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Every month RESURJ members will collectively share and reflect on some news highlights affecting sexual and reproductive, environmental and economic justice from the different regions and countries we work in... [read online](#)

Brazil: Patriarchal Horror Show in Brazil

On May 24th, a video was released on Twitter showing a [16-year-old Brazilian girl](#) naked, passed out and bleeding, while two men announced with laughter that she had been raped by 30 men. Before the Twitter account was suspended and the video taken down, five hundred people had already *liked it*. Thirty men. Five hundred likes. A girl's body. The girl was brought back to her family and then taken to a hospital for medical care. Enduring the patriarchal horror show, always so quick to speculate why the rape was "predictable" or even "deserved", the survivor girl wrote on a social media account that "It does not hurt the uterus, but the soul because there are cruel people who are getting away with it". The crime took place a day after another rape of a 17-year-old woman by five men in the state of Piauí in the Northeast of Brazil.

The cases sparked intense debate on social media platforms, with many women questioning men who are eager to change their profile pictures in support of a campaign against rape culture and ask for punishment for rapists, but who are much less willing to be critical of their own macho behavior; to challenge the naturalization of violence against women within male peer groups, or to talk to their kids about consent. In the meantime, activists are protesting against the [all-male and all-white cabinet](#) appointed by interim Brazilian President Michel Temer, who also decided to [eliminate the ministries of culture](#), policy for women, human rights and racial equality. Although Temer has shown signs of wanting to reconsider some decisions as a result of the heavy criticism, it is not expected to improve his government's conservative agenda. One of the women Temer now contemplates appointing for a weaker version of a ministry for women is [Fatima Pelaes](#), a self-declared former feminist who, after a religious conversion, became a pro-life Member of Parliament.

Egypt: A Mixed Months for Rights Protection in Egypt

It was a month of mixed blessings for Egypt. The backlash to last month's arbitrary [sentencing](#) against 11 'accused' of homosexuality was huge and this month a court reviewed the sentences and [decreased](#) them from 12 years to one year, also acquitting one of the individuals. Another court also [acquitted](#) a prominent TV [broadcaster](#) who had shared private pictures of a girl she was interviewing about a sexual harassment incident in a mall; the broadcaster showed the girl on the beach with a bikini, using that as some sort of twisted logic to explain why the girl was harassed at the mall. Her TV show was [suspended](#) and she was [sentenced](#) to a year in prison and a LE15,000 fine for a violation of privacy, and an additional six months in prison and LE10,000 for libel and slander after a huge social media campaign using the hashtag [#موتي_يا_ريهام](#) (die Reham). The show resumed shortly after it was suspended however.

Tragedy also hit the governorate of Suez when 17-year-old Mayar Mohamed Mousa [died](#) in a hospital while she was being circumcised. The practice [continues](#) at very high rates, despite the 2008 law banning the practice and a [conviction](#) of a doctor last year. It is high time the government questions whether the criminalization of the act is enough and that it needs to do much [more](#) to tackle the problem.

On the political front, last month's political detainees who were arrested at demonstrations calling out the government for giving sovereignty over two Red Sea islands to Saudi Arabia, had their 5-year [sentences](#) overturned and the exorbitant [fine](#) (LE100,000 which is about USD 11,300) upheld. The judge refused their request to pay the fine in [installments](#) however basically sending them back to jail as this amount of money is unattainable for most of these young individuals.

El Salvador: One Step on the Long Road to Liberalizing the Country's Abortion Law

El Salvador has one of the most restrictive contexts for women's right to an abortion. It's so hostile that women face jail sentences and are accused of murder even when they have miscarriages or stillbirths. In El Salvador the state is failing women, when they are facing a very stressful moment in their life, instead of being offered care and support, they are thrown in jail. Since April 1st, 2014 the local feminist movement launched a campaign called #Las17 to support 17 women in jail sentenced from 12 to 40 years for "homicide" linked to abortion, stillbirth and/or miscarriage. On Friday, May 27th, they released Maria Teresa, who was originally sentenced to 40 years in jail for homicide following a miscarriage. After having served four of her 40-year sentence, a court overturned her conviction. The feminist movement is celebrating her release, however, Maria Teresa should have never had set a foot in prison to begin with. Even though achieving the liberation of each one of the unjustly imprisoned women is a success that needs to be celebrated, the goal is to liberalize the abortion law in El Salvador altogether so that women are not criminalized for miscarriages and stillbirths. And ultimately, the goal should be to promote a context that respects the women's right to choose to induce an abortion when she wants/decides/needs to.

India: Real Commitment Needed to Uphold the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Under the auspices of the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, the Accessible India Campaign launched on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities promised to comprehensively address stigma, discrimination and the inability to ensure full participation in mainstream civic life. The government's real achievements in this regard have remained limited and questionable in examples such as official celebrations of the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) completing two years in office, where the events were allegedly made accessible to people with hearing disabilities.

India has more than 70 million people living with disabilities and yet, the country's political leadership continues to drag its feet to replace the obsolete Persons with Disabilities Act of 1995. When the proposed 'Rights of Persons with Disabilities Bill' was discussed in Parliament in January 2016, Union Minister Maneka Gandhi had responded to reporters raising concerns that a schizophrenic cannot be given a job; officials have since said he was misunderstood. Despite several repeated public calls to clarify how budgetary

allocations are being made to address systemic discrimination, commitment reflected by top government officials has remained both ineffective and weak-willed, seen by many as a PR response instead.

Last year the Prime Minister asked to replace the Hindi word '*viklang*' with the word '*divyang*'. The Central Government has further suggested that the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities update its title to similarly reflect the use of the term '*viklangjan*' as '*divyangjan*'. The word '*viklang*' in Hindi largely translates to disabled in the context of being crippled or maimed. 'Divyang' takes this confusion one step further, by attaching the idea of divinity or 'god-given' to physical disability. The outrage from disability movements and civil society groups has been not just on the government's misplaced attempt to create inclusion by changing terminology but in the lack of real commitments and focus in the Accessibility India campaign. The government has however continued to exert effort and resources in updating terminology.

This excerpt is from an article published on the Feminist Voices blog. To read the full article, click here.

Lebanon: Homonationalism in the Backdrop of a Corrupt Government and Sectarian Elections

On May 5, 2016, a court ruling dropped the charges against a Syrian man who had been arrested under Article 534, the article of law that criminalizes 'unnatural' sex acts. According to the Legal Agenda, the Syrian man had been apprehended by the police because he was wearing "feminine" clothing, and admitted to having had sex with other men in Syria. Ten days later, a handful of LGBT activists staged a protest in front of the Hbeish gendarmerie in Beirut to commemorate IDAHOT and protest Article 534 as well as the arbitrary detentions based on a person's appearance and gender expression. However, the arrests are not as arbitrary as the activists would like to believe. Homonationalism, a common practice that deems certain homosexual bodies "proper" citizens at the expense of more vulnerable communities with non-conforming sexualities, heavily relies on xenophobic and classist categorization of refugees, migrants, and the working class. As governmental bodies are not held accountable for their violations of bodily integrity when it comes to "disposable" populations, this reality is exacerbated in a country that ranked first in corruption among neighboring Middle Eastern and North African

countries. Not only were [hundreds of Lebanese individuals and companies](#) named in the Panama Leaks in a deafening mediatic silence, but an [increase of 107% in electoral violations](#) was reported by the Lebanese Association for Democratic Election (LADE) during the Lebanese municipal elections this past month. The elections were fiercely fought by the parties in power, who appealed to their voters via [xenophobic campaigns and sectarian sentiment](#), and who ended up taking over most of the seats across the country. Despite the sectarian parties' win, activists still [expect change in the coming years](#).

Mexico: Government strategy on violence continues to face challenges, including limited media coverage

In Mexico in response to last month's social [mobilization](#) against macho violence, the government of Mexico City launched a '30-100' strategy, under which the local government is committing to act on harassment, abuse and violence in public spaces and transportation. According to the Local Institute of Women and the mayor's office, the strategy has many actions divided in two major phases: actions that fall under immediate measures, and others that need further planning or that require legal change. On Wednesday May 25th, the local government presented the first report after 30 days of the strategy's implementation. However, even though the event to present the report included four speakers including three women (Teresa Incháustegui-Head of the Local Institute of Women, Ximena Andion- Executive Director of the Instituto de Liderazgo Simone de Beauvoir (ILSB), Ana Güzmes- UN Women Mexico Representative and Miguel Ángel Mancera - Mayor of Mexico City), [the press just took one last bit from what the only man \(the Mayor\) in the panel said](#). The event was also by-invitation only.

The 30-100 strategy does not propose any structural changes, and includes some limited actions such as distributing [whistles to women to alert police and others of violence/assault further putting the responsibility on women to protect themselves from sexual harassment and violence](#). Given the shortsighted measures, the government for sure will continue to face many challenges in addressing violence and engaging better with civil society and the strategy will need to be strengthened with more proactive measures. However, the way the press is portraying the strategy is also not a fair reflection of it and the work the mayor, the Local Institute of Women and UN Women are doing on this issue-the media will

also need to play a more constructive role in engaging the key players on this work.

Nigeria: Is Privacy not a Right for Adolescent Girls?

On May 17th, [news broke that one](#) of the 218 missing Chibok girls had been found. Many individuals including those involved in the [#BringBackOurGirls](#) campaign, had feared that none of the girls would ever be found. In the midst of the excitement expressed by representatives of government, civil society organizations and the media, very few stopped to think if all the attention and publicity is in the girl's best interest. The pictures of Amina, the 19 year-old girl and her 4-month old baby were [all over local and international media outlets](#). The result of her medical examinations reported in several newspaper articles. She seemed to be dragged from one place to another, questioned about her experiences over and over again, with very little time to process the fact that she is free or can finally go home to her family.

The general public, including the Nigerian president and his wife seemed to be concerned with her right to education, right to health services, including psychosocial support but not her right to privacy. A few feminists raised concerns on social media, "...The biggest crime in Nigeria is being poor....you...can't afford privacy or dignity" ([Saratu Abiola](#)). [Bisi Fayemi](#) also added: "she needs privacy now & not endless media exposure [#Aminaneedstoheal](#) [#Aminaneedsprivacy](#)". One can only wonder if the survivors in these circumstances were older or different gender or economic status, would they have to endure the trauma and violations of their rights to privacy?

This is becoming a trend, as 14 year-old, Ese O. faced a similar [situation](#). When she was found, instead of taking her home to her parents, she was taken to Abuja for media briefings. It was during this process that her medical records were accessed and the fact that she was pregnant was revealed to the public. Releasing her medical records will likely limit her choices of terminating her pregnancy due to the risk of facing legal charges and social stigma surrounding abortion.

Pakistan: Transgender Community at Greater Risk

On May 22nd, 2016, Alisha, a coordinator for Trans Action Alliance (TAA) was [shot](#) several times in the northern city of Peshawar. The circumstances surrounding her murder are still unknown as some reports have claimed that she was attacked by a

criminal gang that extorts money from the transgender community while in other reports, she was said to be shot by an angry customer. Regardless of the details, Alisha's shooting is the 5th direct attack on the transgender community since the beginning of 2016 and 45th in the past two years.

More troubling still was the circumstances surrounding [Alisha's treatment](#) for her severe injuries. Alisha was transported to the Lady Reading Hospital in Peshawar in critical condition but was kept waiting for over one hour while hospital staff tried to decide whether to admit her to the female or male ward. She was also tormented by staff who according to witnesses asked her "how much she charges." Those that were trying to support her from the transgender community were also ridiculed and laughed at by staff of the hospital.

The transgender community has been advocating for greater protection but little action has been taken thus far by local police. While politically transgenders have made a great deal of progress in claiming their rights, with Pakistan's Supreme Court upholding the classification of a third gender and allowing the category to be placed on national ID cards, socially there is still a great deal of stigma and discrimination faced by the community, with transgender men facing even more criticism and persecution due to strong codes of masculinity and discomfort with male homosexuality. While small political gains have been made, and the LGBTI movement, even though nascent and often underground, is slowly gaining momentum, Alisha's death is a strong reminder that the protection of LGBTI human rights has a very long way to go in Pakistan.

Philippines: What 200,000 Votes Means

The world watched intently the race for the Philippine Vice Presidency, with the son of the convicted corrupt dictator vying for the position against the widow of a beloved icon of transparency and good governance. Flashback 30 years ago in one of the most resounding transitions that defined the so-called rebirth of democracy, with Corazon Aquino running for the highest position of the land against the dictator, Ferdinand Marcos.

[Now, under the second Aquino presidency, the nation almost came face to face with its gruesome past.](#) The country witnessed the rise of Bongbong Marcos in the polls, fuelled even further by the endorsement of a popular religious group, Iglesia ni Cristo, which is supposed to draw in a bloc vote in millions. A strong performance of a Marcos in

the national elections would affirm the influence and power of the late dictator and his family in the country. Worse, the closer a Marcos is to the Presidency, the farther justice would be for the survivors of his period, which despite the convictions has yet to see the light of day.

But the lone woman in the pool of vice presidential candidates, [who beat four male candidates](#), Leni Robredo, slowly rose in the surveys, which translated in the quick count. [The arrival of election returns for the quick count and the actual counting of the ballots gripped the nation with Marcos and Robredo neck to neck in the votes.](#) Robredo is not just the widow of an icon of good governance, in her own terms, as a human rights lawyer and a legislator in the Philippine Congress, she is a beacon of justice and hope. And with a splinter of more than 200,000 votes, the narrative of the Filipino people may change, that despite power and influence the voice of the majority wins.

Senegal: Senegalese Celebrated Democratic Model in Danger or Finally Rising?

Since the Senegalese president Macky Sall took office in 2012, many local human rights observers have quietly mentioned that power was not being exercised democratically. Having taken office a few months after the February 2012 riots against his predecessor, one would have thought that President Sall would have known better. The first years of his mandate were marked by world celebrated human rights achievements such as the criminalization of corruption and impunity at the highest level, the nomination of a woman as prime minister and the adoption of a state-wide plan of action for sustainable development. However in the same vein, demonstrations of opposition parties were outlawed, parliament did not adopt a single law that did not come from the executive branch and religious fundamentalism and its leaders' refusal to respect the laws of the secular state were tolerated if not encouraged.

The President recently took a step further in his attacks on Senegal democratic values by organizing a [referendum](#) to modify the constitution and extend his presidential term until 2019 instead of July 2017. The country has been paralyzed for several weeks by strikes of students, professors, civil servants and others asking for better living conditions and questioning the legitimacy of those governing the country. What is surprising is the deafening silence of regional and international media on this unprecedented situation.

For the first time in Senegalese recent history, the leaders of the Catholic Church, civil society movements, political parties from both opposition and ruling coalition, and Workers union have spoken in one voice against the [President's false attempts at reconciliation](#). This is an historical and hopefully unstoppable train towards transparency, accountability and nation-building that the

Senegalese women's movement is still shy to take but young feminists are already mobilizing troops to make sure that one of the stations it stops at is effective gender equality and respect for women's rights, freedom, agency and choice.