



AVOIDING GENDER BASED VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN POLITICS ON AUDIOVISUAL MEDIA

Guidelines

What is political violence against women, lesbians and transgender people?

Some background information

According to the Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention (MESECVI - OAS), violence against women in politics shall be understood as:

“[...] any act, conduct or omission, carried out directly or by others which, based on gender, harms a/many women, has the purpose or result of undermining, annulling, impeding, or restricting their political rights. Political violence may include, among others, physical, sexual, psychological, moral, economic or symbolic violence”.¹

In 2019, political violence was included in the National Law of Integral Protection to Prevent, Punish and Eradicate Violence Against Women, thus recognizing the definition of MESECVI and including actions that violate *“the right to participate in the public and private sphere on equal terms with men”*.²



¹ Inter-American Model Law On the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women in Political Life. Inter-American Convention on Women. Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention (MESECVI), OAS 2017.

² National Law of Integral Protection to Prevent, Punish and Eradicate Violence Against Women.

Regarding the ways in which political violence against women can be exercised, the law states *“intimidation, harassment, dishonor, discredit, persecution and/or threats, which impede or limit the development of their professional lives or the access to political rights and duties”*. It adds that it may happen *“in any sphere of public or political life, such as public institutions, polling places, political parties, social organizations, unions, media outlets, among others”*.³

Who is affected by gender-based political violence in the media?

Political violence affects social referents, opinion makers, political militants and candidates, representatives-elect and appointed servants. As pointed out by MESECVI-OAS and Argentine legislation, the media are a scenario in which this type of violence can take place⁴. In that regard, communicators play a key role in recognizing and addressing the cases of gender-based political violence that may occur or be broadcast in the media, and in preventing coverage that is discriminatory or hostile towards women, lesbians and transgender people who participating in public debate. Eight out of ten lawmakers have said they have been a target of gender-based political violence and 98% considered politics to be a space of discrimination against women and LGBT+ people⁵. Those interviews have pointed out, for example,

³ Art. 6, inc. h Ibid 2.

⁴ *“[...]continuous judgments against women in the media, the main perpetrators of symbolic violence which, based on prejudices and stereotypes, undermine the image of women as effective political leaders; the violent messages and threats received by many women in public positions through social networks, which often also affect their families - constitute only some of the terrible acts of violence that women face, for being women in the exercise of their political rights”*. (OEA, MESECVI, 2017: 13).

⁵ According to a poll published by the Latin American Team on Justice and Gender (ELA, 2018)



that when it comes to men, journalistic coverage focuses on their professional development. However, the information broadcast about women is based on their gender (53%) and their personal life (42%).

Gender-based political violence is not a new phenomenon, but it has gained visibility as a result of broader, more significant participation of women and LGBT+ people due to social movements and provincial and national laws of gender parity.

What is the role of the Defender of the Public of Audiovisual Communication Services?

The Audiovisual Communication Services Law incorporates into its text the provisions of the Law on Integral Protection against Gender-Based Violence. Regarding political violence, this implies that broadcasts should avoid hindering or undermining the political participation of women, lesbian and transgender people through stigmatizing stereotypes and other forms of symbolic violence, such as hate speech or images that violate their privacy or dignity.

The main mission of the Defender of the Public is to promote, divulge and defend the audiences' right to democratic communication throughout the country, with an understanding of the right to free speech that takes into consideration power and obligations of those who produce and broadcast media contents and those who receive them, the public.



The Defender acts as a mediator and represents the audiences' interests and rights, promoting a law-abiding reporting or rule-abiding reporting, including the Law on Integral Protection against Gender-Based Violence. The organization intervenes in different ways, such as receiving complaints, reports and queries; favouring the redress of violated rights, organizing workshops on specific topics and creating guidelines for communicators.

Alongside ELA, as part of the second "Bridging the Gap Project: Denaturalizing hidden violence to eradicate gender-based violence promoting equality"⁶, two online events were organized, called "Experiences and Strategies against Gender-Based Political Violence in the Media", with the participation of more than 50 women and LGBT+ people from the Media, academia and human rights' organizations. As a result, the Defender wrote a series of specific recommendations for media workers.

These recommendations aim to promote democratic communication, improving the quality of political speech through communication standards based on respect, prevention and the protection from gender-based violence.



⁶ The "Bridging the Gap Project: Denaturalizing hidden violence to eradicate gender-based violence promoting equality" is sponsored by the European Union and includes civil society organizations in the field of gender equality: the Latin American Team on Justice and Gender (ELA), the Argentine Commission on Refugees and Migrants (CAREF), the Foundation for Women's Studies and Research (FEIM), Women in Equality (MEI), and the 21 st Century Foundation.



**RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR REPORTING ON
PUBLIC-POLITICAL
PARTICIPATION OF
WOMEN, LESBIANS AND
TRANSGENDER PEOPLE**

1 VISIBILIZE THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN, LESBIANS AND TRANSGENDER PEOPLE AT DIFFERENT STAGES OF POLITICAL LIFE, REGARDLESS OF THEIR DEGREE OF INSTITUTIONALIZATION OR HIERARCHY.

Throughout history, women have been discriminated against and left out of political participation. Advances in this regard are the result of work by feminist organizations and networks, and women and LGBT+ people that have fought for decades to make themselves heard and to promote leadership. In this sense, nowadays, it is extremely relevant that their exercise of their rights in public affairs be visibilized and broadcast. It is advised to recognize the representation of women, lesbians and transgender people, incorporating into the media coverage

mentions that show their participation, whether they come from the political, union or business fields or from social organizations. Journalistic reporting may contribute to making the voices of women, lesbians and transgender people heard. That is why it is suggested that their interventions be incorporated in their own words, regardless of the fact that they may not hold the highest position in their institutions, such as the presidency of a parliamentary commission, a chair in an organization or top places in the Executive Branch.

2 PROMOTE EQUAL REPORTING ON ELECTORAL CAMPAIGNS

It is important that when reporting on electoral campaigns -be national, provincial or local-, the opinions of women, lesbians and transgender people be represented. It is recommended that

women candidates, politicians and specialists be included in proportions equivalent to those of males, giving them as much airtime to ensure equal treatment. It is advisable to promote this criterion even if, despite political parity, they are not running for top positions.

3

PROMOTE FREE OF STEREOTYPES REPORTING ABOUT WOMEN, LESBIANS AND TRANSGENDER PEOPLE THAT PARTICIPATE IN PUBLIC DEBATE

As women's participation in the public sphere grows, so does male chauvinist violence. The Media have a key role when it comes to identifying, preventing and denaturalizing the use of speech that undermines, harasses, dishonors, discredits and/or threatens women, lesbians and transgender people. A respectful coverage that avoids commenting on the clothes, age or physical appearance of women, lesbians and transgender people is recommended; reproduction of stigmatizing

stereotypes (the attribution of social roles) and restrictions or attributions of certain topics and qualities based on gender, sexual orientation or gender identity should be avoided. Promoting a debate about their proposals and ideas is advised.

4

PRESERVE THE INTIMACY AND DIGNITY OF WOMEN, LESBIANS AND TRANSGENDER PEOPLE WHO PARTICIPATE IN POLITICS

A woman, lesbian or transgender person's participation in public affairs should not entail an intrusion into their private life or their relatives'. These invasions may result in a violation of their dignity, intimidation, threats or discredit, and can also have a bigger impact that might lead to discouraging other women's political participation. Mentions or questions about their personal lives, or focusing on the family lives of civil servants, congresswomen, leaders or candidates when reporting on their professional performance should be avoided.

5

BE ESPECIALLY CAREFUL WHEN BROADCASTING MESSAGES OR IMAGES FROM THE INTERNET

Be careful when publishing messages or images from the internet (social media and messaging apps, among other sources) given that this content is often protected by the right to privacy. It is also suggested to avoid posting

photos or comments on social media that are not related to the public, political activity of women, lesbians and transgender people and which belong to their private sphere without express authorization. Broadcasting social media posts that constitute gender-based political violence is not advisable, with the exception of those whose content is divulged within the appropriate context with the purpose of informing about the issue.

6

RESPECT AND PROMOTE THE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN, LESBIANS AND TRANSGENDER PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT FORMATS

Particularly during debates and other forms of reporting, it is recommended to avoid systematic interruptions and other ways of undermining participation. Communicators are advised to intervene when during a debate, arguments include criticisms based on gender, sexual orientation or gender identity, and steer dialogue and controversy towards politics.



7

REPORT ON MEASURES THAT PROMOTE WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION, AS WELL AS ON STRUCTURAL CONDITIONS AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE THAT AFFECT THEIR PERFORMANCE IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE

Access of women, lesbians and transgender people to positions of public representation has been historically unequal. That is why it is important to visibilize the process of implementing political parity and its results. For that purpose, it is advised to make visible

the remaining structural inequality by giving voice to those involved, as well as to report and raise awareness about the definition of gender-based political violence, its media aspect and its harmful effects on democracy.

8

INCORPORATE THE VIEWS OF WOMEN, LESBIANS AND TRANSGENDER PEOPLE AS SPECIALISTS AND SOURCES, AND QUOTE DATA FROM RECOGNIZED INSTITUTIONS WHEN REPORTING ON THE FEMINIST AGENDA

When reporting implies broadcasting of information about conquest of women's rights, or draft bills and projects of the Executive Branch about this topic, it is suggested that the views and opinions of specialists or members of women, lesbians and transgender people networks be included. Moreover, data for the coverage should be provided by specialized institutions and social organizations.

PROMOTE TRAINING JOURNALS



9

PROMOTE TRAINING JOURNALISTS IN GENDER PERSPECTIVE AND INCLUDE WOMEN, LESBIANS AND TRANSGENDER PEOPLE IN WORKTEAMS THAT REPORT ON POLITICS

Training journalistic production teams in gender perspective and including in them women, lesbians and transgender people contribute to the prevention of

political violence in the Media and the promotion of a broader public debate. The Defender of the Public offers training in this topic to journalists.

10

USE ACCURATE, RESPECTFUL LANGUAGE TO TALK ABOUT GENDER IDENTITIES

Members from different spaces often promote the creation of language that attempts to overcome the male female binary and heteronormativity in order to acknowledge and make visible the whole spectrum of identities in our society. Keeping in mind that language is dynamic and has innovations and specificities of its own, it is advised to follow the language used by women and LGBT+ people to identify themselves and/or to refer to their interventions in the public sphere, and promote the right to fair treatment requires by the National Law of Gender Identity.

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