

## Let's be diverse but docile: The "Revolution of joy" has arrived<sup>1</sup> A few reflections on the new Argentinean government's sexual politics

On December 10, 2015, the *Cambiamos* coalition – of which the leading party is PRO (*Propuesta Republicana* - Republican Proposal)<sup>2</sup> was elected to power in Argentina at the national level and in the two main districts, the Buenos Aires Province and the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires (CABA in Spanish), which ] PRO had ruled for the last 8 years. In a very close vote, PRO defeated the FPV (*Frente para la Victoria* - Victory Front), which had ruled the country since 2003 in three successive administrations (Néstor Kirchner 2004-2007 and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner 2008-2011, 2012-2015), by 51% over 49%. In response to a kind invitation by Sexual Policy Watch, we will try to briefly analyze (with a high degree of speculation, given how recent is the change of government) what sexual politics PRO might implement.

### A few legislative facts

Given that PRO has been ruling Argentina for only the last three months, and even though the indicators of what their actions might be are pretty evident, it is still useful to present a few facts regarding the party's past behavior on sexual rights issues. The chart below shows how PRO representatives have voted in Parliament on some of the most significant sexual rights laws passed over the last 12 years:<sup>3</sup>

Law	House of Representatives			
	In favour	Against	Abstained	Absent
Egalitarian (same-sex) marriage (2010) <sup>4</sup>	4	6 (including the current Vice-President)		1
Gender Identity Law <sup>5</sup> (2011)	8	1		2
Law against Trafficking of Persons (2012) <sup>6</sup>	6			5
Assisted Reproduction Act (2013). <sup>7</sup>	3		8 (including the current Vice-President)	

<sup>1</sup> This expression ("*la revolución de la alegría*") was used by PRO during the electoral campaign.

<sup>2</sup> An excellent analysis of the PRO as a party, conducted by two academics who have studied the party in depth, can be found (in Spanish) in [Unidos y diversificados: la construcción del partido PRO en la CABA](#), by Gabriel Vommaro and Sergio Daniel Morresi (Universidad Nacional de General Sarmiento, Argentina)

<sup>3</sup> In the period in which these laws were passed, the PRO had a bloc of 11 MPs in the House of Representatives and no representation in the Senate.

<sup>4</sup> <http://chequeado.com/el-explicador/es-verdad-que-el-pro-voto-en-contra-de-las-leyes-que-marca-la-campana-de-scioli/>

<sup>5</sup> <http://frentenacionaleydeidentidad.blogspot.com.ar/>

<sup>6</sup> <http://chequeado.com/el-explicador/es-verdad-que-el-pro-voto-en-contra-de-las-leyes-que-marca-la-campana-de-scioli/>

<sup>7</sup> <http://chequeado.com/el-explicador/es-verdad-que-el-pro-voto-en-contra-de-las-leyes-que-marca-la-campana-de-scioli/>

## A few implementation facts

As previously mentioned, the PRO has ruled the CABA for the last 8 years. As the party has come to national power without having administered any other district, all the "implementation facts" listed below are examples taken from the CABA administration.

- *Budget*
  - The total amount assigned to programs related to sexual rights in the CABA constituted 0.0049 % of the total city government budget. Most of those resources were devoted to HIV prevention. In 2013, only 500 young persons used the Sexual and Reproductive Health Counselling services in the city and 127 took part in community workshops<sup>8</sup>.
- *Sexuality education:*
  - In 2010, CABA had spent only 0.1% of the budget assigned to this area and trained only 2,000 teachers out of the more than 55,000 active in the city.<sup>9</sup>
- *Abortion*
  - In 2012, the PRO leader Mauricio Macri (current President and then CABA Mayor) vetoed the Non-Punishable (Legal) Abortion Protocol passed by the City's Legislature to comply with the decision issued by the Supreme Court: rape is always an admissible cause for non-punishable abortions and does not require prior approval by a Court<sup>10</sup>. The Legislature passed this Protocol in response to another one, issued by Jorge Lemus, then the head of the CABA Department of Health (who is presently the Minister of Health), which severely restricted the standards set by the Supreme Court<sup>11</sup>. A year later (2013), Macri's veto was declared unconstitutional by a judge (2013)<sup>12</sup>. But in February 2016, with the PRO already in power, the Chamber of Appeals re-established the Protocol created by Minister Lemus by annulling the effects of the 2016 laws approved by the Legislature.
- *Sexual and reproductive health services*
  - In those CABA communes<sup>13</sup> where socio-economic indicators are very low and the population is highly dependent on the public health system, the percentage of teenage mothers that have

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<sup>8</sup> Salud sexual y reproductiva en la Ciudad: presupuesto y resultados". June 2014.

[http://lafabricaportena.com/salud/ley-de-educacion-sexual-de-la-ciudad-presupuesto-y-resultados/-VplVM\\_HtmrY](http://lafabricaportena.com/salud/ley-de-educacion-sexual-de-la-ciudad-presupuesto-y-resultados/-VplVM_HtmrY)

<sup>9</sup> Foro por los Derechos Reproductivos, "[Comunicación conjunta para el Examen Periódico Universal](#)", Argentina, 2012 (paragraph 28, p.6)

<sup>10</sup> Centro de Información Judicial: "La Corte Suprema precisó el alcance del aborto no punible y dijo que estos casos no deben ser judicializados". March 13, 2012. <http://www.cij.gov.ar/nota-8754-La-Corte-Suprema-preciso-el-alcance-del-aborto-no-punible-y-dijo-que-estos-casos-no-deben-ser-judicializados.html>

<sup>11</sup> Mariana Carbajal: "Para dificultar la interrupción". Página 12, February 16, 2016.

<http://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/sociedad/3-291766-2016-02-04.html>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.infojusnoticias.gov.ar/nacionales/ciudad-esta-vigente-la-ley-de-aborto-no-punible-786.html>

<sup>13</sup> The Buenos Aires Autonomous City is divided into 15 administrative districts known as "communes" (*comunas*)

proper medical care during childbirth is extremely low: between 13.6 and 14.6%.<sup>14</sup>

- The chart below<sup>15</sup> compares the provision of services in the CABA's public hospitals with those offered in two other provinces with a similarly-sized population (Córdoba and Santa Fe)<sup>16</sup>

	Pre-and post-abortion care	Sexual violence	Tubal ligation and vasectomy	Adolescent sexual health	Counselling
CABA	0	3	13	18	19
Córdoba	55	4	20	4	40
Santa Fe	29	29	29	29	0

## A few reflections

Given the data shared above -- and of what we believe we know from being political subjects of and in Argentina -- there may not be yet any definitive affirmations that can be made. However, there is much to explore in terms of what these facts may mean and the tendencies they might reveal.

The PRO can not be said to be an univocally “right-wing conservative” party , and even less a “conservative Catholic” party. In our opinion, it is first and foremost a party that represents the financial and agro-exporting local elites and their foreign partners. Its main goal is to secure good business conditions for its members and supporters<sup>17</sup>. This is what really matters to the PRO. Other policies will be subordinated to the priorities defined in the realm of these elites’ interests.

In is true that some PRO members, like the current Vice-President and the Buenos Aires provincial governor, both of them women, have links to and share the ideologies of the most conservative branches of the Catholic Church. Other party members, however,

<sup>14</sup> "Salud sexual y reproductiva en la Ciudad: presupuesto y resultados". June 2014.

[http://lafabricaportena.com/salud/ley-de-educacion-sexual-de-la-ciudad-presupuesto-y-resultados/-\\_VpIvM\\_HtmrY](http://lafabricaportena.com/salud/ley-de-educacion-sexual-de-la-ciudad-presupuesto-y-resultados/-_VpIvM_HtmrY)

<sup>15</sup> Programa Nacional de Salud Sexual y Procreación Responsable. "Políticas de Salud Sexual y Salud Reproductiva. Avances y desafíos. Balance 2003-2011", p. 50.

[http://www.unfpa.org.ar/sitio/images/stories/pdf/2015-06\\_original-balances-syr.pdf](http://www.unfpa.org.ar/sitio/images/stories/pdf/2015-06_original-balances-syr.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> According to the last census performed in Argentina (2010), CABA had a population of 2,890,151; Córdoba, 3,308,876 and Santa Fe 3,194,527 people. [https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Censo\\_argentino\\_de\\_2010](https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Censo_argentino_de_2010)

<sup>17</sup> In Fernando Krakowiak, "El país atendido por sus propios dueños" (Página 12, January 3 2016) there is a description of the large number of CEOs from big companies that are now in high-level positions in the Argentinean government (or public owned companies).

are liberal with regards to both economic and social matters. This is why they could, for instance, vote in favor of same-sex marriage.

Consequently, policies that imply no costs for the State and enjoy social approval run no risk under the PRO administration. A good example is same-sex marriage: if nothing else because it propels businesses and confers upon Argentina a reputation of being "modern", a terminology that the PRO insistently associates with its political messages and practices.

In relation to those topics that are indifferent to public opinion, or that have not achieved a wide social consensus, the PRO allows itself to please its most conservative quarters. This is the case, for example, of Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE), a policy that is not vocally demanded by Argentinean society. When teaching teams gathered in February 2016 to plan the school year, CSE teachers from different provinces raised concerns, because the new authorities were requesting that more conservative and biological approaches be adopted in the courses. Most particularly, the educators noted that support for the initiatives already underway was rapidly dwindling<sup>18</sup>. By March, the General Schools Directorate officially informed that, after hearing complaints raised by parents and teachers, it "will review CSE contents and methodologies". Until the review is completed, all activities in the area will be reduced to a minimum.<sup>19</sup>

In regard to abortion, however, conservative positions seem to prevail in the PRO policy approach. When the Assisted Fertilization Act was discussed in Parliament, a group of 8 PRO MPs abstained or objected to the treatment of frozen embryos (called by them "unborn persons"). A few feminist friends who support parties allied with the PRO hope that more liberal views may prevail in the long run. We, however, do not have positive expectations. The PRO recruits its technical cadres and "volunteers" (what most political parties would call "activists") among young students and graduates from private universities, most of them Catholic. For the social group that the PRO serves and on which it relies -- agro-exporting and financial elites -- paying formal respect to Catholic mandates (regardless of their actual religious practices) is a core element of their identity. We don't think the PRO is willing to go against the

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<sup>18</sup> Interventions during the second assembly of *Colectiva Lohana Berkins* (CABA, February 20, 2015)

<sup>19</sup> Horacio Yacante, *Diario Vox*: »Se paralizará la educación sexual en las escuelas«, Mendoza, March 13, 2016. <http://diariovox.com.ar/la-dge-no-priorizara-la-educacion-sexual-en-las-escuelas/>

Church with regards to abortion (not to mention that that illegal and clandestine abortions bring significant profits to the private sector doctors and clinics that perform them).

In the current political scenario, all policies that imply governmental expenditures are at risk, not necessarily because of their content but rather due to the financial model the PRO advocates for state management, in which social policies are not defined as investments but rather as "expenditures" that need to be cut. This applies, for instance, to sexual and reproductive health services<sup>20</sup>. We do not predict that the PRO will repeal the Gender Identity Law, but the free provision of hormones in public hospitals for trans\* persons going through the gender re-assignment (as guaranteed by the law) is at risk. The PRO considers that this is a provision which should be offered by the state system, but it will never forbid trans\* persons from buying hormones (spending their own cash) or undergoing transitional treatments in private clinics. It can even promote these services through tax reductions, wherever they ensure profits.

In its first month in office, the PRO eliminated the taxes being paid by agro-exporting elites that provided a significant state income <sup>21</sup>. On March 1st, the new government reached an agreement with the financial vulture funds (or "hold-outs", in the terminology now used by the ruling party and its allies) that implies the immediate payment of 4,653 million dollars in cash. The Argentinean state will contract, with the transfer of these funds, a new debt that the *Financial Times* (a source entirely unsuspected of Kirchnerista affiliation) considers to be the largest debt taken on by a developing country in the last 20 years.<sup>22</sup> The payment of this new debt will require the adoption of well-known strict structural adjustment programs, through which state "expenditures" are reduced to a minimum in all areas, except those that function to protect the neoliberal model of governance ("security" and propaganda)

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<sup>20</sup> Regarding the Assisted Fertilization Act, the current President said back then that he also would have abstained because "it is a very costly procedure and the priority for the (public) health system is to intervene in life-saving situations". See <http://www.diariopopular.com.ar/notas/159156-macri-contra-la-ley-fertilizacion-asistida>

<sup>21</sup> Ver Alfredo Zaiat, "Muy pocos se llevaron todo" (Página 12, 20 de diciembre de 2015). <http://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/economia/2-288666-2015-12-20.html>

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.lanacion.com.ar/1876105-el-financial-times-destaco-que-argentina-emitira-la-deuda-mas-grande-en-20-anos-de-un-pais-en-desarrollo>

Under such conditions, it is quite possible that budget cuts will be used as an excuse by medium or low-level State officials to justify discriminatory measures. Giving priority to straight couples over lesbian couples when scheduling assisted fertility service consultations and procedures, for example. But it is important to keep in mind that the PRO will **not** exclusively cut funds for sexual health services on the basis of moral or religious principles. It will cut the health budget as whole<sup>23</sup> (along with housing, education, social economy and many other areas). The PRO is in power to do business: it is neither governing to ensure the glory of God nor to ensure the full exercise of human rights. The transfer of money from the public to the private sector and the re-creation of a foreign debt may become profitable businesses for PRO party members and their supporters. As we said before: everything else is a side issue.

Having said that, of course, it is always tempting to combine the useful and the enjoyable. Consequently, under the PRO, the budgets of some particularly sensitive policy areas, such as the National Program for Sexual Health (which we will discuss further, below), were among the first to be cut.

### **Friends? Allies? Foes...? How sexual rights activism is positioning itself in the face of the new government**

In the realm of activism, the first reactions to the electoral results were mixed. Some people were hopeful because they belonged to PRO-allied parties and honestly believed (and many still do) that their parties' more progressive positions could prevail over the more conservative and/or exclusively profit-oriented agendas of their main partner. Others (including us) were in a state of shock. We mourned the electoral defeat and asked ourselves if we were returning to the worst moments of our country's past, those we could remember or those we had been told about by our elders: the military dictatorship or the wide, deep, neoliberal 1990s.

Three months into the new government, however, things are slowly becoming clearer.

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<sup>23</sup> For instance: since the new government came to power, the Ministry of Health has stopped the activities of 19 sanitary trucks from the Community Health Programme that are used to distribute health supplies. These are parked and sidelined while 14 provinces are struggling with a dengue epidemic. Two hundred workers from the Program were assigned no tasks for three months and in March their contracts were not renewed. <http://www.laizquierdadiario.com/Alerta-y-movilizacion-contralos-despidos-y-el-ajuste-en-el-Ministerio-de-Salud> and <http://www.radiografica.org.ar/2016/01/15/denuncian-vaciamiento-del-programa-de-salud-comunitaria/>

An important factor we must first take into account is that something changed, forever, in the relationship between sexual rights movements and the states/governments in many Latin American countries (including Argentina) during the first decade of the 21st century. Party affiliation and working with/within the State were strong characteristics of the 12 years of the Kirchnerista administrations. But as we were writing this article in March 2016, 29,444 workers had been fired from public jobs<sup>24</sup> and many more were at risk of also being laid off.

This sweep has decidedly affected lesbian, gay and trans\* people, including some very visible Kirchnerista supporters but also others who refuse to "adjust" to the new times. This massive lay off of public personnel will not only impair the rights and economic survival of those directly affected: it will also jeopardize the continuity of the sexual rights programs and policies these personnel were implementing<sup>25</sup>. The current situation in two state bodies that are key for sexual rights related policies -- the Ministry of Health and the National Institute against Discrimination, Xenophobia and Racism (INADI in Spanish) – is illustrative of what is occurring.

The Sexual Health and Responsible Procreation Program is tasked with the distribution of hormones for trans\* people, free contraception devices and fertility treatments across the country. Additionally, the Program provides training for health teams and community promoters. In January, a presidential decree (a legal instrument used by the PRO before achieving their parliamentary majority) re-structured the Ministry of Health and, as a result the Program, as such, disappeared<sup>26,27</sup>. Feminist groups, academic institutions and many other actors (including ourselves) reacted immediately. There were several demonstrations, much media coverage and many moments of hope. But the harsh reality is that the Program's activities ceased on January 4 and both its staff and its activities were spread across different departments in the Ministry. The authorities have decided that that the Program is to function with a staff of 15 people (less than a third of the total

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<sup>24</sup> <https://infogr.am/despidos-pro-6274>

<sup>25</sup> Members of Conurbanos por la Diversidad, an LGBT organization from Buenos Aires Province working with economically marginalized populations, told us that in some districts now ruled by the PRO, its members were fired and all the programs they were implementing were terminated. Those programs addressed access to health and education, as well as offering support to obtain social benefits for LGBT populations.

<sup>26</sup> Mariana Carvajal, "[Un derecho fuera de organigrama](#)" (Página 12, January 14 2016)

<sup>27</sup> Mariana Carvajal, "[Un derecho fuera de organigrama](#)" (Página 12, January 14 2016)

Program staff at the end of 2015)<sup>28</sup>. Workers have already been fired. Although negotiations with the trade unions are still underway at the time this article goes to press and there was not yet clarity about the final outcome of this battle, prospects are not exactly encouraging.

Moving to INADI, under the Kirchners' administration, the institution had been a flagship for sexual diversity. Many activists worked there, of which a great percentage has been hired through the large LGBT organizations. Then, on February 26, the lay-off wave hit INADI. As in all other public institutions, the procedures used to terminate workers' contracts did not follow any acceptable standard. On the day the terminations hit (a Friday), 25 workers were informed by e-mail that they had been fired.<sup>29</sup> The entire INADI staff spent the weekend checking their e-mails and dreading the receipt of a similar message. The police began guarding the office of the newly appointed Director, Javier Buján and when workers arrived at INADI on February 29, the lay-offs had expanded to 100 people. In reaction, the workers took over the INADI building. Just as had happened with the Sexual Health Program, negotiations began immediately. But as we finished this analysis, only 10 people had been reinstated.

These two reactions from LGBT activists allow us a glimpse into some of the initial responses to the wider challenges posed by the new political landscape. On February 24, the most combative public employees union called a national strike and a demonstration against the lay-offs, which gathered 50,000 people in the streets of Buenos Aires<sup>30</sup>. In the demonstration, the Lohana Berkins Collective (*Colectiva*)<sup>31</sup>, which brings together about 200 LGBT and some "more-or-less straight" (as they call themselves) activists, became known to the public for the first time.

The Collective – which explicitly defines itself as "anti-Macri" -- had its own column in the march. Even though coexistence between different the political expressions within the Collective (leftists, Kirchneristas, etc.) is far from easy, the interest it aroused in the

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<sup>28</sup> <http://eleco.com.ar/la-ciudad/preocupa-la-suspension-de-las-acciones-del-programa-de-salud-sexual-y-procreacion-responsable/>

<sup>29</sup> Werner Pertot, "El tren de los despidos llegó al INADI". <http://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/elpais/1-293484-2016-02-29.html>

<sup>30</sup> Multitudinario acto de ATE contra los despidos. <http://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/ultimas/20-293170-2016-02-24.html>

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.atandalucia.org/2016/02/en-las-calles-la-colectiva-lohana.html>



community<sup>32</sup> is an indicator of the urgent need for a broad and diverse LGBT political expression to take form in order to strongly oppose the current government.

On March 6, activists from the Argentinean Federation of Lesbians, Bisexuals, Gays and Trans (*Federación Argentina de Lesbianas, Gays, Bisexuales y Trans*, FALGBT) met with President's Chief of Cabinet, Marcos Peña, to present a new project named "Pride in the workplace" as a response to the lay offs. Unbiased sources report that they had not gone as deep as needed in their critique of the cut offs.<sup>33</sup> FALGBT responded to the criticisms raised by other activists on Facebook, saying that its priority is to guarantee the rights of those communities with which it works and that in order to achieve this goal, they must make agreements with governments.

The PRO administration response to the claim was to create the National Directorate of Comprehensive Sexual Diversity Policies (*Dirección Nacional de Políticas Integrales de Diversidad Sexual*) and to appoint Diego Borisonik as its coordinator. Borisonik had a similar role in the CABA government. One of his first "field visits" was to the beach city of Mar del Plata, ruled by a PRO mayor that has expressed outspoken Nazi sympathies and where gay, feminist and anti-fascist activists have been physically attacked in recent months.<sup>34</sup>

As this article was being written, another and even more serious case (because it involves direct State responsibility) came up. In the nearby town (Miramar), ruled by a PRO ally, five policemen tortured and kidnapped a very young (17 years old) gay activist<sup>35</sup>. These incidents of violence are not the only ones reported in the last three months.<sup>36</sup> For example the indigenous activist Milagro Sala, the

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<sup>32</sup> The facebook page of the Colectiva Lohana Berkins has more than 1.000 followers.

<sup>33</sup> Julia Olivan, "Marcos Peña y la agenda gay". <http://www.mariajuliaolivan.com.ar/2016/03/06/paso-esta-semana-marcos-pena-y-la-agenda-gay/>

<sup>34</sup> General Attorney Alejandra Gils Carbó - who the PRO administration is trying to remove from office - did more than paying a protocol visit: she created a special team of Prosecutors to investigate the Neonazi attacks that already has arrested the perpetrators. Matías Máximo: "En foco" <http://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/suplementos/soy/1-4442-2016-03-12.html>

<sup>35</sup> Activists from Colectiva Lohana Berkins are documenting other cases as well, in 4 other parts of the country. On the Miramar case: Gabriela Mitidieri and Sandra Aguilar: "Secuestro, tortura y amenazas policiales a un activista gay en Mirama», Marcha, March 15 2016. <http://www.marcha.org.ar/24484-2/>.

<sup>36</sup> For instance, on March 6 an unidentified person shot a group of activists from the Partido Nuevo Encuentro (that is part of the FPV) who were in the street celebrating the opening of their new offices. Two young women were injured - one of them had been fired from a State job the previous week. Even though the authorities met with party leaders and heard their complaints, until now there has been no progress in the investigation. Pro-

elected representative to Parlasur,<sup>37</sup> has also been arrested. These facts suggest that, despite the new government's "good manners", a new "hunting season" seem to be starting. The feeling is now spreading that there is now informal social and institutional permission for state and not state actors to engage in violent behaviors that, until recently, were not acceptable.

The open question to be explored is what is the future of sexual and reproductive rights politics in the context of a neoliberal project that will necessarily imply old and new forms of social exclusion and that cannot be properly implemented without the resources to repress and silence those who will oppose it? In our opinion, in the current policy framework, there is space for charity, which might still solve urgent needs for the most marginalized. It will not empower them, however. The current political climate also allows for expressive acts (such as the photo of the Chief of Cabinet posing with a poster calling for "Zero Discrimination") and for suitably horrified reactions to be manifested in regard to the worst abuses. But there is not room for much more than that.

Never in history have sexual rights been able to flourish and fully develop their transformative potential in a society that has been impoverished<sup>38</sup> -- materially and symbolically -- and that is controlled with an iron hand via the content circulated by a pro-government market-oriented mass media and via the massive presence of security forces in the streets, not only during demonstrations, but also attacking "social dangers" like street vendors. There are achievements that (hopefully) are irreversible, such as the visibility and pride that young LGBT people exhibit in unheard-of proportions. The risks are huge, however. Everything seems to point to a time for resistance, sifting, repositioning and strengthening.

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government media considers the attack to have been caused by "a madman".  
<http://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/ultimas/20-293948-2016-03-06.html>

<sup>37</sup> Milagro Sala has been detained since January 16 in her province, Jujuy, without being formally charged with any crime. This situation has already led to a request for precautionary measures to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (<http://www.amnistia.org.ar/noticias-y-documentos/archivo-de-noticias>) and a communication from the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (<http://www.telam.com.ar/notas/201603/138337-milagro-sala-detencion-onu-explicaciones-denuncia.html>)

<sup>38</sup> A research study done by the academic institute Centro de Innovación de los Trabajadores shows that the poorest 10% of the population lost 23.8% of its purchasing capacity in the period December 2015-March 2016. The same institution reports that the same period shows the highest inflation since 2002 (33%) and estimates that it will reach 55% by October. <http://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/economia/2-294503-2016-03-14.html>

## **Post-script:**

As this article was being written, news came from the White House Press Office during the visit of President Obama to Argentina which deeply hurt the feelings of a large number of Argentines, who took to the streets in the largest demonstrations on this date in a decade (and it is worth remarking in this context that March 24th, the National Day of Memory, Truth and Justice, is when the victims of the latest US-supported military dictatorship are remembered). The Argentinean media has not reported on this (or on most of the long list of agreements that Argentina has signed as part of the PRO government's complete surrender to the USA). Argentina seems to have joined the Global Equality Fund, "a public-private partnership that supports civil society organizations advancing LGBTI rights worldwide", and will support the "recently established LGBTI Rapporteur in the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and in the opening of a similar office in the UN Human Rights Council". We could write a whole article just on this, so we will be brief:

- Please go back and read the section on how the new government is firing State employees every day. Social assistance programs are also being closed on a daily basis as the government claims the need to save money in order to conduct the "dramatic financial situation" it is facing. Future plans include raising the age for retirement, among other measures. In this context, for Argentina to invest money in joining a fund to "support LGBTI rights everywhere" is a wonderful recipe to encourage homo/lesbo/transphobia... if publicized, of course.
- USA ignorance about (and despite for) the IACHR is legendary. The LGBTI Rapporteur position was created in 2011<sup>i</sup> -- not "recently" -- with full support from the Argentinean government of those times (now the opposition party).
- The inter-American and the international human right systems are deeply different in their structures, balance of power, positions with regard to sexual rights, and etcetera. The Special Rapporteur for SOGI is a USA-led initiative that is not fully endorsed across the spectrum of sexual rights/LGBTI movements, as many of us consider it to be quite problematic. It might sound obvious but different contexts do require different approaches...

To be continued...

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<sup>i</sup> See <http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/lgtbi/default.asp>