

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](#)

The struggle for abortion rights in Brazil

By Sinara Gumieri

The proposed constitutional amendment [PEC 181/2015](#), nicknamed "Trojan Horse", is the latest in a series of attempts to restrict abortion rights in Brazil led by the christian fundamentalist-dominated Lower House. The proposed bill's original text aimed at extending maternity leave for mothers of premature babies, but "right to life from conception" language was quickly inserted in the text. The bill doesn't directly address abortion, but restricting legal abortions is the sole purpose of the language included. On November 8th, 18 male representatives voted for the amendment - the only woman in the room voted against it. The special commission session ended with male MPs chanting "life yes, abortion no". The so called "bible caucus" threatens to strip Brazilian women and girls away from their basic rights to be free from reproductive coercion - abortion is only legal in the country in cases of rape, risk to the woman's life and fetal anencephaly. The bill, PEC 181/2015, needs two-thirds of the votes in both chambers of Congress to pass.

The "bible caucus's" legal strategy is allegedly inspired by the 1969 American Convention on Human Rights, in which article 4 states that "Every person has the right to have his life respected. This right shall be protected by law and, in general, from the moment of conception". The expression "in general" is a caveat to remember exceptions to the purpose of protecting life "from conception", but it is conveniently absent from the Brazilian bill text. It is worth remembering the 2012 Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR) ruling on the case [Artavia Murillo et al v. Costa Rica](#). Costa Rica had banned the assisted reproductive technique of in-vitro fertilization (IVF) under the claim that potential IVF related embryo destruction violated the right to life "from conception". IACHR decided instead that the ban violated rights to privacy, liberty, personal integrity and sexual health, the right to form a family, the right to be free from

discrimination, and the right to have access to technological progress. In doing so, the Court stated that there is [no absolute protection of life in gestation](#).

**This excerpt is from an article published on the [South Feminist Voices](#) blog. To read the full article, [click here](#).*

Militarization in Mexico

By Oriana López Uribe and Laurie Chambon

On November 30th, Mexico's Chamber of Deputies approved the [Law of Internal Security](#), which authorizes military involvement in domestic law enforcement activities. This Law is former President Felipe Calderón's legacy, which started the [war against drugs](#) and led to [170 000 deaths](#) and 25 000 missing people. It will allow the further militarization of an already violent country.

Militarization has never shown any evidence of being a solution to violence eradication. Quite to the contrary, in 11 years of the war against drugs in Mexico, general violence has grown. Arbitrary detentions, torture of civilians, deaths of journalists and threats and espionage on human rights defenders are things we are learning to live with.

The involvement of Mexican soldiers in public security is a real threat. Since 2006, many cases of [women raped and abused](#) at the hands of military officers were reported across the country, but more specifically in cities - such as Ciudad Juarez - where drug trafficking is important. Also, [33 out of 100 women in jails](#) were victims of sexual violations and 72 out of 100 suffered sexual harassment during their arrests, by policemen but also by Army and Navy members. Women reported the highest rates of rape in arrests carried out by the Navy, and 8 out of 10 arrests carried out by the Navy included rape.

Furthermore, the Federal Constitution (Art.13) establishes that offences against civilians perpetrated by members of the Armed Forces should be judged by civilian jurisdiction, while investigations into human rights' violation are

undertaken of the military power as written in the military code. The issue is that the latter is neither objective, transparent or independent and investigations are never done. This situation led the Inter-American Court to issue two sentences against Mexico for cases related to military jurisdiction when it comes to violence against women: the case of [Ines Fernandez Ortega and Valentina Rosendo Cantu](#). The only case that stood out as an example of how criminal investigations into military abuses against civilians should be carried out in [Mexico is the Castaños's](#) one which deals with the rape of 14 women by military forces.

With this law, the Army would have a permanent [acting role in public security](#). This means they would be able to arbitrarily decide when their intervention is needed, especially when "a social or political protest is not peaceful", or in case of "state of emergency", giving the Army power over other authorities.

The law is a huge threat to civilians in Mexico and to our almost nonexistent democracy. We have not learned from other countries in Latin America. The only hope we have now is that the Senate might be able to stop this law, if it takes into account the obscure times other countries in Latin America have gone through and the [international evidence](#) that shows this is not a solution.

Pakistan: Breaking Through The Digital Gender Gap: Online Violence Against Women By Sheena Hadi

As technology rapidly expands to new settings in the Global South, women and young people are perhaps the demographic that are most greatly impacted. In Pakistan, where mobility is a significant challenge for women, the internet and the social spaces it provides, has opened up mechanisms for communication and public interaction, which were otherwise largely closed to women. Needless to say, access to the Internet in a largely non-literate and rurally situated population is still limited as is women's access to mobile devices in Pakistan, where [the gender gap in cellphone usage and ownership is still wide](#). Yet, as technology becomes more affordable and accessible, more women are finding themselves with access to the Internet, and social media.

In many ways, the route to discourse and access to new information has paved the way for marginalized women and vulnerable groups, feeling more empowered. Recently, a 27-year-old trans

activist, Sarah Gill, [expressed in an article](#) how social media has not only saved her from sexual assault and violence but has also been a critical tool in holding the police accountable when they try to silence demonstrations protesting such violence. In another case, a young law student, Khadijah Siddiqi, who was stabbed by a classmate from an influential family, took to social media when her attacker was released on bail after [spending just 2 months in jail](#). Graphic photos of her wounds sparked a wave of support on social media, with hashtags such as [#FightLikeKhadija](#) trending, eventually forcing her court case to become a national dialogue rather than one shrouded in silence, as is often the occurrence with cases of violence against women.

Yet, with the stories of empowerment and women finding their voice through social media, there are many stories of women being trolled and victimized. While a cyber crime law exists (The Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act), there is little awareness about it and even less reporting in cases of online harassment, which are estimated [to impact 40% of women internet users](#). Recently, Ayesha Gulalai, a parliamentarian, accused Imran Khan, the leader of a major political party (and the party to which she belonged) of sexual harassment which created a social media storm. While public debate on the veracity of her claim was expected, social media was used as a mechanism for shame and abuse, with Gulalai [receiving direct threats of murder and acid attacks](#). Other prominent journalists and women who have spoken out boldly on issues such as minority rights have also faced significant online abuse including threats of exposing photographic evidence of so called "social transgressions".

In many ways, online spaces are manifesting the violence and abuse that is widespread against women in Pakistan, particularly in private spaces. As women claim public space, including cyber space, men who have conventionally held that space feel threatened, and respond with tactics that have traditionally worked to silence women. However, the examples of women fighting back and condemning all forms of violence against women, including online violence and harassment are growing in Pakistan. And as is the case the world over, a few strong women speaking out and seeking justice can set the tone for a much greater movement.

In Case You Missed It

RESURJ submission on online violence against women to the UN Special Rapporteur on VAW

In November 2017, the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women [called for submissions](#) from CSOs; views and inputs on practices of law regulating violence against women and sexual harassment online, including existing legislative models on prosecuting and punishing various forms of online violence against women. RESURJ has submitted with inputs and analysis from members in India, Mexico, Brazil, Nigeria, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and the UK, with recommendations as to how criminalization and regulation through civil law, should be just one strategy of a multi-pronged approach towards addressing technology-related and online violence against women. The submissions will be considered for the Special Rapporteurs presentation of a report to the Human Rights Council in June 2018.

[Click here](#) to download and read the full text.

RESURJ contribution to Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy Journal

RESURJ members have authored an article in the inaugural [Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy Journal](#). Building on RESURJ's analysis *Cut the Strings: Bodily Autonomy Needs Sustainable Funding*, published in March 2017, the article develops the analysis to consider the far-reaching impact that 'foreign funding' and development assistance policy can have on women's agency and bodily autonomy, and how they play out in women's lives.

"...the struggle to address North and South dynamics emerging from a long history of imperialism, and the far-reaching impact that development aid policy can have on women's agency and bodily autonomy remain unaddressed."

Please see the article [here](#).

The full journal print version is available [here](#).