

From VOA LEARNING ENGLISH, welcome to AS IT IS! Hello, I'm Steve Ember.

Today we tell about a study showing some of the world's richest countries need to take better care of their children.

In Egypt, some Islamists are blaming women's behavior for sexual harassment and attacks.

And in Chile, medical experts are set to examine the remains of Pablo Neruda. It's in response to an accusation that the great poet was murdered more than forty years ago.

The United Nations Children's Fund says some of the richest countries of the world are doing a poor job of protecting their children. UNICEF officials spoke after the release of a new report. Kelly Jean Kelly has more about the report and its findings.

UNICEF says the Netherlands and four Nordic countries -- Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden -- top its ratings of the best developed countries for children to live in. Four southern European countries -- Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain -- are in the lower half of the ratings. Romania is at the bottom.

The United States is one of the world's richest countries. But it was in 26th place on the list.

Chris de Neubourg is chief of social and

economic policy at UNICEF's Office of Research. He says the United States receives a failing grade because

"You have an excellent education system, excellent health system, but only not everybody has access to it and the equality in the access is very different between the U.S. and other rich countries."

Mr. de Neubourg says the United States does better in comparison to European countries with lower rates of alcohol abuse and bullying among children. But he says the teenage pregnancy rate in the United States is double that in Europe. And he says baby and child death rates are also two times as high.

Writers of the UNICEF report say more research is needed to investigate the effect of the worldwide economic crisis on children. They say there is evidence that child poverty and the difference between rich and poor already are increasing in some countries. They say many poor children are permanently leaving school and are not employed or involved in any training programs. I'm Kelly Jean Kelly.

You are listening to AS IT IS. I'm Steve Ember.

Women's rights groups in Egypt are fighting

attempts by some Islamists to blame women for increased sexual harassment. In Egypt today, the number of women reporting sexual harassment or sexual violence has increased greatly. So, too, it seems is the number of Egyptians blaming women for the abuse they suffer.

Farah Shash is with the Nadim Center for Victims of Violence. She says Egyptian society is becoming increasingly conservative and controlled by men. She says a woman can be criticized for her clothing, for laughing, or just for being outdoors.

"She is the one to be blamed because she is dressed 'inappropriately' or she walks 'inappropriately' or she laughs loudly or just because she is on the street."

Egyptian religious and political leaders like Sheikh Gamel Saber have expressed just those opinions. He helped to organize the al-Ansar Party. He suggests that women can expect disrespectful treatment when they walk down the street wearing tight clothing. He says he does not want to say harassment is a natural response. But in his words, men "are not entirely to be blamed."

The Egyptian government has sought to

distance itself from such statements. President Mohamed Morsi launched an effort to help protect and strengthen women's rights. But rights groups say the effort is more talk than reality.

Recently, the Muslim Brotherhood rejected a proposed United Nations declaration condemning violence against women.

Mr. Morsi came from the Muslim Brotherhood. He is part of a growing Islamist movement in Egypt. The movement has roots in religious beliefs that rights activists say are not in keeping with Egyptian traditions.

Nehab Abo el Komsan directs the Egyptian Center for Women's Rights. She praises the country's religious leaders.

"We have lots of very open-minded sheikhs who teach us about Islam and women, and we do not find any controversy between women's rights and lots of interpretations of Islam."

She says many women are now starting to understand why political leaders work on restricting women's rights. She says the politicians mean to take attention away from problems like the economy.

From VOA Learning English, You're listening to AS IT IS. I'm Steve Ember.

Medical experts are set to examine the remains

of Chilean poet Pablo Neruda, who died in 1973. The examination is part of an investigation of claims he may have been poisoned during the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet. Test results will not be announced for at least three months. June Simms has more.

In addition to his poetry, Pablo Neruda was active in politics and belonged to the Communist Party. At one time, he served in Chile's Senate.

The writer died 12 days after the military overthrow of President Salvador Allende in 1973. The president belonged to Chile's Socialist Party. The overthrow brought General Augusto Pinochet to power.

It was said that Pablo Neruda died of prostate cancer. But there were also unconfirmed reports that he was murdered. In 2011, Chile opened an investigation of claims by Neruda's former driver. The driver accused agents of the Pinochet government of poisoning the poet.

Pablo Neruda won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1971. He is probably best known for his poem about the history and people of South America. It is called "Canto General" or, a general song. He also won recognition for his love poems.

Critics say Neruda was a public poet – a writer

who captured everyday happenings, objects and people in his work. A good example is his poem about the death of his dog. Listen now as Christopher Cruise reads a few translated lines from the poem, "A Dog Has Died."

"My dog has died.

I buried him in the garden

next to a rusted old machine.

Someday I'll join him right there,

But now he's gone with his shaggy coat,

His bad manners and his cold nose."

And that's our program for today. For the latest world news, join us at the top of the hour Universal Time for VOA News on radio and here on our web site. I'm Steve Ember. Thanks for joining us.