

Ref.: Visit of Argentina's President to Germany

Buenos Aires, Argentina, June, 2024

Ms. Annalena Baerbock
Federal Foreign Minister

Of our highest esteem,

In view of President Javier Milei's visit to Germany, the Center for Legal and Social Studies (CELS) would like to share information regarding the situation of women's rights since the beginning of his government. CELS is an Argentine non-governmental human rights organization created in 1979 that promotes the protection of human rights and the strengthening of the democratic system.

As women and members of the LGBT+ community working in feminist organizations in our region, we were very pleased on March 1, 2023, when the German Foreign Office released its document expressing its commitment to a feminist foreign policy and specifying how Germany will make its values credible in today's world, both in terms of its own structures - strengthening representation, resources, rights of women and other marginalized groups in the German Foreign Office - and in concrete foreign policy fields of work such as security, climate and trade.

Since then, the phenomenon of the far-right political movements, known as right-wing populism, extreme right or neo-fascism, has been growing across Europe as well as in Latin America and other regions of the world. These movements exhibit both common global characteristics and unique local expressions. Common traits include xenophobic nationalism, historical negationism, and regressive views on gender roles, LGBTQ+ rights, and the rights of racialized communities.

In December 2023, Javier Milei assumed the presidency of Argentina with an extreme anti-politics and libertarian stance. His government is currently implementing an austerity program which implies a drastic reduction of public spending along the lines of -30%. In the first quarter of 2024 there was a sharp drop in the real execution of the great majority of budget lines, including in areas that are fundamental to ensure basic human rights such as the rights to food, education and health.

Particularly, of 43 national care policies -which are mainly directed to women, children and the elderly-, 21 have already been dismantled, 15 are on alert, and only 7 are still in force. These policies include the expansion of infrastructure such as schools and elderly residencies,

public services and policies related to the remuneration and formalization of care workers¹. Moreover, the government suspended food shipments to soup kitchens where working-class people eat. All these measures impact mainly on women, who disproportionately bear the brunt of care work at home and within their communities.

At the same time, the government is trying to pass the “Bill on Bases and Points of Departure for the Freedom of Argentines” (“Bill on Bases”) which repeals the “Pension Debt Payment Plan Law”. This law allows access to a pension for people who do not meet the 30 working years requirement, most of them women who were in charge of unpaid care tasks or who spent part of their lives in the informal labor market. Around 94% of women will not have access to a pension if the Bill is approved, gravely affecting their economic and social rights.

Sexual and reproductive rights are being threatened. Several members of the government, including the President, have repeatedly expressed their position against voluntary pregnancy interruption² and against comprehensive sex education. Since the beginning of the government, no progress has been made in the acquisition of new supplies for the sexual and reproductive healthcare kit, such as contraceptives, condoms, misoprostol and mifepristone from the National Ministry of Health to be sent to the provinces, putting at risk their availability in the coming months.

Furthermore, the government announced the “National Early Childhood Program”, whose objectives include “the search for pregnant women through sanitary trains, with operations throughout the Argentine territory”, suggesting an active detection of pregnant women which poses a risk to confidentiality, privacy and reproductive autonomy. This objective had been included in a former version of the “Bill of Bases”, which incorporated a reform to Law No. 27,611 on “Integral Health Care and Attention during Pregnancy and Early Childhood”. Although this bill lost parliamentary status, authorities have said that the ruling party will send new bills taking up these contents, confirming the intention to replace the model of autonomy, respect and protection of rights with a police model in which the “detection of the pregnant mother and her unborn child” will replace the consent of women and adolescents.

This risk is enhanced due to the government’s decision to cut funding for the Plan for the Prevention of Unintended Pregnancy in Adolescence (ENIA), a comprehensive and interdisciplinary public policy that seeks to guarantee the access of children and adolescents to contraceptive methods, comprehensive sexual education, counseling and community promotion activities, prevention of forced pregnancy and access to abortion. Even though serious challenges remain, there is solid evidence on the success of this public policy, which has been in force since 2017 and was continued by two presidencies of opposite political parties. Indeed, according to the 2022 census, the number of teenage pregnancies decreased by 50% in comparison to 2010.

Finally, we would like to express our concern that on May 7th 2024, four women were attacked with fuel and fire in a boarding house hotel in Buenos Aires, after receiving

¹ The entire report is available in Spanish at:

<https://www.cels.org.ar/web/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/LCDLC-INFORME-1-1-1.pdf>

² Argentina passed Law No. 27,610 in 2020, which allows for a legal, safe and voluntary pregnancy interruption.

permanent misogynist and homophobic aggressions, resulting in the murder of three of them. Although the attacker's political affiliation is unknown, this dramatic event has a context: the empowerment of discourses that generate hatred about social groups such as lesbians; the acceleration of the precariousness of life; the marginalization in the city and the approach to mental health and homelessness with security strategies. The only approach from the government to this crime was through the presidential spokesperson who stated: "I don't like to define it as an attack against a certain group, collective, it's wrong, it's terrible, whoever it is against", overlooking the structural violence against women.

It is our view that the government's measures and narratives reveal a clear regression in women's rights, not only hindering Argentina's policies and position in international fora, but also taking away from the country's leading progressive take on these agendas. This poses a risk to women's rights across the region and the world which cannot be ignored.

We hope that this information will allow you to prepare for Argentina's President's visit to Germany and express concern to the country's authorities on these issues.

We remain at your disposal to provide you with additional information if required.

Sincerely,

Center for Legal and Social Studies (CELS)