

STATEMENT : INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

On Sunday 8 March 2026, the Amman Center for Human Rights Studies (ACHRS) joins the international community in observing International Women's Day under the theme of 'Rights. Justice. Action.' At a time when justice systems worldwide have been weakened by conflict, corruption and political instability, women and girls often pay the highest price. Globally, no country has fully closed the legal gap between men and women; women hold only 64 per cent of the legal rights afforded to men, and in nearly 70 per cent of surveyed countries, women face greater barriers to accessing justice than men. Moreover, nearly three out of four nations still legally allow girls to be forced into marriage, and 44% of countries do not guarantee equal pay for work of equal value. These gaps affect women's everyday lives, limiting their ability to live with security and dignity.

Although barriers to justice for women exist in every region, women and girls in countries affected by armed conflict, political instability or humanitarian crises are disproportionately impacted. For the 676 million women and girls living within 50 kilometres of active conflict zones, justice systems are often absent, corrupt or highly ineffective, with perpetrators frequently acting with impunity.

The ACHRS therefore concerns itself with access to justice for women as this directly relates to our priorities, including women's rights, youth rights, the right to life and the right to social protection. In the Middle East and Arab region, which form the primary focus of the ACHRS's work, ingrained gender bias, ineffective judicial systems and limited access to affordable legal representation continue to restrict women's ability to seek justice and undermine their equality before the law.

Equal justice means more than access to courts. It also means that:

1. Laws protecting women are effectively enforced in practice
2. Child marriage is clearly prohibited and prevented
3. Family, labour and healthcare laws guarantee equal rights for women
4. Justice systems operate without gender bias and support survivors
5. Legal aid is affordable and easily accessible to those who need it

However, women seeking justice continue to face significant barriers, including:

1. Being turned away, disbelieved or revictimised when they seek redress
2. Institutional bias or gender stereotyping within police, courts and legal institutions.
3. Legal and transportation costs that make pursuing cases difficult
4. Childcare responsibilities that limit women's ability to take legal action
5. Frequently facing stigma, blame or silence instead of protection

When justice systems do not work properly, discrimination and violence often go unpunished. For many women, the costs of legal action, entrenched gender bias, the fear of stigma and the lack of support make seeking justice extremely difficult. In these conditions, equality remains out of reach and the rule of law offers little real protection.

The ACHRS therefore calls on states, especially those in the Arab region, to:

1. Strengthen and fully implement legal frameworks that guarantee women's equal rights under the law
2. Adopt and enforce laws and policies that protect women and girls from abuse, violence and discrimination.
3. Remove financial and procedural barriers to justice, including excessive court fees and other obstacles to accessing courts.
4. Implement and adequately fund affordable legal aid programmes
5. Protect justice institutions from political interference and uphold the rule of law

The ACHRS remains committed to highlighting the structural barriers that prevent women and girls from accessing justice through its programmes that aim to help women and girls reach their full potential. Without fair courts, affordable legal support and laws that guarantee equality for women, commitments to gender equality remain symbolic. Improving justice systems, reforming discriminatory laws and ensuring that women can report violations safely and without judgement are essential steps toward real and lasting change.