

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESPONSIBLY REPORTING ON MIGRATION AND THE RIGHTS OF MIGRANTS

The aim of these recommendations is to provide those who work in audiovisual media with tools to report on and portray migration and migrants in Argentina in a way that contributes to making and consolidating a plural, egalitarian, discrimination-free society. This material was written by the Argentine Commission on Refugees and Migrants and the Defender of the Public, communicators, specialists in the field and migrants' organizations.

It is advised to:

Recognize and visibilize in the media that migrants are full subjects of law, citizens that are part of the political, cultural, economic and social life of Argentina.

The Constitution and current migration norms state the legal equality of foreigners that aim at living in Argentine territory and people born in Argentina. It is suggested making migrants visible as full subjects of law right in the media and thus promote a perspective that counteracts stigmatizing stereotypes that are often seen about people born abroad.

Avoid referring to migrants as a threatening otherness, separated from Argentine society.

It is advised to promote media coverage with an inclusive outlook. It is frequent the allusion to nations and their people from a fragmented outlook of society, not bearing in mind that its makeup is diverse. Given this scenario, it is necessary to do away with the assumption that denies the existence and historical and contemporary legitimacy of migrants as part of society. Moreover, denying it is strengthened by blaming migrants for several social problems: unemployment, the crisis of the healthcare system and the alleged saturation of the public school system, among others. Said prejudiced attribution of responsibility produces and consolidates stigmatization and discrimination.

Promote and divulge Migration Law no. 25,871 and point out that in Argentina, migrating is an inalienable human right that must be guaranteed by the State.

Migration Law no. 25,871, in force since 2004, has been a fundamental tool for the integration of groups of migrants and their recognition as equals on behalf of the State. It is crucial to promote and divulge in the media the rights stated in this law and thus contribute, in a critical and reflexive way, to dismantling the prejudice that affects migrants. Moreover, it is advised to highlight the right to migrate as a human right in the construction and to broadcast information about both the domestic and the international environment in order to offer an integrating perspective in line with the paradigm of rights promoted by the Audiovisual Communication Services Law.

Avoid the concept of “illegality” when referring to migrants who have not been granted a residence permit in Argentina.

An irregular migratory status is an administrative offence, not a crime. Argentine norms do not consider migrants with no residence permit to be “illegal”. Therefore, when applicable, it is recommended to use the term “person with an irregular migratory status”. The term “illegal”, apart from having a deeply negative connotation and being judicially inexact, criminalizes migrants that have not finished their paperwork.

Avoid using the term “race”, as well as comments or opinions based on an alleged national, social, ethnic and/or racial superiority.

It is of utmost important to understand that the concept of “race” is incorrect and dated, apart from the fact that it legitimizes segregationist social divisions. Its use, throughout history and at present, tends to support inequality and discrimination. Despite growing criticism towards its use, it is still resorted to in some circles, which tends to promote social hierarchization and symbolic violence.

It is also advised to avoid giving negative connotations to ethnicities, nationalities or classes and legitimizing hierarchies. For example: “Arabs are bad (...) If they treated you the way they treat women over there...”. In that sense, and so as not to reinforce different forms of material and symbolic inequality in society, it is also advised to avoid the non-critical reproduction of soundbites, such as the following:

Reporter: Do many Bolivians come here to Liniers?

Interviewee: Too many. (...) And it’s filthy.

Avoid associating phenotypic traits with nationalities, as well as the generalization of these categories with negative cultural and judicial practices.

Associating an ethnic group with the negative aspects or practices of one of its members is a stigmatizing generalization that produces inequality. It is advised to rigorously inform the public about the reality of communities of migrants and their members so as to avoid that the allusion to a person’s nationality derive in an outlook on the whole group of migrants.

Mentioning people’s nationalities, usually followed by negative comments related to crime, simplifies different groups whose identity traits are multiple, complex and heterogeneous.

In turn, it is recommended a respectful, reflexive treatment of people of African ascent regarding their ethnicity and nationality. It is also advised to avoid the double discrimination against people born in other countries in the region, who are discriminated against for being migrants as well as aborigines.

Denaturalize the criminalization, policing and victimization of migrants in order to deactivate discrimination and promote inclusive citizenship.

It is recommended to avoid the recurrent, unreflective connection between crime and the natio-

nality of those involved so as not to stigmatize anybody. The systematic relation, for example, between migrants and drug trafficking tends to cast suspicion on foreigners and their practices and everyday life. In turn, the use of terms such as “mafia” or “hired assassins” portrays these migrants as part of an alleged criminal scenario in which there are victimizers and victims that share a world of illegalities and crime. Thus, be them victimizers or victims, they are reduced to being perceived as dangerous or scary.

Visibilize the different realities of migrants, avoiding their invisibilization in the media or giving them a mere popular esthetic. Moreover, reporting on migrants from the perspective of gender is advised.

It is suggested tackling the multiple realities of migrant communities. It is advised to bear in mind that communities are not homogeneous, but they have a variety of interests, even conflicts, the responsible reporting of which may enrich media coverage.

Promoting a migrant agenda implies contemplating several aspects of what migrants do regarding their political, economic, social and cultural rights. This might be an opportunity to promote the exercise of their rights.

It is indispensable to consider a perspective of gender to promote a more egalitarian treatment and raise awareness of the specifics that make up the many identities and gender roles within each group.

Promote the use of inclusive images and discourse of migrants.

It is advised to make migrants visible through representations that promote both the full exercise of their rights and their social inclusion and integration so as to balance generally marginal and/or negative media coverage.

Moreover, it is recommended the critical treatment of stigmatizing media and extra-media discourse about migrants for being migrants, using norms, sources and rigorous data about migration in Argentina.

Resort to different, rigorous sources of the communities of migrants themselves, official, social and human rights organizations, and academia.

It is advised to resort to the different organizations that represent communities of migrants to get information and opinions and their perspective on what is being reported. This allows for a broader space for the expression of groups of migrants and may contribute to legitimizing their identity as part of the plural society they are part of. When there is information about migrants, it is also advised to resort to human rights organizations and specialists in the subject, as well as to get official data at both a national and international level.