Group's Proposal):**

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgsproposal>



WHAT IS MY ACTION PLAN? Project - TASK FORCE - *Chair:* H.E. Ambassador Carlos E. GARCIA GONZALEZ - *General Director:* Bircan ÜNVER

The Light Millennium (LM) is a non-religious, non-political, not-for-profit (501-c-3), non-governmental, independent public benefit multi-media and culture organization. The LM is an NGO associated with the United Nations Department of Public Information (since 2005). Officially formed in New York State (based in Queens, NYC) in 2001.

A New Initiative by The Light Millennium ©2014-2015 - Flyer version #5 - March 2015.

# REFERENCES

Secularism.org.uk

<http://www.un.org/press/en/2009/sgsm12127.doc.htm>

<http://www.oecd.org/social/40881538.pdf>

The "Village Institutes" in Turkey, Alexandre Vexliard and Kemal Aytaç - *Comparative Education Review*: Vol. 8, No. 1 (Jun., 1964), pp. 41-47, [The University of Chicago Press](#)

<http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.2307/1186471?sid=21106102000243&uid=3739832&uid=4&uid=2&uid=3739256>

Clarence K. Streit's "The Unknown Turks: Mustafa Kemal Paşa, Nationalist Ankara / Daily Life in Anatolia, January-March 1921", edited by Prof. Heath W. Lowry, published Bahçeşehir University Press, Istanbul, 2011

<https://www.americanambassadors.org/publications/ambassadors-review/fall-2004/women-and-diplomacy>

[http://www.freemiddleeast.com/blog/free\\_middle\\_east/the-bleak-reality-of-women%E2%80%99s-rights-in-the-middle-east-and-how-far-the-arab-spring-must-go/477](http://www.freemiddleeast.com/blog/free_middle_east/the-bleak-reality-of-women%E2%80%99s-rights-in-the-middle-east-and-how-far-the-arab-spring-must-go/477)

Erdogan: Women – men are not equal

<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/12/erdogan-women-men-not-equal-turkey.html##ixzz3TCMz4xKj>

<http://www.diken.com.tr/kadinlar-turkiyenin-en-aci-duvarini-ordu/>

<http://www.guncelbakis.com/haber/1714/ozgecandan-sonra-17-can.html>

[http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/24/opinion/ozgecan-aslan-and-violence-against-women-in-turkey.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/24/opinion/ozgecan-aslan-and-violence-against-women-in-turkey.html?_r=0)

<http://theconversation.com/election-complete-tunisia-is-still-a-ray-of-hope-for-the-middle-east-35800>

UN – Blue Book

[www.un/ga.org](http://www.un/ga.org)

Universal Declaration of Human Rights: <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/history.shtml>

<https://www.americanambassadors.org/publications/ambassadors-review/fall-2004/women-and-diplomacy>

<http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2014/2/tunisi-as-new-constitution#sthash.j64j2OEF.dpuf>

Voting Rights for Women: <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/suffrage.htm>

<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>

[www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2015/02/un-women-executive-director-inaugurates-first-regular-executive-board-session-of-2015#sthash.pbJg5D16.dpuf](http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2015/02/un-women-executive-director-inaugurates-first-regular-executive-board-session-of-2015#sthash.pbJg5D16.dpuf)

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/>

**Radicalization of the Middle East: A Secular Perspective through Women and the UN Post-2015 Development Agenda**

Researched – Composed and Presented by: Bircan Ünver, The Light Millennium - <http://www.lightmillennium.org>

Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada – March 14, 2015.

