

Hello, and welcome to As It Is.

I'm George Grow.

Today we tell about struggles facing lawyers in South Sudan. They are helping the country's government control rebels -- within the rule of law.

Next, we hear a report about the dangers of pregnancy to girls under age 18.

And finally, we remember Grace Kelly, the American film actress who became a European princess.

But first, we turn to a young nation's struggles to establish law and order -- how lawyers are helping.

South Sudan won its independence from Sudan in 2011 after many years of bitter fighting. Today, a government made up of

former warlords -- former militia leaders -- is seeking to control life-long rebels within the rule of law.

At the center of this new battle are about 250 lawyers. They are working hard in one of the most dangerous jobs in the country.

Deng Awur is the head of South Sudan's only law college. He works in a dark office at Juba University. The office has no electricity, and his law books serve as the only library.

Mr. Awur says about 80 people will finish their law school studies and graduate this year. Their skills are deeply needed if the government is to establish the rule of law.

About 250 lawyers have returned to South Sudan from overseas. Mr. Awur says their skills are as mixed as those of members of the country's legal systems. South Sudan is moving back to a common law system. The system was first established in Sudan during British colonial rule. Islamic law came to Sudan in the 1980s.

But more than 60 tribes are using differing customary laws. Mr. Awur says those systems treat half the population unfairly.

“A woman cannot inherit property of her husband or her father. But there are real, real issues for women, and laws -- the law is clear, the law is clear. The law is not taking chances with anybody. So we hope through time people will be enlightened to accept that reality that human beings are the same. The law is for everybody, the constitution is for everyone, and there is no bias. We don't want any bias against or for anybody.”

Juba University has stopped teaching Sharia law. In the past, Sharia was one of its main subjects.

Victor Lowilla directs legal aid at the South Sudan Law Society. He says Sharia still influences current laws and must be removed.

Mr. Lowilla wants all of South Sudan's laws to be re-examined. He wants to prevent chiefs from declaring strong sentences. And he calls for ending a number of cruel practices that continue under customary law.

For example, a custom called “ghost marriages” forces women to marry dead men. This tradition calls for a young girl to be given as payment to the family of a murdered man.

Mr. Lowilla also notes that lack of lawyers has left many people in jail, unable to get hearings before judges.

But the shortage is most worrying for the hundreds of people awaiting execution. These prisoners are individuals suspected of crimes like murder or rebellion.

Mr. Lowilla says prison officials help some of them. And he says others who have enough money can get a lawyer to help with their appeals.

“But most of them have no lawyers to represent them during their cases. They have no lawyers to do their appeals. So they have no lawyers to write for them, even, I mean, to write the president to pardon them. ”

Lawyers often must travel great distances to help people who need representation. Victor Lowilla says 80 percent of South Sudanese live in rural areas. Yet 85 percent of the country's lawyers live in Juba, the capital.

In one case in Western Bahr el Ghazal, five lawyers were defending 50 suspects after protests in which security forces attacked civilians. The lawyers received death threats or were threatened outside the court.

I'm George Grow.

Now, on to problems of pregnancy and childbirth for teenage girls...

A United Nations report says millions of adolescent girls suffer serious long-term health and social problems from pregnancy. The UN Population Fund recently released its State of the World Population report in Geneva, Switzerland. It found that 7.3 million girls under age 18 give birth worldwide every year. The young mothers include two million girls younger than 14.

Kelly Jean Kelly has more.

Giving birth to a baby should be a happy time in a woman's life. But for millions of young girls around the world, early pregnancy and childbirth result in serious problems.

The UN's State of the World Population 2013 report finds that in developing countries, 20,000 girls under 18 give birth every day. The report estimates that 70,000 young women in developing countries die each year during pregnancy and childbirth.

The director of the UN Population Fund in Geneva, Alanna Armitage, says young girls are more likely to be forced to marry and have sex. She says death among mothers under age 15 from low- and middle-income countries is twice that of older women.

The report demonstrates the economic results of adolescent pregnancy. For example, the report considers Kenya. It says the Kenyan economy would have improved greatly if the more than 200,000 young mothers studied had been employed instead of

getting pregnant. It says the economy would have gained 3.4 billion dollars.

The report finds that in every area of the world, poor, undereducated girls from rural areas are more likely to become pregnant than richer, urban girls. UNFPA Senior Maternal Health Advisor Luc de Bernis says the young mothers most threatened with death live in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

He also notes that many young women die from getting abortions -- the medical end of pregnancy.

The report says adolescent pregnancy is a much bigger problem for the developing world than for developed nations. But, it finds that pregnancy for young girls is still important in richer nations. And it says society should help girls and young women instead of blaming them for getting pregnant.

I'm Kelly Jean Kelly.

Now, time to remember the birth anniversary of an American actress who became a lasting symbol of beauty and glamour.

Grace Patricia Kelly was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on November 12th, 1929. She is remembered for many films like "Rear Window", "Dial M for Murder" and "To Catch a Thief." She won an Academy Award for her work in "Country Girl."

Grace Kelly gave up her career to marry Prince Rainier of Monaco. They had three children. In 1982, Princess Grace died after an automobile accident. She was only 52 years old.

I'm George Grow.

Thanks for joining us on As It Is.

Be listening to VOA for the latest world news at the top of the hour, Universal Time.



Contact information for VOA Learning English:

Postal address:

**VOA Learning English
Room 3400
330 Independence Ave SW
Washington, DC 20237
United States of America**

Email us at: LearningEnglish@voanews.com

Or go to our website -- learningenglish.voanews.com -- and click
"Contact Us."

Follow us on Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn, iTunes and Twitter at
VOA Learning English

<http://learningenglish.voanews.com/>