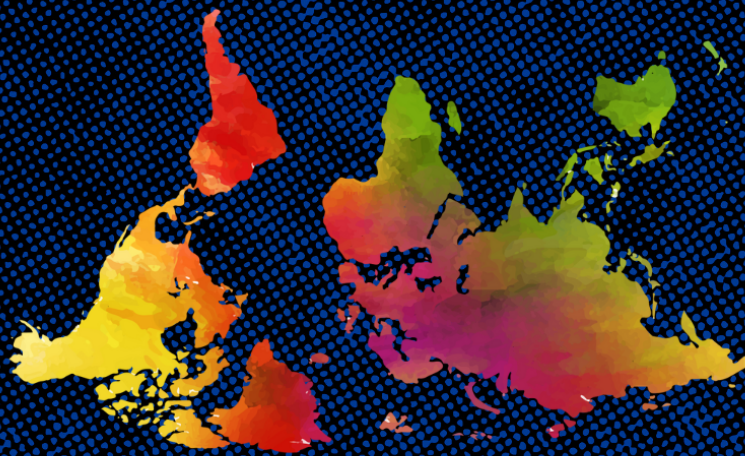




## Sexual Politics Around The World: February-July 2023

July 2023



### Opening Words

This newsletter describes and seeks to contextualize the developments in sexual politics since February 2023. In times of democratic deterioration around the world, sexual politics, our object of analysis, inevitably finds itself entangled in authoritarian shifts. The pervasive effects of de-democratization are palpable in anti-gender political dynamics and mutations, in the field of abortion and reproductive rights, and in the field of LGBTQIA+ rights, particularly in the case of transgender people, as well as in multilateral forums. This constant turbulence has even hampered the regularity of our newsletter. However, it must be said that despite these adverse conditions, there is also good news to report and analyze, and it is this good news that drives our work.

Happy reading!

*The SPW Team (Sonia Corrêa, Nana Soares, Fábio Grotz, and Tatiane Amaral)*

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## SPW Events

The regional anti-democratization panorama and the place of anti-gender policies in it were the subject of discussion at the seminar "[Mapping and Resisting the Gender Ghost in Latin America: Geographies of Anti-Gender Movements](#)", promoted in April by SPW, in partnership with the London School of Economics and Political Science, the Arts & Humanities Research Council and with the support of the BRICS Policy Center. At the seminar, activists and researchers from Latin America shared insights and keen analyses of the current national and regional situation and its many international connections. They also exposed and debated various forms of resistance that are underway inside and outside institutional spaces. To learn more about the event, there is information on the [SPW website](#) and records of the best moments in videos available on our [YouTube channel](#).

Two months later, in June, we held – in the context of our partnership with Akahata, Promsex, Puentes, and Synergia – a special webinar of the Regional Forum of Debates on Current and Emerging Issues in which the reflections made in April were revisited. This recording is also [available](#) on our YouTube channel

## Accelerated De-Democratization

The wave of de-democratization that we have been systematically discussing since 2020 reached unprecedented levels in 2022, as noted by the V-Dem Institute's annual [report](#), released in March and entitled "Defiance in the Face of Autocratization". Heavy democratic losses were seen in 42 countries, nine more than in the 2021 report. This corresponds to 43% of the global population living in conditions that oscillate between autocracies with a democratic face and decidedly authoritarian or dictatorial regimes, in which political and civil rights, freedoms, and guarantees are suppressed or regressing.

Central America today is a clear locus of accelerated autocratization. In Nicaragua, the Ortega-Murillo regime has fully deepened and accelerated its repressive approach. In February, 222 citizens were deported to the United States, 95 of whom had their [nationality revoked](#). The same measure has been applied to at least 220 other people who are in prison or have already left the country. Some of these people are applying for asylum in the US, and Spain, Mexico, and Argentina immediately offered citizenship to the exiles. In addition, since 2018, some 600,000 Nicaraguans [have left](#) the country. Read our [compilation](#) on the situation there.

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It is important to mention that the new Brazilian government has shown, since January, hesitancy and reluctance to condemn this brutal regime. In April, an expatriate, the historian and former guerrilla Mónica Baltodano, was in Brazil [in dialogue](#) with civil society and public authorities, including an audience with Ambassador Celso Amorim, special advisor to the president on foreign policy. However, in June, during the OAS General Assembly, [as reported by Jamil Chade](#), Brazil regrettably proposed attenuating changes in a joint declaration of condemnation of the regime, provoking indignant reactions from the Nicaraguan resistance in exile. Subsequently, however, after a conversation with the pope in Rome, Lula declared that Brazil would "[help](#)" in efforts to free Bishop Alvarez. Brazil would subsequently [support](#) the harsher tone of the declaration voted on at the OAS. In early July, Bishop Alvarez was released, but only [for two days](#), revealing once again the draconian intransigence of the tyranny.

In El Salvador, Nayib Bukele, who calls himself the world's coolest dictator, has inaugurated a mega-prison named the "Terrorist Detention Center", which in fact houses people accused of common crimes, especially members of the so-called *maras*. With a capacity for 40,000 prisoners, the prison on a colossal [architectural scale](#) is a monument to a brutal crime-fighting strategy that, as various analyses point out, is in fact a [policy of exception](#). Crucially, Bukele is exporting his crime-fighting model to the wider region. In May, for example, his justice minister [attended](#) a public hearing at the Federal Chamber of Deputies at the invitation of Bolsonaroist Congressman Osmar Terra.

In addition, the political climate in the country is deteriorating. The [relocation of the newspaper El Faro](#) to Costa Rica, a decision taken to protect itself from attacks on press freedom, is a symptom of this. SPW has [compiled](#) analysis on the situation in El Salvador, where, despite the continuing deterioration, Bukele's popularity has reached stratospheric levels. We also recommend recording the [speech of activist Morena Herrera](#) at the seminar organized by SPW in April. Herrera characterized Central America as an "abyss" and analyzed the pivotal place occupied by Bukele, the rising star of regional autocracy.

Nevertheless, signs of de-democratization are everywhere in Latin America. In Chile, after the "rejection" of the new constitution in September 2022, the right, with a large presence of the ultra-right, was [victorious](#) in the election for a new Constitutional Commission, which took place in May. The range of ultraconservative voices in the public debate has therefore widened, several of which are shameless defenders of the legacies of [Pinochetism](#). Despite compulsory voting, 20% of voters voted blank. This strong symptom of disaffection with institutional politics was also the effect of an anti-voting campaign mobilized by sectors of the left. Read our [compilation](#) on the

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effects of the May vote.

In Ecuador, President Guillermo Lasso, whose legitimacy has been questioned since 2021, resorted to a constitutional rule known as "*morte cruzada*" and [dissolved](#) Congress in May, calling for new general elections. Read more about the [crisis](#) that led to the *morte cruzada*. The measure, although provided for in the Constitution, has exacerbated the ongoing climate of uncertainty and instability in Ecuador. [Eight candidates are running](#) in the presidential election scheduled for August. In this atypical election, the candidates include Luisa González, who represents Correismo, Otto Sonnezholner, a "liberal" close to former President Lenin Moreno, and Yaku Pérez, an indigenous leader who in the 2021 elections almost reached the second round, advocating a substantive environmental agenda, and whose candidacy is growing. The latest [analysis](#) of the electoral process indicates that the contest will in fact be between Yaku Perez and the candidate representing Correismo.

In Argentina, the approaching election has also raised fears due to the persistent rise of Javier Milei, an iconic figure of right-wing libertarianism and regional de-democratization efforts. The great concern of several analysts is Milei's growing popularity among younger voters, but a longitudinal survey by the UBA suggests that [youth attitudes](#) are in fact more complex and nuanced. We compiled [analyses](#) on the figure, who is at the center of an electoral [corruption scandal](#) that erupted in early July and involves selling candidacies.

In Asia, Narendra Modi's autocratic traits made headlines again with his attacks on opposition leader Raul Gandhi, who was [removed](#) from parliament in March after being convicted of [criticizing](#) the Indian prime minister. At the same time, government [pressure](#) against UNICEF gained publicity. On the other hand, the most significant development in recent months has been the defeat of the BJP - i.e. Modi - in state elections in three key states, including Karnataka, a result interpreted as a sign that the winds of Indian politics may finally be shifting. Read a [compilation](#) on India here.

In Turkey, Erdogan has been re-elected after competing in a run-off for the first time since he came to power 20 years ago and despite his [disastrous handling](#) of the massive earthquake that devastated part of the country in early February. This latest victory will undoubtedly mean another chapter in the country's autocratization. Importantly, anti-gender and anti-LGBT rhetoric was especially prominent in Erdogan's campaign, as well as in his first speech after his victory. This makes Turkey an Islamic country where, indeed, gender phantasmagoria is [decidedly established](#). However, the Turkish political scene must also be analyzed in light of the neoliberal entrenchment, the migration crisis,

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and the persistent tension with Kurdish demands for autonomy. Read our [compilation](#).

In Iran, meanwhile, the enduring feminist rebellion of 2022 was [contained](#) with heavy force (read more [here](#) in a DW report). However, in the first half of 2023, news began to spread about a [wave](#) of students and girls poisoned in various cities, which was interpreted as a brutal act aimed at deterring women's education – a phenomenon that seems to have been [replicated](#) in Afghanistan.

In Africa, the political situation in Sudan has [worsened](#). In 2019, a lengthy dictatorship was toppled by a [popular rebellion](#), followed by a military coup in 2021. In April 2023, an [armed conflict](#) broke out between the army command and the so-called Rapid Support Forces, which put the country in a [state of civil war](#) with no short-term solution in sight.

In Senegal, considered a bastion of political stability in West Africa, massive protests took place after an opposition leader was sentenced to prison for [corrupting minors](#). President Macky Sall's response was harsh, the internet was suspended, and in the police crackdown several protesters died. In early July, he [announced](#) that he would not run for a third term. We have [compiled](#) news reports on the episode. In Tunisia, the arrest of leaders of the main opposition party was [reported](#), suggesting a [worsening of the democratic erosion](#) that began in 2021.

In Europe, meanwhile, the Spanish local elections saw a marked [surge by the PP and Vox](#) in the country's ten largest cities, where they will be able to govern in coalition. Vox's advances are particularly worrying ([more here](#), in Spanish). The election result prompted President Sanchez to [bring forward](#) the general elections to July 24. In late June, opinion polls show a tight race between the PP and the PSOE, heralding a parliament in which there will be no majority. The July 23rd elections took place when this English edition was about to be published. While the PP won the majority of votes it cannot ensure a majority to govern. [The PSOE fared better than in 2019](#) and, yet more significantly, the ultra-right represented by Vox lost 19 seats, a major defeat. In our next issue, we will offer a more full assessment of the Spanish political landscape.

In Scandinavia, the Finnish nationalist party [has won](#) several ministerial posts in the new government – another advance of right-wing populism in a Nordic country with a long social democratic tradition (more on the Finnish scene [here](#) and [here](#)).

Another context in which political dynamics raise concerns is undoubtedly the United States, where the contest for the 2024 presidential election is already well underway. Donald Trump, until he was recently [indicted](#), was still [leading](#) in the opinion polls.

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This indictment does not mean, however, that Trump's path is in jeopardy, nor does it mean that another Republican candidate, as radical or more radical than him, such as Mike Pence or, more notably, Ron DeSantis, cannot benefit from a possible electoral obstruction of the former president. Above all, there are not many signs of political vigor in the Democratic camp, where there is the [paradoxical rise](#) of Robert Kennedy Jr., a spokesman for Covid-19 denialism and the anti-vaccine movement. US de-democratization is also reflected in the overwhelming wave of anti-gender and anti-trans offensives that will be examined in the next section.

In such an adverse global climate, the [victory](#) of a coalition of opposition parties in Thailand in the May legislative elections, which sidelined a semi-military regime installed by a coup in 2014, is noteworthy. The outcome is far from signifying substantive and immediate change in the country, as analysts point out ([here](#) and [here](#)), but it is undoubtedly another sign of democratic hope in Asia.

### *Rebuilding Democracy in Brazil*

In this analysis, Brazil, which in 2022 managed to steer clear of a disastrous path of extended democratic erosion, deserves special attention. Six months after the [ultra-right-wing insurgency](#) that destroyed the Three Powers Plaza, the political atmosphere is much more relaxed. Although the relationship between Lula's executive branch and a Congress that operates on the principle of bargaining and now includes a powerful conservative bloc is tense, the Lula government is managing to enact the reforms it considers a priority, and the country's economic indicators are improving.

With specific regard to the containment of right-wing forces, the judiciary has taken firm steps to investigate and punish those involved in the January 8 insurgency and, in June, the Superior Electoral Court [ruled](#) Bolsonaro ineligible for the next eight years. A law to regulate digital platforms was also proposed, the negotiation of which was stalled by congressional concerns.

However, the issue has also entered the Executive's agenda, as the Ministry of Human Rights and Citizenship created a Working Group on Hate Speech and Extremism in February. The [final result](#) of this effort has just been published and, among other recommendations, proposes the creation of a permanent forum to monitor and respond to the threats and risks that disinformation and the deliberate propagation of inflammatory labels and hate speech imply for democracy.

In addition, public policies are being reformed in areas critical to sexual politics, such as

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health and human rights, and, as we will see below, in foreign policy.

Under these conditions, the political ultra-right is going through a moment of clear disorganization. This does not mean, however, that its agendas and aggressiveness are abating. As will be seen below, despite this ongoing disorder at the institutional level, the forces of the ultra-right are still alive and active, promoting anti-gender offensives of all kinds in the legislative sphere, on social networks, and in everyday life.

In this context, it is disturbing that, on the left of the political spectrum and in the PT itself, there is a lack of clarity and cohesion regarding the meaning of gender and sexuality issues, either as an unavoidable dimension for the reconstruction of democracy or as a continuing concern of the ultra-right. An example of this is the [heated and coarse debate](#) that took place between parliamentarians and PT leaders about the potential affiliation of Duda Salabert, one of two trans federal parliamentarians elected in 2022.

## Anti-Gender Politics

The US is now, very significantly, a global center of the anti-gender offensives that today manifest themselves as a brutal siege on the rights and very existence of trans people. The [Trans Legislation Tracker](#) and the [American Civil Liberties Union](#) (ACLU) monitoring projects measure the extent of this "open warfare": by June 2023 more than 500 anti-trans bills had been introduced in state and local legislatures, many of which had already been passed. Based on ACLU data, the [Washington Post](#) analyzed the implications of this dramatic situation.

These surveys solidify the perception that the anti-trans juggernaut is now routine and "naturalized" as a political fact. This situation is the result of a long process of updating ultraconservatism and the ultra-right (see [Sonia Corrêa's interview](#) in Sur magazine and the [investigations](#) carried out by Mother Jones magazine). However, there is a new element, the increasingly palpable presence of trans-exclusionary feminist currents, analyzed by the [report of the All or None portal](#), which also examines other national settings and what is happening at the UN. We have compiled a fairly [extensive collection](#) of analysis and news on anti-gender and anti-trans politics in the US in the first half of 2023. From this selection, we recommend The Nation's [story](#) that analyzes anti-trans offensives as a threat to democracy.

At the institutional political level, anti-trans politics have been led mainly by Florida governor and GOP presidential candidate Ron DeSantis. In the first half of the year,

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DeSantis [escalated](#) a conflict with Disney after the company opposed the law popularly known as "Don't Say Gay", passed in 2022, which restricts the discussion of gender and sexuality issues in elementary schools ([learn more here](#)). In April, the reach of the law [was extended](#) to all grades. In May, DeSantis enacted [laws](#) restricting minors' access to gender transition services and procedures.

Some of the attacks were particularly noteworthy, such as in Tennessee, where a law passed in March [banned](#) drag queens from performing in public, affecting, for example, artists who perform for children at reading events. Other states have followed suit and proposed similar legislation: Arizona, where the bill was [vetoed](#) by the governor; Oklahoma, where the bill was reintroduced after a first attempt failed to advance in the legislature; and Kentucky, where the bill [failed](#) in the state Senate. In total, nine states [have moved](#) against drag queen performances. In Tennessee, the law was ruled [unconstitutional](#) by the courts, but the suspension is temporary.

Equally deplorably, at February's ultra-conservative Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) in Washington, one of the US participants [called for](#) the "eradication of transgenderism from public life". Four Brazilian parliamentarians attended the event, including Eduardo Bolsonaro and Mário Frias, who also strongly rejected the right to gender identity in their speeches, especially in the case of children.

No less importantly, Twitter, now under the control of Elon Musk, has quietly [eliminated](#) the rule of conduct that prohibited the use of transphobic speech. Musk, it must be said, is now as prominent a [global spokesman](#) for anti-gender and anti-trans rhetoric as Vladimir Putin. He has vocally opposed gender identity in children and announced that he will [finance](#) the criminalization of the practice worldwide. In June, Musk visited Italy, where he [debated](#) the risks of artificial intelligence with Giorgia Meloni, as well as the falling birth rate - which both see as a threat to humanity arising from the extensive use of contraception and abortion.

North of the border, Canada has also come onto the radar of anti-gender forces. In June, Openly reported that the Conservative-ruled province of New Brunswick [suspended](#) a school rule that allowed students to self-identify the gender of their names and pronouns. As of July, children and youth under 16 are subject to parental consent to choose.

On the other side of the Atlantic, the battle over trans rights has also taken on new shapes. In February, Conservative Prime Minister Rishi Sunak threatened to [veto](#) the gender identity law passed in December in Scotland, which had already been the subject of virulent attacks by trans-exclusionary feminists. These tensions formed the



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broader context that would lead, when the Gender Identity Act was passed in Scotland, to the subsequent [resignation](#) of First Minister Nicola Sturgeon. In March, Sunak also announced his intention to [amend](#) the English law protecting trans people by revising the text to restrict the definition of sex to its biological meaning.

In Italy, on the occasion of International Women's Day, Giorgia Meloni [stated](#) that "women are the first victims of 'gender ideology'". Then the central government officially [requested](#) that the city of Milan stop registering children of same-sex couples. And in June, the government of Rome's Lazio region [withdrew](#) government support for the LGBTQIA+ Pride Parade.

In Hungary, which is going [through a significant economic crisis](#) affecting the poorer sectors, the parliament [passed](#) a law encouraging anonymous reporting of same-sex couples who have children on the grounds of protecting the "Hungarian model of social life". The law, however, was [sent back](#) to the parliament by President Katlin Novak, a move the meaning of which is not entirely clear, but may be aimed at projecting a less extremist image of the president. In Poland, the ruling PIS party [has introduced](#) a bill to prevent NGOs from engaging in sex education in schools. In Sweden, the far-right, which became the country's second largest political force in last year's elections, [launched](#) a campaign against drag shows featuring children. In protest, Stockholm's liberal deputy mayor gave a [reading](#) to children dressed as a drag queen.

In Russia, the speaker of the upper house of parliament used International Women's Day to [renew](#) attacks on LGBTQIA+ people and on gender and sexuality curricula in schools. In June, a bill aimed at permanently banning gender reassignment surgeries also [advanced](#) in the Russian lower house - Putin [signed](#) the legislation in late July. In Bulgaria, the Supreme Court in February [denied](#) trans people the right to change their civil registration, on the grounds that the constitution only recognizes biological and binary sex. In Bosnia, in March, the LGBTQIA+ Pride Parade was [banned](#) by the police.

In Slovakia, a bill is [currently before the parliament](#) to make legal gender reassignment conditional on a DNA test. This proposal, which replicates the content of a bill [introduced](#) in Ohio last year, has been strongly condemned by [Amnesty International](#) and the [Council of Europe's commissioner for human rights](#). In Turkey, not surprisingly, the government banned Pride month celebrations and [arrested](#) more than 100 people who, despite the restrictions, organized marches at the end of June.

Still, it must be said that the war on trans rights is not a unique feature of the global north. In Pakistan, where a trans identity rights law was [passed](#) in 2018, the Sharia high court [condemned](#) it in May this year. This condemnation is especially worrying as,

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historically, *metis* (trans women) were accepted in Pakistani culture, as they are in other Asian countries, including Islamic ones such as Indonesia.

In Latin America, attacks against trans people have also increased in several countries, especially in Mexico, where anti-gender feminist groups are now more numerous. However, it is once again necessary to focus on Brazil, which, since the end of 2022, has become the scene of a conflict over attacks on the rights of trans people.

A [survey](#) by Folha de São Paulo showed that, in the first three months of this year, more than 60 bills were introduced in federal, state, and municipal legislatures (the article inspired an edition of the [Café da Manhã](#) podcast). It is therefore not surprising that March 8 witnessed a grotesque scene of the new war on gender in the federal parliament: the Bolsonaroist deputy Nikolas Ferreira, in the middle of a speech, put on a blond wig to vilify the right to self-declared gender identity. At the end of May, a [CPI](#) (parliamentary commission of inquiry) was set up in the São Paulo legislature to investigate gender transition treatment for children and adolescents at the University of São Paulo's Hospital das Clínicas.

An [article](#) in Jornal Nexo on this proliferation of anti-trans attacks emphasizes, as we always do at SPW, that these attacks and grotesque scenes should not be interpreted in an exclusively national context, but always situated in relation to comparable international dynamics. An example is that Congressman Mário Frias, who was at CPAC, announced the creation of a federal CPI analogous to the one ongoing in São Paulo, but with a broader scope. Since then, he has also vigorously championed Elon Musk's promises and projects to eradicate gender identity in children.

However, anti-gender attacks in Brazil have many other aspects. One of them is, for example, the political gender violence that is brutally affecting feminist and, above all, trans parliamentarians. In June, the Ethics Committee of the Federal Chamber of Deputies [accepted](#) the request for the removal of six female MPs, including one black woman and the two newly elected indigenous parliamentarians. In response, a campaign was [launched](#) in the first week of July. The two federal trans parliamentarians, as well as those in state and municipal legislatures, have also been the [object of attacks](#) from both the right and anti-gender/anti-trans feminist groups.

In addition, [attacks](#) on teachers and content on gender, race, and social inequality in public education continue. In the Chamber of Deputies, a newly elected ultra-right-wing deputy proposed the creation of a parliamentary group and a "civil society observatory against indoctrination in schools" and then [introduced a bill](#) to guarantee conscientious objection for teachers who refuse to teach "indoctrinating

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content". Even before they are approved, these initiatives have the effect of aggravating the climate of intimidation in the school environment.

However, the most appalling fact of this escalation was that, at the end of LGBTQIA+ Pride month, a well-known fundamentalist pastor [gave a sermon](#), widely publicized on social networks, openly inciting the murder of LGBTQIA+ people. These facts make it very clear that the war on gender-related phantasmagoria has not cooled down. However, in the political conditions of 2023, these attacks not only have greater media visibility but have been responded to with greater agility and vigor, including by state institutions. The fundamentalist pastor mentioned above, for example, is already [being investigated](#) by the federal prosecutor's office.

Returning to the global scene, it should also be mentioned that the world of sports in general and elite sports in particular is presently another main locus of offensives against gender and, more particularly, the rights of trans people. These conflicts were analyzed by Nana Soares in an [article published](#) in June that revisits and updates an initial investigation carried out last year.

## Multilateral Forums

Session 67 of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) took place in March. Preceded by a [statement](#) by UN rapporteurs in support of comprehensive sexual education, the session concluded with a statement emphasizing the links between women's rights and the digital environment. Once again, the negotiations were arduous due to the strong presence of organizations from the conservative camp, above all because Nigeria, Russia, and the Holy See systematically obstructed gender language and language related to sexual and reproductive rights, often using the arguments propagated by global anti-gender networks such as the specter of "the corruption of children".

In June, the International Labor Organization (ILO) Assembly also witnessed a [conservative, anti-gender push](#). In debates in the ILO's finance committee, the budget was stalled by opposition from some African and Arab countries to a clause aimed at supporting individuals "affected by discrimination and exclusion, including those based on race, sexual orientation, and gender identity". As a result of this pressure, the text was changed to "combating all forms of discrimination on any grounds", with the additional caveat that there are differences between countries on the matter. This is the first time such a clash has occurred at the ILO, but signs indicate that such clashes will continue in the future.

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At the UN Human Rights Council, two developments merit attention. Since the end of 2022, when she published a note openly criticizing the Scottish Gender Identity Act, the special rapporteur on violence against women and girls has been criticized by transnational feminist and LGBTQIA+ networks, as she was in the [letter](#) published by AWID (Association of Women for Development and Human Rights) in May. Her views have also contrasted with positions taken by other UN delegates, such as the [letter](#) sent by nine special rapporteurs congratulating Spain on the final approval of a trans law in February.

At the June session of the Human Rights Council, the [list of candidates](#) to replace Victor Madrigal, independent expert on human rights, sexual orientation, and gender identity, whose mandate is about to end, was made public. The list includes 24 candidates from all regions of the world, including two trans women and one non-binary person. For the first time the seat is hotly contested, and, in this election process, it is crucial that the integrity of the office be preserved in order to stem the growing virulence of attacks on LGBTQIA+ rights, particularly in the case of transgender people.

In the international arena, it is once again worth highlighting the change in the diplomatic stance of the new Brazilian government in relation to human rights and global health agendas. Brazil has [reconnected](#) with the World Health Organization (WHO), a relationship that had been virtually severed by the Bolsonaro government during Covid-19. Moreover, at the 52nd session of the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) in February, the minister of human rights and citizenship, Silvio Almeida, in his [speech](#), addressed a [wide range of rights](#) and underlined that they will once again be a priority of Brazilian foreign policy. Symmy Larrat, national secretary for the rights of the LGBTQIA+ population and the first transvestite to hold a senior position in the federal administration, was in the delegation. In April, she [participated](#) in the 3rd World Forum on Human Rights. At the 53rd session, held in June, Brazil announced its return to the group of 36 countries that supports the LGBTQIA+ rights agenda at the UN and, more particularly, the mandate of the independent expert on human rights, sexual orientation and gender identity, whose creation in 2016 was supported by Brazil.

Finally, another OAS General Assembly was held in Washington in June, and once again the [anti-gender and anti-abortion forces](#) were outnumbered. Above all, the assembly discussed the crises in Nicaragua and Haiti. As [Portal Catarinas reported](#), however, despite the presence and pressure of conservative forces, relevant issues of sexual politics were also discussed, such as the rights of LGBTQIA+ families. Four new members of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights were also elected: Stuardo Ralón (Guatemala), for a second term; Arif Bulkan (Guyana); Gloria Monique

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Mees (Suriname); and Andrea Pochak (Argentina). This election was preceded by a turbulent process in which several countries, including Brazil, presented and withdrew their candidates. As a result of this turmoil, the Chilean feminist lawyer Lydia Casas, whose candidacy was brutally attacked by the ultra-right, did not obtain the necessary votes to occupy one of the seats on the commission.

## LGBTQIA+ Rights

The passage of a draconian law against homosexual people in Uganda is among the most significant news stories of the first half of the year. The bill was passed by parliament in March and signed into law by the president at the end of May. The provisions are brutal: conduct deemed "aggravated homosexuality" is subject to the death sentence, and the newly created crime of "promotion of homosexuality" can lead to 20 years' imprisonment. Homosexuality was already defined as a crime under the Ugandan penal code and could result in life imprisonment. However, this year's rollback of the law has amplified the shock and outrage in the LGBTQIA+ community. We have [compiled](#) reactions and analysis.

In Kenya, a bill [introduced](#) in Parliament expands the crackdown on same-sex sexual relations by stipulating life imprisonment as punishment. Similarly, in Tanzania, a new legislative initiative dramatically [toughens](#) punishment against homosexuals and, as in Uganda, proposes the death penalty for the crime now defined as an "unnatural offense". In Cameroon, the National Communications Council [has banned](#) the showing of television programs with content "propagating homosexuality", under the pretext of "protecting children". In Burundi, more than 20 people are being [prosecuted](#) for "homosexual practice and incitement to homosexuality" following a police crackdown on an HIV/AIDS seminar in the country's capital.

In India, the Supreme Court is hearing several cases seeking recognition of the constitutionality of same-sex marriage, filed with the court since homosexuality was decriminalized by the court in 2018. However, the Modi government has been publicly [pushing](#) for these demands to be denied. This pressure differs from what a BJP-supporting [religious leader](#) said when he asserted that homosexuality is natural (biological) and a way of life, and that therefore homosexuals always have the "right to live".

In Kuwait, even though the Constitutional Court struck down a law criminalizing "imitation of the opposite sex", the daily lives of trans people [remain](#) subject to stigma, violence and abuse.

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In Latin America, the most negative news comes from Panama, where the Supreme Court [rejected](#) the recognition of same-sex marriage on the grounds that this demand cannot be interpreted as a human right. This is a well-known argument of religious and secular ultra-conservatism that dismisses human rights claims regarding sexuality as "new rights that are not justified".

## *Good News*

As always, despite many dismaying developments, there is good news to report. Among the most significant is the [final approval](#) in February by the Spanish parliament of a law that extends the rights of transgender people, authorizing free self-determination of gender from the age of 16 (read [more](#) in El País). We also enthusiastically reported that the African Commission on Human Rights passed a [resolution](#) in March condemning surgeries on intersex children as a violation of the right to bodily diversity.

In Kenya, where the LGBTQIA+ rights situation has been worsening, the Supreme Court [ruled](#) in favor of the National Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission, a civil society group, overturning a refusal to register the group in 2013. In Namibia, where homosexuality is still criminalized, as [The Guardian reports](#), the Supreme Court [recognized](#) the legitimacy of same-sex marriages performed abroad.

In Asia, a South Korean court [has overturned](#) a lower court ruling that prevented same-sex partners from sharing a health insurance plan. The case will go to the Supreme Court and could expand civil rights for same-sex couples. In Taiwan in May, parliament passed a law [granting](#) same-sex couples the right to adopt. In Hong Kong, despite the growing crackdown on LGBTQIA+ activism in China, the Supreme Court [declared](#) unconstitutional a law requiring sex reassignment surgery as a condition for changing one's social gender identity on one's identity card. And at the end of June, Nepal's Supreme Court, in a landmark decision, [ruled](#) that same-sex marriages must be recognized throughout the country, even when the civil code defines marriage as a union between a man and a woman. The ruling paves the way for equality to be provided for in law in the future. With this decision, Nepal becomes the second country on the continent to recognize same-sex marriage and is once again a major pioneer in sexuality policy – following the important protection of LGBTQIA+ people in the 2008 constitution (read more in an [article by Human Rights Watch](#)).

In the Cook Islands, the parliament [decriminalized](#) homosexuality by passing a reform of the criminal law inherited from British colonial rule. Finally, in Brazil, the design of [a](#)

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[new national identity card](#) was unveiled that eliminates the "sex" field as well as the distinction between civil registration name and social name.

## Abortion and Reproductive Rights

### *United States*

In the US, it has been one year since the Dobbs decision overturned the 1973 ruling that recognized the constitutionality of the right to abortion. Françoise Girard [analyzes](#) in detail the devastation caused by the decision in the lives of women of all ages, classes, and races. She also draws attention to the resistance of governors and legislators (federal and state). Above all, she emphasizes that all opinion polls and referendums conducted on the issue since 2022 have reaffirmed public support for abortion rights. We recommend both the [compilation](#) of initial assessments of the Dobbs decision that we made a year ago and a [new selection of articles and analysis](#) on its effects.

In the post-Dobbs context, access to the abortion pill, regulated in the country for more than 20 years, became crucial and, as was anticipated, was quickly taken to court. The litigation began with the decision of a federal judge in Texas to [suspend](#) the marketing of the drug mifepristone in early April, a measure that would be [overturned](#) by a regional federal court that, however, did not restore the original conditions of access. In mid-April, the Supreme Court temporarily [restored](#) full access to the drug by preliminary injunction.

This decision was puzzling, as it was [supported](#) by most of the court's conservative justices, with the exception of Samuel Alito and Clarence Thomas. For some, it could be explained by the influence of the powerful commercial interests of the pharmaceutical industry. However, it should be noted that the decision could be reversed in the future. In an [article](#) for the New York Times, Michelle Goldberg wrote, for example, that the conservative camp has plans to resurrect the 19th century Obscenity Act (Comstock Act) to achieve this goal. The Comstock Act was used in the early 20th century to persecute and criminalize feminists who promoted access to contraception, such as Margaret Sanger and Emma Goldman. In addition, restrictions on abortion rights continue to increase in several states, such as [Florida](#), South Carolina - which [criminalized](#) abortion after six weeks of gestation - and Wyoming, which passed the first law [criminalizing](#) the prescription, sale, and distribution of abortion pills - albeit a judge [blocked](#), in late June, the law days before it was set to take effect.

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## *Other countries*

In Brazil, it was recently announced that the lawsuit known as ADPF 442/2017, which challenges the constitutionality of the articles of the penal code that criminalize abortion, could be [brought to court](#) later this year. At the same time, there have been attacks on the right to legal abortion enshrined in law. In Alagoas, the city council of Maceió [passed](#) a law requiring the broadcasting on the public network of videos showing the risks and consequences of legal abortion, a move clearly aimed at obstructing access to the procedure. In Santa Catarina, the lawyers who acted in defense of the 10-year-old girl whose legal abortion after rape was targeted by conservative sectors were [indicted](#).

From El Salvador came the news that the Beatriz case, which is [being heard](#) by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR), has a good outlook. The Salvadoran state will likely be ordered to pay reparations to the family of the young woman who died from complications of a high-risk pregnancy that was not allowed to be terminated and to adopt measures to prevent recurrence, which means suspending the current draconian restrictions on abortion. There is a broad consensus among experts that the decision in the Beatriz case [will positively alter the court's jurisprudence](#) on the right to abortion.

From Peru, meanwhile, comes the news that the state has been [condemned](#) by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child for preventing young Camila from terminating a pregnancy resulting from rape. The decision recommends that the Peruvian state repeal the criminalization of abortion in all cases of child pregnancy (under 14 years of age), as well as ensure the implementation of incomplete abortion care services. See what the [data](#) says about child pregnancies in Peru.

Argentina and Honduras have adopted policies to guarantee access to essential drugs for the exercise of reproductive rights. In the South American country, in March, the marketing of mifepristone in pharmacies was [authorized](#) by the regulatory body, complying with a provision of the law that legalized abortion in 2020 (more details [here](#) in Spanish). In Honduras, President Xiomara Castro signed, on Women's Day (March 8), a decree [authorizing](#) the sale of morning-after pills, which had been banned in the country since 2009.

Even in Brazil, there is good news. The Court of Justice [authorized](#) the procedure in a pregnant woman whose fetus did not have extrauterine viability, after refusal to perform the procedure in a court of first instance. The court argued that the refusal



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meant "double punishment" to the pregnant woman and "criminalization of the interruption of pregnancy", a position that, according to a [report by UOL](#), is very frequent among lower court judges in the state of São Paulo. The second piece of very positive news is that the UN committee, in reviewing national policies, [recommended](#) to the Brazilian state that abortion be decriminalized.

Finally, in June, the Latin American Consortium against Unsafe Abortion – CLACAI – held its regional conference on the right to abortion in Panama, bringing together hundreds of activists, researchers, and health professionals. El País [published a good article](#) about the event and its main debates.

Sadly, we once again highlight some [bad news](#) from Poland: the number of women killed as a result of women being denied abortion continues to rise. In May, thousands of people took to the streets to [protest the death of Dorota Lalik](#), who was 33. However, there is good news to report in Latin America.

## #MeToo

More than five years on, the effects of #MeToo are still being felt. At the international level, a new wave emerged from an article published in the book *Sexual Misconduct in Academia*, published by Routledge, in which three academics – a Belgian, an American of indigenous origin, and a Portuguese – exposed a strong atmosphere of moral and sexual harassment at the Center for Social Studies (CES) of the University of Coimbra, directed by sociologist Boaventura dos Santos.

The case gained visibility as a result of the manifesto [Todas Sabemos](#), launched by Portuguese feminists in April, which provoked new complaints, including from [a state legislator from Minas Gerais](#). The repercussions were great, especially in Latin America, where the sociologist's influence is widespread, and he immediately responded to the accusations (see a partial [compilation](#) of articles on the case). Despite the great publicity, in July 2023, [as reported on the Buala website](#), an independent investigation commission had not yet been set up at CES, and, as a result of a lawsuit, Routledge withdrew the book from publication.

In Brazil, Folha published an [article](#) based on an unprecedented study on lawsuits against sexual harassment that are being filed in the military courts, i.e., they refer to cases of rape and abuse that occurred in the armed forces. Characteristics of these proceedings are slowness and procrastination, as well as a lack of transparency regarding the penalties applied to the aggressors. It is worth mentioning that an

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equivalent pattern can be identified in many other cases of complaints and reports on sexual harassment, such as the CES case reported above.

## Prostitution

In Portugal, sex workers celebrated a [decision](#) by the Constitutional Court that made the criminalization of pimping unconstitutional. In Colombia, the new structure of the Ministry of Equality [includes](#) a specific unit to respond to the demands and needs of sex workers.

## Farewells

In March, the departure of Jorge Beloqui meant the [loss of an irreplaceable leader](#) in the fight against AIDS in Brazil and Argentina. Jorge's death was mourned in public statements by the [National Health Council](#) and the [AIDS News Agency](#). In its statement of mourning, ABIA defined Beloqui as a "defender of the search for understanding of facts and truths by scientific evidence" and "an expert on the global response to AIDS".

In May, geneticist Thomaz Gollop passed away. His departure was [mourned](#) in a public statement signed by several feminists who recalled his qualities as a "scientist and professor, who embraced with competence and collective spirit the struggle for reproductive rights in Brazil".

## Sexuality & Art

In this issue we remember two exceptional artists who passed away in the first half of 2023. Sonia Corrêa [writes](#) about the impact of Rita Lee and Tina Turner in her life.

## We recommend

### Press Articles

[Dark blue, almost black: Europe and the rise of the far right - El País](#)

[Spain's election is a key battle in the Europe-wide struggle against neofascism - The Guardian](#)

[Sánchez's tricky road to victory after shock Spanish election result - Politico](#)

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[One-Fifth of United Methodist Congregations to Split from Church Amid Rift over LGBTQ Members - Democracy Now](#)

[Hungary as a precarious context for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community.](#)

[Interviews with transgender people - Henriett Primecz and Valéria Pelyhe - Wiley](#)

[In the Post-Roe Era, Letting Pregnant Patients Get Sicker – by Design - New Yorker](#)

[The Dark Money Fight Against Abortion Access: A Year in Review - MS Magazine](#)

[Pro-choice Catholics fight to seize the narrative from the religious right - The Guardian](#)

### **Academic Writings**

[The anti-feminism of anti-trans feminism](#) – Alyosxa Tudor

### ***From Engenderings Blog***

[The threats and possibilities awaiting the gender-equal democracy in Turkey after the 2023 general elections](#) – Diden Unal

[Non-Obvious Connections: How Feminism Becomes Transphobic?](#)- Olga Plakhotnik and Maria Mayerchuk

[Wednesday, the 28th of June, 2023: Anti-Gender Violence in Canada](#) - Emily Sams-Harris

[Solidaristic coalitions and ‘unbudgeable conviction in justice’ in the face of transnational anti-gender movements](#) – Sumi Madhok

### **Multimedia**

[Seminar “Mapping and resisting the gender phantasm in Latin America: geographies of ‘anti-gender’ movements”](#)