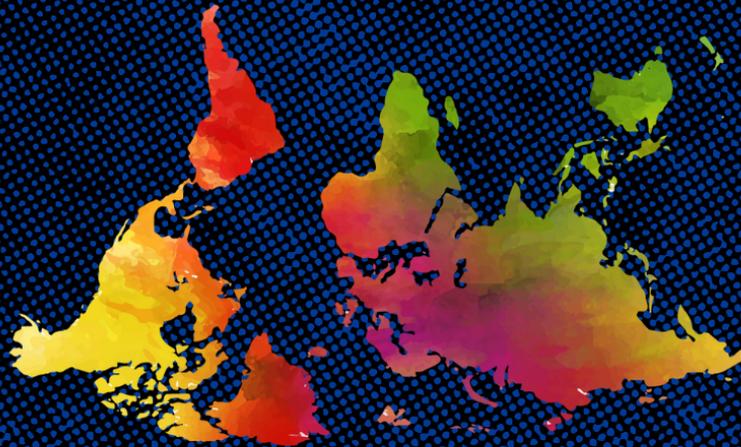




Sexual Politics from March to May 2022

June 2022



First words

Since April 2020, [SPW newsletters](#) have been tracking and analyzing sexual politics in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. After two years of health crisis and after brutal and repeated spikes of mortality spread over several regions and countries, the pandemic is finally ebbing thanks to the immunization achieved by vaccines as well as the evolution of the virus.

This ebb, however, neither prevents new outbreaks nor magically erases the dramatic legacies of the pandemic. So let's keep talking about pandemics, whether it is the COVID-19 pandemic or new epidemic waves. For example, as this newsletter was being finalized, the alarm sounded about the global spread of monkeypox, a disease hitherto confined to the African continent, once again confirming how easily epidemic crises can

spread [stigmas](#). No less important, in this issue we also talk, albeit very concisely, about the invasion of Ukraine, which, like in many past instances, intertwines the effects of the "plague" with the tragedy of war.

Finally some good SPW news. We released two new SPW publications. In March, we published the e-book [Políticas antigênero na América Latina em contexto de pandemia](#), which will soon be translated into English and Portuguese. In May, we launched the two versions of [Termos ambíguos do debate político atual: o pequeno dicionário que você não sabia que existia](#), published exclusively in Portuguese. For this issue, we have a collaboration by [Maria Luísa Peralta](#) on the issue of surrogacy in the context of the war in Ukraine. Finally, we congratulate Gloria Careaga, an SPW board member who was awarded the Felipa de Souza Award by OutRight Action International. [Learn more](#) about the award and the ceremony.

Happy reading!

SPW Team (Sonia Corrêa, Nana Soares and Fábio Grotz)

The (near-terminal) state of the pandemic and its legacy

Although there is talk everywhere about the end of the pandemic, localized outbreaks continue to occur. Since December 2021, the spread of the Omicron variant has produced waves of contagion in Europe, the Americas, and Asia, where it has been especially acute in Beijing and especially Shanghai. In this wave, the virus finally reached North Korea, where there is no [access to vaccines](#). Following this, new COVID-19 outbreaks erupted in [California](#), [Mumbai](#), India, and [Brazil](#). While health officials from the WHO and nation-states continue to insist on maintaining restrictions and precautions to curtail infection, fatigue from collective and individual preventive measures is everywhere. However, in fact, the pandemic is not over.

As the [New York Times' COVID-19 tracker](#) shows, almost 70% of the world's population has received at least one dose of the vaccine, and around 30% have received two doses. Several countries in Europe and the Americas are already administering the third and fourth doses, but vaccination rates in Africa remain [negligible](#), as is the case in some countries in other regions such as Guatemala, Haiti, Jamaica, and Suriname (in the Americas), in nations affected by armed conflicts such as Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and Afghanistan, as well as in Ukraine and other countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

In other words, vaccine apartheid persists and the global disparities in COVID-19 treatments are enormous. Thus, the news published in late May that Switzerland was going to [destroy](#) more than 600,000 expired doses of RNA vaccines (Moderna) is shocking. It is also unfortunate that the European Union and the US have in various

ways obstructed the WTO negotiations regarding patent flexibility that had gained momentum and visibility in 2021.

To conclude, the pandemic, which has resulted in the deaths of more than [6 million people](#) and cast a dark shadow of grief and mourning around the world, has also caused persistent epidemiological after-effects that are still poorly understood and a devastating socioeconomic legacy that will not be resolved in the short term.

The epidemic of worsening inequalities

To the millions of dead and debilitated and bereaved survivors is added the global economic crisis that has led to a return to high levels of poverty, misery, food insecurity, hunger, unemployment, and greater job insecurity. Between 2020 and 2022, the movement online of social life reached an unprecedented scale, and even if this can be read as beneficial for the service economy in a pandemic context, the deleterious effects of this reorganization must also be accounted for, especially in the [world of work](#). Financialization has also continued, in Brazil, for example, where a significant portion of the generous emergency aid has been channelled to the [financial system](#).

Above all, contrary to what was speculated when the pandemic struck, patterns of inequality have been exacerbated and the rich have gotten richer. This worsening is so pronounced that the title of the 2022 Oxfam report released at Davos is [Profiting from Pain](#). According to the analysis, last year 573 people joined the club of the super-rich, whose combined fortunes have grown by \$3.8 trillion since 2020.

As we know, in 2021, Brazil's private healthcare companies made a massive profit while COVID-19 ravaged the country. In 2021, according to Oxfam, food giant Cargill made a net profit of \$5 billion, the highest since its founding in 1865, and expects to earn even more this year. In contrast, an epidemic of hunger and food insecurity is gripping the world. A recent Brazilian [study](#) by the Getúlio Vargas Foundation (FGV) also shows that food insecurity rates have skyrocketed, especially among women (46% of the female population now lives in food insecurity).

Post-pandemic politics: autocratic mutations

As we have discussed since 2020, the pandemic has encouraged and deepened dynamics of de-democratization and authoritarianism, the growth of right-wing forces, and autocratic tendencies. The past three months have seen a repeat of the pandemic exception pattern seen in 2020 in China. The new outbreak in [Beijing](#) and [Shanghai](#) has led to the adoption of restrictions to meet the Covid Zero directive set by the central government. Among other measures, children who have tested positive have been [separated](#) from their families to break the chain of contagion, and residential buildings have had their [entrances locked](#) to prevent the movement of residents. In other words,

the management of the crisis once again has become a [window of opportunity](#) for the Chinese regime's authoritarianism to escalate. On the other hand, social reaction and resistance to the new measures have revealed [fractures and power plots](#) at the heart of Xi Jinping's administration.

In 2021, the [report](#) by the Swedish V-DEM institute characterized these trends as the viralization of autocracy. Even though since 2020 many leaders like Xi himself or [Bukele](#) have taken advantage of COVID-19 to consolidate authoritarian measures, in most countries de-democratization and authoritarianism should not be read only as an effect of the pandemic because those tendencies were in evidence much earlier. They have only multiplied and intensified more recently. The [V-DEM Report 2022](#) shows that, worldwide, indicators of democracy have returned to the levels of 1989, when the Cold War ended. This decline has occurred everywhere, including in the European Union.

The number of coups broke records in 2021: six military rebellions and one autoup, all on the African continent. In addition, the number of extreme autocracies rose from 25 to 30. One of them is Nicaragua, where the regime has expelled the [OAS](#) from the country and brutal political repression that is getting worse every day has now [targeted feminist organizations](#). This tragedy has been unfolding [since 2018](#) under the complacent gaze of Europe, the US, and the Latin American left.

The report also notes that autocracy is metamorphosing, the strongest feature of this change being the multiplication of "democratic authoritarian" regimes in which democratic formalities coexist with state arbitrariness, threats to institutions, and increasing constraint on the public sphere, and persecution of minorities or other "internal enemies." Today, 44% of the world's population lives under such regimes, in countries such as Hungary, Poland, [Serbia](#), Russia, El Salvador, Brazil, several African countries, and also the US, where signs of democratic erosion remain palpable.

The list also includes [India](#) and [Sri Lanka](#), where a broad movement currently protesting the economic crisis is being brutally repressed by the regime. In this group, there are 35 countries in which, during 2021, there was a worsening of arbitrary rule and state violence – as exemplified by the [police slaughters in Brazil](#) – and violations of freedom of expression, but also conflicts and state-authorized intercommunal lethal violence, as it is the case in [India](#), a violence that has now [extended directly to the political opposition](#).

The autocracies of the present coexist with more or less maintained formal democratic procedures. Thus, the dynamics of de-democratization are blatantly manifested in electoral processes. Starting with Asia, in the Philippines, the son of former dictator Ferdinand Marcos, Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr., was recently [elected president](#) in a "legitimate" process. He was supported by Rodrigo Duterte, who has presided over the country since 2016, using and abusing executive power, including legitimizing extrajudicial executions. In Europe, meanwhile, Viktor Orbán was [re-elected to a fifth](#)

[term](#) as prime minister of Hungary, as his party, Fidesz, won a large majority in parliament in April's elections, confirming the effectiveness of the strategy of [institutional erosion](#) used by Orbán to stay in power.

However, potential erosions of democracy are also taking place in countries that score well on the V-DEM index. This is the case in France, where the [reelection of Emmanuel Macron](#) was threatened by right-winger Marine Le Pen, who had 41.46% of the vote in the second round, a significant improvement over the 2017 vote. This electoral process also witnessed the furor caused by the campaign of the ultra-rightist Eric Zemmour, guided by disinformation, racist phantoms, and discrediting democratic institutions. As was well summarized by the journalist [Jamil Chad](#), Macron was reelected, but the extreme right won (read our [compilation](#) in English/Spanish). And in South Korea, a country that scores well on V-DEM, a [conservative former prosecutor](#) was elected president by a small margin of votes. His [speeches](#) combine the sharp defence of "freedom" now brandished by all right-wing populist leaders and avowedly anti-feminist positions.

Unusual electoral dynamics that imply democratic risks have also been seen in Latin America. In Costa Rica, the highest-ranked country in the region in the V-DEM index, an outsider was elected president, contrary to predictions that the traditional right-wing would win. [Rodrigo Chavez](#) is an ultra-neoliberal economist who had lived outside the country for thirty years and resigned from his post at the World Bank after being accused of [sexual and psychological harassment](#). As soon as he was elected, he aligned himself with the political forces of fundamentalist evangelicalism that almost came to [power in 2018](#) and measures to [restrict therapeutic abortion](#) were immediately announced.

Similarly, the Colombian election held at the end of May was won by leftist [candidate Gustavo Petro](#), but an outsider made it to the runoff. [Rodolfo Hernández](#) is a 77-year-old engineer who, like Petro, is running with a black woman as his running mate, and, at the beginning of June, he was leading the polls by a margin of three to four percentage points. Hernández was mayor of Bucaramanga and defends a radical pro-market agenda and technocratic policy. However, he is not automatically aligned with the anti-gender and anti-abortion agendas that characterize the Colombian right. In his candidacy, it is the [methods and positions](#) typical of right-wing populists, who talk directly to the electorate and show contempt for institutions, that suggest democratic risks.

Finally, in Brazil, an icon of de-democratization in the region and in the world, although the presidential elections aren't until October, the electoral dynamics are already in place. A hyper-polarized election between Bolsonaro and former president Lula, who [steadily leads the polls](#), is being planned. Lula's advantage inevitably inflames the authoritarian temptations of Bolsonaro, who has once again attacked the [electoral courts](#) and the [electronic ballot boxes](#), a systematic suspicion that is a [strong symptom](#) of

autocracy.

Even more serious is that since April the press has been [talking openly](#) of the possibility of a coup if Lula wins the elections. In mid-May, at a meeting organized by three research institutes linked to the military, a [document](#) was released attacking "globalism", "judicial activism", and the "ideologization of education". The text also proposes a radical privatization program and plans political control of the country until 2035. The coming months will therefore be crucial not only for Brazilian democracy but, as [Jamil Chade](#) observes, to define the country we want to be.

The War in Ukraine: antecedents, effects, and significance

The V-DEM 2022 report correctly notes that the invasion of Ukraine cannot be disconnected from Putin's accession to power twenty years ago and thus compounds the long-term scenario of the resurgence and sedimentation of autocracy in the 21st century. Within this long cycle must also be included the invasions of Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003), which coincided temporally with the ascension of the Russian leader and, above all, triggered dynamics of the de-democratization of the fabric of American politics. No less significantly, the [spectres of these wars](#) haunt Putin's motivations and justifications for invading Ukraine.

In the intermingling of geopolitical interests and rationales that preceded the new war, which are complex and profound, the behaviour of the US, Europe, and NATO carry undeniable weight. However, this is still a war of aggression against a sovereign country and, as such, [must be repudiated](#). Moreover, the looming nuclear threat cannot be downplayed and, as [Ivan Krastev](#) rightly analyzes, neither can Russia's internal dynamics be excluded from the analyses that try to explain the conflict. Likewise, the Ukrainian political scenario is complex and contradictory since both populism and hyper-conservative religious forces and extreme right-wing groups flourish there.

The war also brought neocolonial ghosts and realities to the surface. It has illuminated the long and brutal history of [Russian domination](#) (including Soviet) which, to a large extent, explains the vigour of Ukrainian resistance. However, it has also laid bare the [scandalous contrast](#) between the generous opening of European borders to people leaving Ukraine and the racism and xenophobia that persists towards "other" refugees and migrants. Also, early in the conflict, it was strikingly colonialist for the global press to insist that Ukraine "is not a failed state of the global south".

We made this assessment as the war completed [one hundred days](#). By early June 2022, the Russian army [controlled 20% of Ukrainian territory](#), thousands of lives [had been lost](#) in the carnage of the conflict, entire cities [had been razed](#), and atrocities of all kinds had been committed, not least by the Russian army, and [millions of refugees](#) had left Ukraine. In Russia, [brutal political repression](#) has prevented demonstrations of

resistance and pushes those who oppose war and authoritarianism into exile. The economic sanctions imposed by the US and Europe have had no immediate effect, diplomacy has failed, and militarization continues to escalate, yet the outcome of the conflict remains unpredictable.

On the other hand, the impact of the war on the already pandemic-stricken global economy has been devastating. The [fall in food production](#) threatens to worsen the food security situation, especially in Africa and the Middle East, and the effects on global production chains indicate the prospect of de-globalization and [stagflation](#). The war is indeed altering the geopolitical cartography that had solidified since the end of the Cold War. According to the political scientist Fyodor Lukianov, it creates an environment in which assumptions of universality are abandoned in favour of a "pluralism of values" and in which the interplay of interests returns to the classical logic of the balance of power and war as conflict resolution (to understand the ideological substratum of this shift it is worth listening to [Masha Gessen](#) analyzing Putin's view of modernity).

Against this backdrop, as our [compilation](#) shows, both the conditions of war and the narratives about it are densely populated by gender and sexuality. At centre stage is Vladimir Putin, an iconic figure of toxic political masculinity, a vocal leader of the hyper-conservative camp that funds anti-gender political figures and organizations in Europe.

Last October, Putin proposed that "gender ideology" be [defined](#) as a "crime against humanity", and he certainly agrees with Moscow's Orthodox patriarch, who in March 2022 justified war as a [measure](#) to "contain the Western imposition of homosexuality". Looking at the scene from Latin America, neither the solid military agreement between Russia and the Ortega-Murillo regime in Nicaragua nor [Bolsonaro's visit to Putin](#) when the drums of war were already beating are politically trivial.

On May 8, the webinar Transfeminist Solidarity for Ukraine, convened by Ukrainian philosopher Irina Zherebkina, Judith Butler, and Sabine Hark, took place. In this exchange, which is [available on video](#), Ukrainian and Eastern European feminists denounce the imperialist nature of the war and analyze how anti-gender ideology is embedded at the core of the conflict. They also courageously elaborate on the vacuity of decontextualized anti-war and anti-militarization stances that claim to speak for them. This dialogue is a key reference for understanding the complexity of the conflict and better capturing the feminist and democratic vigour of the Ukrainian resistance.

Anti-gender politics

The place that the repudiation of gender occupies in the war setting is the most relevant feature of anti-gender politics in the first months of 2022. There are, however, other significant dynamics to report, starting with the fracture that the conflict has produced among the forces moving in this sphere. It is striking, for example, in the contrast between Poland's radically pro-Ukrainian position and the relations that Viktor Orbán continues to maintain with the Kremlin. In Latin America, the Guatemalan Giammattei government, which last year signed the so-called Geneva consensus just before Russia, is also aligned with Ukraine and has [severed](#) relations with Moscow. To better capture the motivations behind these shifts, we recommend reading the [article](#) written by an ultra-Catholic Australian intellectual as soon as the conflict broke out. This differentiation of positions in the face of war, however, does not seem to be affecting the mobilization capacity of these forces.

The busy travels of Angela Gandra, the national secretary of the family of the Bolsonaro government, between January and May 2022, illustrate this vitality. In January, the secretary was in Bogotá for a meeting of the Arte Academy, a training program of the Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF), and while in Bogotá, she met with José Antonio Kast. In February, just before the Madrid Forum meeting in Bogotá, Gandra participated in a side event of the UN Commission for Social Development on strengthening the family.

In March she went to Guatemala with Damares Alves to participate in the Iberoamerican Summit in Defense of Life and Family and to unveil a document in defence of life described in her posts as a tribute to the Geneva Consensus. She then went to Dubai for public activities at Expo 22 and to Saudi Arabia; in both countries, she met with local authorities. Finally, in May, accompanied by the new minister of women, family and human rights, Gandra went to the United Nations in New York, and then to the OAS, in Washington, where Alejandro Ordoñez, Colombia's ambassador to the organization, announced the [country's accession](#) to the Geneva Consensus. This accession did not have much effect in Colombia, but it is significant on the international level, an important gain of the ultraconservative diplomacy conducted by the secretary since 2019.

Next, in Budapest, Gandra attended the Fourth Transatlantic Summit of the Political Network for Values, now chaired by José Antonio Kast, where she was highly praised. The central theme of the event was freedom, and it denounced the "systematic distortion of human rights promoted by the left, feminist and LGBTTI movements." Prayers were also offered at the event for an end to abortion in the world. It is not an exaggeration to say that Budapest is becoming a Rome of neoconservatism and the

ultra-right. A few days before the summit a conference of the North American platform CPAC, which will soon meet again in Campinas, Brazil, [took place](#) in the city.

Anti-gender laws, public policies, and social movements

In this new realm of anti-gender politics, the most acute conflicts have been over LGBTQIA+ rights, especially trans, and gender and sexuality in education. Starting with Hungary, concurrent with the elections that confirmed Orbán in power, a referendum did not get [enough votes](#) to ratify the 2021 law that had abolished the curriculum of respect for sexual diversity in schools. However, the absolute majority obtained by Orbán in the legislative elections indicates that he has the [political strength and impetus](#) for similar attacks in the coming years. Besides, as the [BBC](#) analyzes, the educational system as a whole is subject to blatant ideological policing. In Africa, in Mozambique, a textbook was attacked for [allegedly propagating](#) homosexuality, and in early May in Peru, congress passed a [law](#) authorizing families to revise school curricula with special emphasis on sex education. Meanwhile, in Argentina, the Ministry of Education in Buenos Aires signed a [resolution](#) prohibiting teachers from using inclusive language in the classroom because it would hinder learning. The argument is based on a so-called concern for the "educational emergency generated by the pandemic" to oppose inclusive language.

The US and Brazil: The fiercest battles

While these clashes are everywhere, they have been most clearly virulent in the US and Brazil. In the US, the multiplication of laws, decrees, and policies against trans rights and abolishing gender and sexuality curricula is so intense that it is [difficult to count them](#). It is estimated that by 2022 more than [230 discriminatory bills](#) will have been introduced whose targets are trans people's rights to bathrooms corresponding to their social identity, diversity instruction in schools, participation in sports, and access to health care ([learn more here](#)). In the specific case of education, several states have adopted [laws](#) against the teaching of diversity in schools and more than half of the states are censoring [books in schools and libraries](#). Importantly, in most cases, these attacks are associated with a repudiation of critical race theory. This escalation has hit an unlikely target: in Florida, the Disney Co. has lost some of its [tax privileges](#) for its stand against a [state law](#) that practically bans the discussion of sexual diversity in schools. The [New York Times](#) reports on the imbroglio. In the case of sports, the most recent and blatant absurdity was passed in the state of [Ohio](#), where the legislature voted that not only all trans girls be banned from playing sports in schools but that, if in doubt, a [genital check](#) be performed.

In the Brazilian case, the most relevant fact was the approval by the Chamber of Deputies, in late May, of a [law](#) that legalizes homeschooling as a guideline of educational policy. This law, considered a priority by the Bolsonaro government, should

be understood as a development in the wars against "gender" and "ideology" in education, ongoing since 2013. It is inspired by the ultraconservative theses that the family should have full tutelage over the education of children and adolescents and that school is an "ideologically dangerous" place. [Salomão Ximenes](#), in an article published in UOL, evaluates that the law as passed deprecates the school as a public good, devalues the professional teaching profession, and deconstructs an essential core of the fundamental right to education.

Clashes mobilized by anti-gender feminism

In the UK the wars over trans rights that we have been reporting on since 2020 continue to simmer. Prime Minister Boris Johnson [declared](#) he was opposed to the participation of "biological men [...] in women's sporting events" and the government announced it will ban so-called conversion therapies, but only for gay and bisexual people, [excluding trans people](#) - a criterion that contradicts even public health system (NHS) guidelines.

It is worth mentioning that this was happening while the same government was organizing the ["Safe to be me" conference](#) to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the first Pride Parades in the country. The adoption of the new law against conversion therapies, however, prompted a mass boycott of the conference that led to the cancellation of the meeting. An [alternative conference](#) was convened whose agenda questions the image laundering triggered by the conservative administration that sought to portray the UK as an international leader of the LGBTQIA+ agenda when, in fact, a significant portion of this population there has its rights increasingly threatened. Although the boycott is a positive development, nothing indicates that the anti-trans attacks will abate in the near future.

The multilateral system as a battleground

These tensions and conflagrations inevitably carry over into multilateral arenas. During the 66th UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW66) in March, the central theme, gender and climate change, was overshadowed by multiple tensions. The US NGO C-Fam circulated a petition claiming that anti-abortion groups were left out of the negotiations because they had different views from "powerful groups with left-wing biases". In addition, feminists who define themselves as "gender critical" and oppose sex work attacked the international human rights system for including gender identity language in statements, resolutions, and campaigns, arguing that this definition blurs cissexual identities. Citizen GO was once again present and widely disseminated these positions through its digital channels (for a detailed analysis we suggest reading the [OpenDemocracy](#) story and the [CESR](#) memo).

The World Health Assembly was also the scene of tensions and disputes. In the last session, the discussion on the new global strategy to respond to HIV, Hepatitis B, and

STDs was postponed due to disagreements on established terms such as "sexual rights", "sexuality" and "sexual orientation". The final resolution was only approved because the Mexican delegation, at the last minute, proposed removing the glossary defining these terms, a decision that was supported by Brazil. Countries that were leading the offensive against the terms, such as Saudi Arabia, were still not satisfied and abstained from the final vote. For more details, see [Health Policy Watch](#).

Abortion Rights: Back to the Future?

Roe v. Wade

In the field of abortion rights, the most significant event of the last three months was undoubtedly the [leak](#) of the draft decision on the new Mississippi state abortion law drafted by Justice Samuel Alito and expressing the views of the ultraconservative group on the US Supreme Court. The document explicates the reversal of the decision that guarantees constitutional protection to the right to abortion, established in 1973 in the case *Roe v. Wade*, and reiterated by subsequent decisions. This potentially extreme regression results from the persistent conservative backlash to abortion rights that ensued soon after the 1973 decision, culminating in Trump's appointment of three hyper-conservative justices (2018-2020) and the passage, as of 2021, of [draconian legislation](#) in six states, including Mississippi.

To justify the reversal, the draft lists legal theses and English common law decisions from the 13th and 17th centuries, as well as the opinion of an American judge from [colonial times](#). It argues, for example, that neither the country's legal tradition nor its history recognize the right to abortion and questions, from various angles, the use of the right-to-privacy premise as the anchor of *Roe v. Wade*. Several of the critiques of the text challenge the first of these arguments, rightly emphasizing that the original text of the Constitution did not mention women's rights nor did it condemn slavery, which does not justify these omissions. They also emphasize that the right to privacy is firmly established in legal doctrine and cannot be applied selectively. The legal arguments put forward by the conservative majority tell us that in the Supreme Court debate, with potential global effects, there are starkly divergent conceptions in dispute regarding not only abortion but the very foundations of constitutionality and jurisprudential procedures, with potential repercussions on human rights more broadly.

Another aspect to be considered concerns the meaning and motivations of the leak. The episode prompted interesting journalistic investigations showing that Supreme Court leaks are rare but not exceptional, one having occurred in relation to the *Roe v. Wade* decision itself. Right-wing forces immediately accused the staff of progressive justices of having been the perpetrators of the leak. More accurate analysis, such as that of [Françoise Girard](#), suggests, however, that the leak may actually favour the conservative bench, as it may have been a strategy to force Chief Justice Roberts to align himself with

the extreme position proposed by the draft. The episode, above all, contributed to eroding the credibility of the court, already affected by recent allegations of [influence-peddling](#) by Virginia Thomas, the ultra-right-wing wife of Justice Clarence Thomas, which led to the launch of a thorough investigation.

Given the current membership of the Supreme Court, the content of the potential decision is not surprising and was already anticipated since the December 2021 hearing on the case (read analysis by [Françoise Girard](#)). It is essential to remember that the text reflects the view of the court's conservative majority but does not reflect the position of the majority of American society in which three out of four people are in favour of abortion rights. One possibility suggested to limit the effects of the announced decision would be the approval of the [Women's Health Protection Act \(WPHA\)](#), passed by the House last year, but which needed to be approved by the Senate. Brought to a vote on May 11, the [bill was defeated](#) by 51 votes to 49, indicating that political conditions in Congress are also very difficult.

The effects of the reversal will be devastating in the US context, legitimizing the draconian laws adopted since last year and drastically affecting the lives of the poorest and blackest women with the lowest educational levels and income: 49% of them live below the poverty line. But the cross-border impacts will also be unmistakable. If upheld, the decision will inspire legal initiatives in other countries and energize anti-abortion forces around the world. In Brazil, for example, Bolsonaro at once irresponsibly declared that he will [use the arguments](#) in the draft to block the processing of ADPF 442 in the Brazilian Supreme Court, even though he has no power to do so.

The end of Roe v. Wade will also free up financial resources hitherto invested in the US to achieve this goal which can be used to finance anti-abortion campaigns in other countries. The Guardian has published two stories ([here](#) and [here](#)) examining how the US decision opens avenues for these forces to begin attacking abortion rights legislation in Europe.

With regard to Latin America, several articles have been published arguing that legal reforms and decisions on abortion rights in the region (Argentina, Colombia, Mexico and Uruguay) are not directly threatened by what happened in the US, either because they are legislative decisions (Uruguay and Argentina), or because they are based on legal grounds that are not the same as those that informed Roe v. Wade. [Ardilla](#), for example, recounts that the Colombian court's decision is based on the premises of dignity and overcoming inequality, which are absent in the 1973 American decision. On the other hand, one cannot dismiss the fact that the intensified globalization of the anti-abortion war will have inevitable impacts on the region.

Other obstacles and setbacks

In the context of the debates on abortion rights, there are other setbacks to mention, such as, for example, situations arising from the war in Ukraine. The newspaper "[Público](#)" and the [Brussels Times](#) have published articles about the dire conditions to which, in Poland, pregnant Ukrainian refugees are subjected after being raped by Russian soldiers, since, as we know, the country has one of the most restrictive abortion laws in the world. Other restrictions also made news in Europe. As a report by [openDemocracy](#) shows, European women living in countries where there are restrictions on abortion can no longer, since Brexit, access the procedure in the UK.

In the last three months, there have also been signs of the spread of anti-abortion activities on the African continent. In Kenya, a Christian association has [joined](#) with the Spanish CitizenGo platform's representative in the country to challenge a recent Supreme Court ruling that [access to safe abortion as a human right](#) should be reflected in the country's laws. Even in Latin America, despite recent gains, reversals have also been reported. In Ecuador, the fierce fight for the right to abortion in the case of rape led to the [passage of a law](#) that although very limited was vetoed by President Lasso. And in Guatemala, which is now, like Brazil, one of the most active centres of opposition to abortion, new draconian legislation was passed against abortion, equal marriage, and school teaching on sexual diversity. However, under pressure from donor countries, the president declared that he would [veto the new law](#).

As this newsletter was being finalized, another episode of attacks on the right to abortion was seen in Brazil: the Secretariat of Primary Care of the Ministry of Health [released](#) the manual "Technical care for prevention, evaluation and conduct in cases of abortion", which recommends the investigation of women who resort to the procedure even in cases permitted by law.

Abortion Rights: The good news

The World Health Organization (WHO) has released a [guide](#) with more than 50 recommendations for making abortion safe. The document was released on March 8 and includes a recommendation for the decriminalization of abortion, as recommended by the 1995 Beijing Conference.

In [Chile](#), the right to abortion has been included in the new draft constitution, which will be voted on in July and put to a referendum in September. In Mexico, where the Supreme Court ruled the criminalization of abortion unconstitutional in September 2021, the states of [Sinaloa](#), [Guerrero](#), and [Baja California Sur](#) passed reforms that decriminalized the practice, bringing to nine the number of states where the right to abortion is guaranteed. And in late May, Spain passed a [revised abortion law](#). From

now on, [young people as young as 16](#) can terminate a pregnancy without requiring consent. Isabel Valdés gives a good summary of the changes in this [report](#) from El País.

In Brazil, where Bolsonaro celebrated the contents of the leaked draft on Roe v. Wade and the government has just adopted a drastic and unconstitutional measure to coerce women from accessing the right to abortion in the case of rape, the political debate on the issue was already heated. In April, former president Lula, the leading candidate in the polls for the presidency, spoke out in favour of the termination of pregnancy as "a right for everyone and a public health problem". The speech, which had wide coverage in the press and was both supported and criticized by a wide range of political actors, definitely fostered debate on the issue, usually avoided in electoral periods. It is also interesting to note that a [recent poll](#) finds that 74% of Brazilians are in favour of maintaining or expanding the range of abortion cases permitted by law. As we were finishing this newsletter, a [Datafolha poll](#) indicated a drop in support for the total prohibition of the procedure in Brazil. Read our [compilation](#) of reactions to Lula's statement.

Finally, it is vital to stress that the reaction to the potential reversal of Roe v. Wade has also been very positive. The forces supporting abortion rights have mobilized very quickly in the US, and the inertia that seemed to have set in after almost 50 years of guaranteed rights is being overcome. The North American press, as well as global and national media outlets, has covered the episode in a comprehensive and detailed manner. The New York Times podcast "[The Daily](#)", for example, revisited previous episodes on the history of the decision and made very substantial new reports on the subject. Also, in late May, The Cut and New York Magazine produced a [special joint issue](#) that is, in effect, an updated manual on how to access a safe abortion even under very restrictive conditions. We have made a [compilation](#) of the published analyses of the event and the reactions and mobilizations that have followed.

LGBTQ+ rights: setbacks and threats

In sub-Saharan Africa, even harsher penalties for homosexuality are being passed, even in countries where the conduct is already criminalized. In [Ghana](#), the proposal to toughen the penalty came from evangelical activists, who took to the streets to support toughening the legislation. On the other hand, as Kenyan activists warn, accusing the judiciary of delays in the [investigation of a brutal murder](#) of a non-binary lesbian, hate crimes that affect the LGBTQIA+ population do not cause as much of a stir.

In Asia, there is also bad news. In Singapore, there was no tightening of restrictive legislation, but an [opportunity was missed](#) to annul the national law criminalizing sex between men. The court that tried the case argued that the men who brought the suit were not at real risk of prosecution. In Qatar, the crackdown on LGBTQIA+ people seems like it will be the focus during the World Cup, as the government has already

announced that it will [confiscate](#) such symbols as rainbow flags. International bodies and networks have expressed concerns about these potential human rights violations, but no concrete action has been taken so far and the [discrimination continues](#) quite explicitly.

Meanwhile in Latin America, in Cuba, LGBT+ activists and ultraconservative religious people physically confronted each other in the city of Vedado. A worship service, which mentioned "conversion to heterosexuality" and "prayers to eliminate the deviations" of homosexuals, was met with protests from activists on the island. Cubacute [reported](#) the episode in detail.

Sexual Politics: Good News

Considering Hungary's centrality in the transnational dynamics of anti-gender politics, as mentioned earlier, it is very positive news that the [Orbán government was defeated](#) in the referendum to ratify the law banning LGBTQIA+ content in books and advertisements. It is also important to note the return of sex education to [Uganda's](#) school curricula.

[New Zealand](#) and [Greece](#) have banned so-called "conversion therapies" - unlike the UK, without excluding trans people. Kuwait's Constitutional Court declared [unconstitutional](#) a law criminalizing "imitation of the other sex". We also highlight that in the state of [Jalisco](#) (Mexico) and in [Chile](#), same-sex marriage is now permitted by law.

Argentina celebrated [10 years](#) of its [gender identity law](#), and the national census [recorded and documented](#), for the first time, self-perception about sexual orientation and gender identity (this last question, as we have already reported, had been judicially challenged by anti-gender feminists). In Brazil, demographic data on sexual orientation collected by the National Health Survey was published, and these [results were criticized](#) by LGBTQIA+ researchers and activists {EN}. In addition, a decision by the Acre state court ordered the 2022 census to include questions about [sexual orientation and gender identity](#), a decision already rejected by IBGE, which [threatens to postpone](#) the survey once again if it has to include such data.

Finally, we applaud the condemnation of the [deportation](#) of Brazilian activist Keila Simpson, president of Antra (National Association of Transvestites and Transsexuals). Simpson was prevented from entering Mexico where she was to participate in the World Social Forum on the grounds that her social name was not rectified in her documentation and that she had no return ticket. She was detained for about ten hours and held incommunicado at the airport, returning to Brazil the next day. The episode generated a vigorous [wave of protests](#) against this act of flagrant transphobic discrimination, in Brazil and in Mexico, and the incident was widely reported in the Brazilian press.

Sex Work

Belgium's parliament has passed a reform [law](#) that decriminalizes sex work, making the country the first in Europe to recognize such a legal status for prostitution. On the other hand, the law also set increased penalties for pimping. The state of Victoria in Australia also [decriminalized the practice](#) – by a wide margin in a parliamentary vote – making it the third state in the country to do so. And in India, the Supreme Court [ruled](#) in favour of sex workers, reaffirming the legality of the profession and mandating their dignified treatment as they are commonly disrespected by police authorities.

Gender Violence and other feminist debates

In Brazil, the Brazilian Public Security Forum released [distressing figures](#) on the prevalence of sexual violence, showing that the problem is far from being a government priority – a diagnosis corroborated by recent [research by Inesc](#) showing the minuscule budget allocation for combating violence against women over the past four years.

In Peru, President Pedro Castillo has proposed [chemical castration](#) for sex offenders, demonstrating the attachment of Latin American leftists to punitive populism. As [Violeta Barrientos](#) and [Susana Chávez](#) point out in excellent articles analyzing the president's proposal, this rationale not only ignores the power asymmetries involved in sexual violence but also disregards the need for public policies to prevent violence and the secondary effects of such punitive measures.

Another issue that gained wide media attention was the litigation between actress Amber Heard and her ex-husband, actor Johnny Depp. The event was accompanied by a flood of misogyny and anti-feminist attacks on the networks, as, as some outlets pointed out, the case was exploited by far-right forces. We [compiled](#) the episode and its repercussions. We highlight in particular the ["Debatable" newsletter](#), from the New York Times, which addresses the weakening and debates the limits of the #metoo movement five years after its emergence.

Finally, the disclosure of the appalling rates of political violence against women and LGBTQIA+ people in Brazil is gaining relevance. The agenda gained visibility after the visit of the United Nations special rapporteur on freedom of assembly and association, Clément Nyaletsossi Voule. The rapporteur was [firm in stating](#) that political violence in Brazil has a clear racial and gender bias, in addition to having a serious impact on the LGBTQIA+ community, and that the severity of the incidents is destroying Brazilian democracy by preventing candidates from running for office. This was the case for [Manuela D'Ávila](#), who ruled out participating in the 2022 election because of successive attacks on and threats to her and her family. The UN rapporteur's appeal finds support in a [recent survey](#) released by #VoteLGBT, which showed that attacks and underfunding are also the hallmarks of LGBTQIA+ candidacies in Brazil. This [text from](#)

[Conectas](#) highlights some important milestones in the issue of political violence against women in the country.

Farewell

On the 19th, we lost Adrienne Germain, co-founder of the International Women's Health Coalition, a pioneer of reproductive rights, a tireless companion in the United Nations debates in the 1990s, and a historical partner in this struggle in Brazil. This is an inestimable loss that stirs the memories of many of us who, for decades, dialogued and collaborated with Adrienne in international forums. She was a dear friend, an example of tenacity and integrity. To remember Adrienne we share a beautiful article by [Margareth Arilha](#) and notes by [Carmen Barroso](#) and [Fós Feminista](#).

We recommend

Resources

- [Dossiê de Mortes e Violências contra LGBTI+ no Brasil](#)
- [A conta do desmonte – Balanço do Orçamento Geral da União 2021](#)
- [Protestos Mundiais: Um resumo das questões-chave do século 21](#)
- [Rede Unidas: briefing do encontro sobre movimentos antigênero na Europa](#)

Articles

- [IN THE DARK - Seven years, 60 countries, 935 internet shutdowns: How authoritarian regimes found an off switch for dissent - Rest of World](#)
- [And Still She Rises – François Girard](#)
- [Why Critics of Angry Woke College Kids Are Missing the Pointhttps - Wendy Brown](#)
- [Homophobia is a feminist issue - HRW](#)
- [Climate justice for women´s rights - Global Voices](#)
- [El fascismo también fue latinoamericano - El País](#)
- [Língua Cortada - por Sérgio Ramirez](#)

Sex & Art

- [Cecilia Vicuña Liberates the Body and the Land in Her New Guggenheim Retrospective](#)

- The filmmaker Paolo Pasolini was born 100 years ago. On the occasion of the anniversary, we offer you Folha de São Paulo's special coverage and reprise the SPW special produced for the 180 days of the Bolsonaro government.

- [Pasolini, cristão, gay e marxista, expressou sua genialidade na subversão - Folha de São Paulo](#)
- [Entendi Pasolini quando vi 'Salò' e extrema direita lançava bomba em cinema - Folha de São Paulo](#)
- [A política sexual no Brasil: Quase 180 dias de administração JMB - SPW](#)