

NOT IN THE NAME OF FAITH

Fundamentalisms, Democratic Setbacks, and Attacks on Gender Justice



**Case Documentation from Argentina,
Brazil, Colombia, and Peru**

**South American ACT Ecumenical
Forum - FESUR**



Editing, publication, and distribution rights: South American ACT Ecumenical Forum (FESUR).

Publication name: Not in the Name of Faith
Fundamentalisms, Democratic Setbacks, and Attacks on Gender Justice
Case Documentation from Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, and Peru.

Publication year: 2026.

Author: South American ACT Ecumenical Forum (FESUR).

Documentation and writing: South American ACT Ecumenical Forum (FESUR).

Editor-in-chief: Nathaly Ospino Díaz (Colombian Methodist Church).

Editorial committee: Andrés Alba, Nicolás Rosenthal, Petra Langheinrich.

Style review: Kathleen Nygard.

Graphic design and layout: Miguel Ángel Castro Penagos.

Cover:

Photography: Cristina Sille.

Graphic composition: Lorena Cortés Córdoba.

Photographs: South American ACT Ecumenical Forum (FESUR).

Funded by: Kerk in Actie, Act Church of Sweden.

Supported by: Bread for the World.

The opinions expressed in this document are the sole responsibility of the South American ACT Ecumenical Forum (FESUR) and do not necessarily represent the positions of funders.

To protect the integrity of contributing individuals and organizations, and given the risks that exist in the region, this report deliberately omits names, photographic material, identifying details, and specific locations in some cases.

About ACT Alliance:

ACT Alliance is the largest global coalition of Protestant and Orthodox churches and faith-based organizations working together to promote justice, human dignity, and human rights. The alliance brings together over 148 member organizations that collaborate in more than 125 countries to promote sustainable changes in the lives of vulnerable communities, regardless of religion, political positions, gender, sexual orientation, race, or nationality. The work is guided by the most rigorous international codes and standards, with a focus on humanitarian action, sustainable development, and ecumenical advocacy.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, ACT Alliance has 48 official members and dozens of observers, organized into 11 National Forums and one Subregional Forum.

For more information about ACT Alliance, visit www.actalliance.org.
To contact the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, write lac@actalliance.org.

About the South American ACT Ecumenical Forum - FESUR:

FESUR is a regional coordination space within the ACT Alliance, organized by ACT Forums in Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, and Peru. The Forum promotes ecumenical dialogue and joint action from a space of faith that is committed to justice, human rights, and the dignity of communities in the face of challenges related to fundamentalism and regressive agendas in the region.



Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits.

Matthew 7:15-16a

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The ACT Alliance and the South American ACT Ecumenical Forum (FESUR for its acronym in Spanish) would like to express special thanks to **Pastor Nathaly Ospino Díaz**, from the Colombia Forum and the Colombian Methodist Church, for her dedication and sensitivity in systematizing and drafting the report *Not in the Name of Faith. Fundamentalisms, Democratic Setbacks, and Attacks on Gender Justice. Case Documentation from Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, and Peru*. Her commitment to faith in action, rooted in gender justice and human rights, has been key in the preparation of this report.

We also express our deep gratitude and admiration to the **affected collectives, organizations, and communities in the aforementioned countries**, who, in contexts of oppression, exclusion, and structural injustices, shared their voices and experiences of resistance. These voices made this publication possible and reaffirm a hope rooted in dignity, solidarity, and the enforceability of rights.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

P/05.	.....	Foreword
P/09.	.....	Executive summary
P/13.	.....	Introduction
P/18.	.....	Fundamentalisms and Regressive Agendas in South America
P/22.	.....	Overview of the case studies
P/24.	.....	Conceptual Framework
P/24.	.....	Civilizational crisis
P/25.	.....	Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Afro-descendants, and Environmental Defenders
P/27.	.....	Comprehensive Sexuality Education
P/28.	.....	Sexual and Reproductive Rights
P/29.	.....	Methodology
P/32.	.....	Case Studies
P/32.	.....	Argentina: <i>Blessed are the Feet of those who Proclaim Peace</i>
P/37.	.....	Brasil: <i>You are the Salt of the Earth</i>
P/42.	.....	Colombia: <i>Between Ruth and Naomi</i>
P/47.	.....	Peru: <i>Do not be Deceived</i>
P/52.	.....	Findings and Common Denominators
P/57.	.....	Conclusions
P/58.	.....	Ten recommendations for decision-makers and faith-based civil society organizations
P/60.	.....	Bibliography

FOREWORD

FESUR understands fundamentalisms to be a setback in rights and a destabilization of the democratic order. In response to this complex context, testimonies from individuals and organizations have been identified, demonstrating that “fundamentalisms kill.” It kills the bodies, sexualities, and identities of real, concrete people. Clearly, fundamentalisms are the expressions or actions of specific actors.

The range of players is considerable: politicians and organizations with media power, political parties, companies and associations, influencers, armed groups, economic groups, legislators, churches, and ultra-conservative religious organizations, to name just a few. These groups insist on imposing their beliefs, and in this changing era, fight to maintain their dominance and control.

This report demonstrates that the acts of aggression, threats, and attacks from these groups are primarily directed against the lives and well-being of women, girls, LGBTQI+ people, Afro-descendant communities, and Indigenous peoples. In a language of liberation theology, these are the new Christs crucified by religious and economic-political systems that resist a continued loss of power in a society that has become more pluralistic, diverse, and democratic. However, society is also currently experiencing setbacks and direct attacks against previous progress in terms of gender justice.

We present this report specifically for decision-makers, with the firm conviction that it demonstrates the impacts of fundamentalism on real, concrete individuals and organizations.

The four cases are also a living testimony that urges states to protect civic space and the freedom of those who are currently at risk from fundamentalist actions.

South American ACT Ecumenical Forum - FESUR



Challenges to the *oikoumenē* in times of a fundamentalist resurgence

In the early 2000s, it was unimaginable that this new era would be marked by so many geopolitical, socio-cultural, and economic setbacks. The 21st century was shaping up to be the era of globalization, digital culture, a society of information, networking, the dismantling of borders, and “another possible world.” However, in little more than two decades, political actions have had dramatic consequences for those who inhabit the *oikoumenē*, our common home.

The victories attained during the first quarter of the century in areas of human, sexual, and environmental rights are now at risk of disappearing due to an increase in massacres and wars; predatory competition for commercial success; new forms of labor exploitation; the climate crisis and its unprecedented impacts; an exacerbation of individualism; the normalization of chaos in social and political relations through a widespread dissemination of hatred and extremism as a source of political and economic gain, especially on digital platforms; the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic,

which profoundly marked humanity and collective life; among other serious situations.

It is in this context that authoritarian and exceptionalist policies are now being revived. During the 19th and 20th centuries, these policies impacted many regions of the world, yet it was believed that they had been overcome through advances in multilateral relations, forums, and organizations. However, in this first quarter of the 21st century, concepts such as imperialism, fascism, Nazism, and genocide are once again at the center of public debate, with massacres and humanitarian crises imposed on communities such as those in Myanmar, Sudan, and Palestine, to mention just a few of the most visible crises. Additionally, authoritarian policies promoted by far-right administrations have multiplied across the globe during this period. These governments, in addition to denying human, sexual, and environmental rights, promote the persecution of political opponents, human rights activists, educators, scientists, artists, as well as institutions and organizations that question them. They have also generated contempt for multilateralism and international law to maintain an order ruled by capital.

As this report from the South American ACT Ecumenical Forum (FESUR) clearly expresses, there is a need to understand religion's place amid this framework of civilizational crisis. On various fronts, religions have played a decisive role in this socio-historical context. However, special attention must be paid to institutions and leaders who use markedly radicalized ultra-conservative rhetoric and practices that fuel the extreme right policies described here.

Aware of these challenges, the member organizations of ACT Alliance in Latin America and the Caribbean began to assess the situation at a regional conference held in Guatemala in 2019. Attendees identified that the region had been undergoing reactionary sociopolitical, economic, cultural, and environmental transformations throughout the 21st century in response to the advances and achievements of previous decades in the areas of human, sexual, environmental, and traditional community rights.

These situations acutely affect the rights of workers, women, LGBTQIA+ people, Indigenous peoples, and Afro-descendants, and represent myriad setbacks and political obstacles.



It was observed that fundamentalism was emerging as a social phenomenon in the region, transcending the religious dimension of its Christian origin and acquiring a diversified profile and a political, economic, environmental, and cultural character. There was a shared understanding that, in these actions, certain “fundamentals” are selected to persuade society to establish boundaries and fight against “enemies.” This often leads to a polarizing and separatist movement that rejects dialogue and democracy and establishes a single mindset to guide actions in the public sphere.

FESUR established a study and reflection process, described in this report, called Guatemala+5, which involved other regional forums, international agencies, and churches from the Global North. One result was a recognition of the role of ultra-conservative Christianity in sustaining and guiding these socio-political and economic perspectives. However, a deeper understanding was required to develop actions to confront them. The studies and debates in the Guatemala+5 process not only consolidated a conceptual definition of the phenomenon in the region but also identified fundamentalist agendas that are effective on the continent and pointed to possible strategies to counter them.

This learning process shows that fundamentalist action has major economic and political capital, the result of their religious capital, and has managed to obstruct social rights, confront national judicial systems, and influence—and in some cases destabilize—democracies. This must be viewed in light of the historical and ongoing colonization that turned Latin America into fertile ground for the expansion of fundamentalism. After all, the continent’s socio-political, cultural, and economic structures were



established based on colonial logics of patriarchy, racism, and large landholdings, aggravated by centuries-long disproportionate extractivist demands and the militarization of politics.

The commitments made in the Guatemala+5 encourage FESUR organizations to continue seeking a deeper understanding of this ongoing phenomenon, going beyond a description, to define concepts and reflect on meaning. For this reason, the group was challenged to document specific situations that impact the lives of populations targeted by ecumenical projects in different territories.

Based on this challenge, this report presents four case studies of fundamentalist attacks documented in Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, and Peru. These cases reveal expressions of denial and demonization of Indigenous and Afro-descendant

spiritualities; the instrumentalization of religion to validate predatory territorial occupation, territorial plundering, and community fracture (Brazil); the disciplining of bodies and sexualities through moral panic, digital and in-person harassment, through the intensive persecution of sexual rights activists, even within faith communities (Argentina and Colombia); and medical-administrative and biopolitical setbacks through the approval of regulations to pathologize gender identity and sexual orientation, in contradiction with international standards (Peru).

This report, which systematizes cases of fundamentalist attacks, not only contributes to a more concrete understanding of the effects of fundamentalism in South America but also acts as a condemnation in times of worsening civilizational crisis affecting the entire oikoumene. This text was written in the context of extremely serious situations, including the events surrounding the United States military invasion of Venezuela, with the arbitrary detention of President Nicolás Maduro on January 3rd, 2026. This action, which flagrantly violates international law and the sovereignty of a country, represents both an imperialist threat to all of South America and the increased instability produced by far-right governments and policies that seek to expand their presence in the region.

This report is being published in 2026, an important election year for several South American countries, such as Brazil, Colombia, and Peru. The electoral period has proven to generate opportunities for political, religious, and non-religious actors to employ a Christian religious paradigm that fuels fundamentalism, using theological expressions, symbols, and rituals. This political strategy gives rise to a religious populism that mobilizes myriad fundamentalist discursive ingredients: anti-gender rights, anti-socioeconomic rights, demonization of Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities, climate crisis denialism, and a promotion of new developmentalist ideologies. Fear becomes the central asset in this strategy, based on the dissemination of misinformation. Thus, religion and panic are used in campaigns to win votes and, subsequently, in the event of electoral victory, to sustain support for extremist governments.

Thus, this report must not be seen as just another reflection on the resurgence of fundamentalism in South America. It must be read and taken up as a decolonial agenda that must go beyond discourse and be translated into new and effective actions by the most diverse actors in civil society, in conjunction with the ecumenical community.

Magali do Nascimento Cunha

February 2026

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Not in the Name of Faith

Fundamentalisms, Democratic Setbacks,
and Attacks on Gender Justice

**Case Documentation from Argentina,
Brazil, Colombia, and Peru**

This report documents how the convergence of religious, political, and economic fundamentalism has become a structural factor in democratic setbacks and the violation of rights previously achieved in South America. Four case studies uncover a regional pattern of attacks against individuals, organizations, and communities that defend sexual and reproductive rights, gender justice, territorial autonomy, and cultural diversity. Analysis reveals that, far from operating as isolated expressions of faith, fundamentalism constitutes organized and powerful projects that use symbolic, institutional, and economic resources to influence public policy, erode the secular state, and reconfigure social relations based on exclusionary frameworks.

01.

Central evidence

The four cases show that the convergence of fundamentalisms:

1. **Instrumentalizes religion** to validate exclusion, symbolic violence, and social control.
2. **Inserts moralizing agendas** into public policy, especially in healthcare, education, and sexual and reproductive rights.
3. **Uses state structures and regulations** (congress, ministries, decrees, regulations) to produce legal setbacks.
4. **Mobilizes hybrid tactics** that combine:
 - Digital harassment
 - In-person harassment
 - Moral panic-generating campaigns
 - Administrative and legislative interference
 - Acculturation and community discipline mechanisms
5. The groups most affected are **women, LGBTQI+ people, Indigenous peoples, and Afro-descendants, as well as progressive religious leaders**, who face stigmatization, threats, persecution, and systematic restrictions on their public participation.



02.

The four case studies

Argentina – “Blessed are the Feet of Those who Proclaim Peace”

A conservative network disseminates lists of “dangerous” religious leaders and progressive organizations, generating moral panic, harassment, and intra-church discipline.

Brazil – “You are the Salt of the Earth”

Fundamentalist practices promote the acculturation of Indigenous communities and a replacement of spiritual practices, coordinating with illegal economic interests that accelerate territorial dispossession and the fracture of collective identities.

Colombia – “Between Ruth and Naomi”

A sexual and reproductive health organization is the target of coordinated attacks (digital, in-person, and administrative) driven by churches, fundamentalist movements, and conservative political actors seeking to limit access to healthcare services.

Peru – “Do not be Deceived”

The enactment of Supreme Decree 447-2024 reintroduces a pathologization of gender identities and sexual orientations, legitimizing institutional discrimination; coordinated mobilization achieved its repeal.



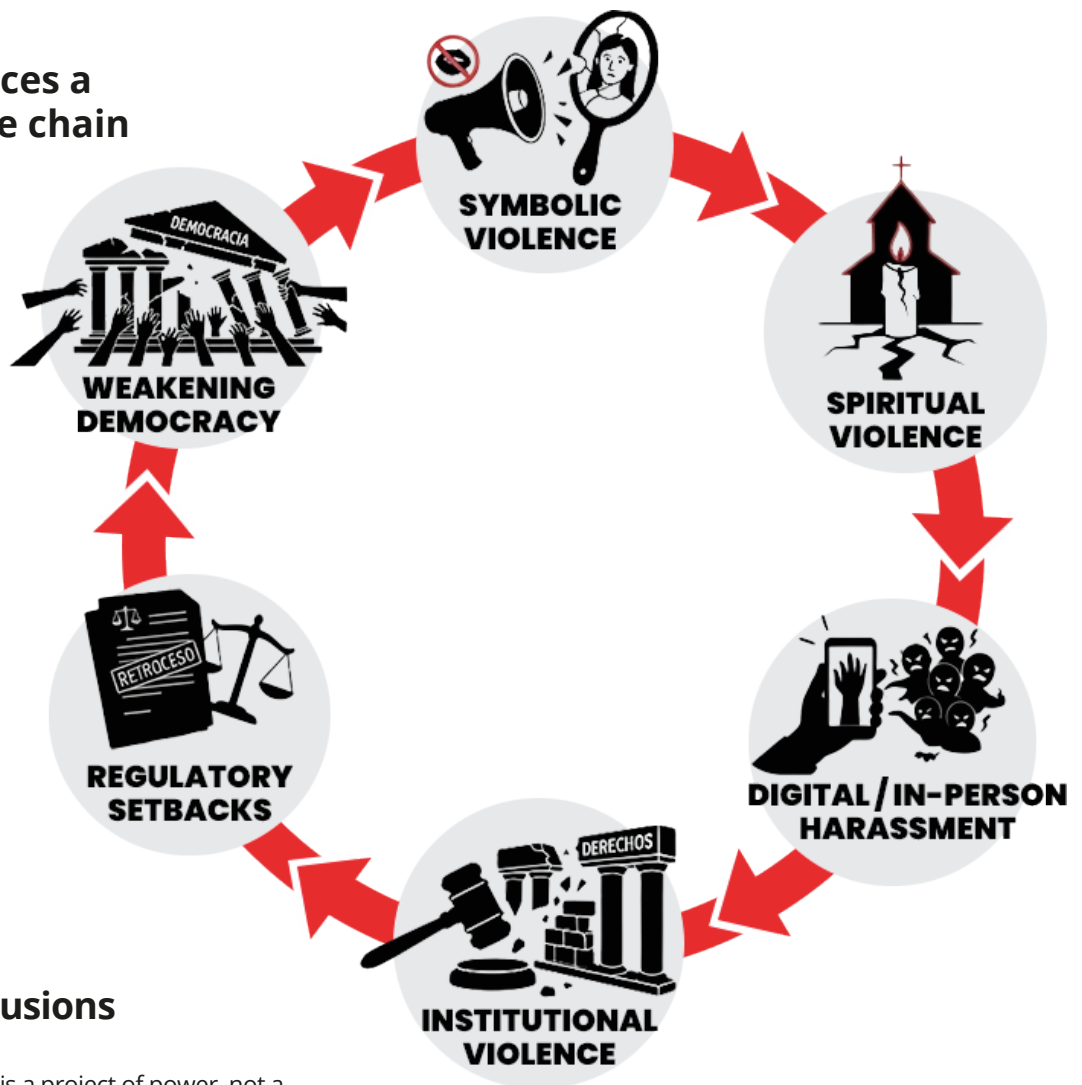
03.

Identified chain of impact

The cases show common operating mechanisms:

1. **Symbolic instruments:** moralization, stigma, and literal interpretations.
2. **Institutional anchors:** regressive regulations, legislative pressure, capture of state agencies.
3. **Implementation mechanisms:** digital networks, churches, public actions, and administrative procedures.

This produces a progressive chain of harm:



04.

Strategic conclusions

1. Fundamentalism is a project of power, not a mere expression of radicalized faith or ultra-conservative religious expressions.
2. The impacts are cross-cutting with multiple layers of violence: symbolic, digital, physical, territorial, and institutional.
3. It seeks to discipline bodies (women, diverse groups), identities (LGBTQI+ people), and territories (Indigenous peoples).
4. It attacks progressive religious leaders and organizations that combine faith and human rights.
5. Institutional capture and the weakening of the secular state are growing risks in the region.



05.

Urgent decision-making needs

1. Reinforce the state's secular character in healthcare, education, justice, and gender policies.
2. Create early warning systems on fundamentalist violence.
3. Comprehensively protect organizations, leaders, and communities under attack.
4. Deactivate moral panic narratives through rights-based and evidence-based communications.
5. Strengthen liberating theologies, ecumenical spaces, and research on fundamentalism.
6. Integrate the analysis of fundamentalism into international mechanisms.
7. Investigate alliances between religion, capital, and illegal economies.
8. Promote church-based advocacy to prevent hate speech and absolutist actions that deny rights in the name of faith.
9. Carry out observation and documentation missions in the communities.
10. Promote regional and international cooperation for coordinated responses.

Key message

The instrumentalized use of faith and religious expressions to justify exclusion, misinformation, and regressive agendas is undermining pluralism and democratic institutions in South America. Recognizing the convergence of fundamentalisms as a political-structural occurrence is key to protecting rights, safeguarding the secular state, and guaranteeing the human dignity of affected communities.



In South America, there is an increasing regional pattern of democratic and human rights setbacks, driven by the convergence of fundamentalisms.

The selective and decontextualized use of religious texts to justify hate speech and impose authoritarian and patriarchal agendas not only distorts the liberating meaning of the faith message but also normalizes dehumanization, deepens polarization, attacks gender justice, fractures the community fabric, and weakens the rule of law and democratic principles.

INTRODUCTION

The Latin American region is currently facing an accelerated rise in fundamentalisms, the closing of civic spaces, and a consolidation of agendas that are contrary to human rights and gender justice, especially in countries such as Colombia, Brazil, Peru, and Argentina. These dynamics have been exacerbated by the events that occurred on January 3rd, 2026, when the United States used military action against the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and arrested President Nicolás Maduro. These actions violate international law and national sovereignty, increasing instability and sociopolitical polarization in the region.

The instrumentalization of faith in these processes poses a central challenge for churches and ecumenical actors who uphold a faith oriented toward justice, unrestricted respect for human dignity, and the common good .

The selective and decontextualized use of religious texts to justify hate speech and impose authoritarian and patriarchal agendas not only distorts the liberating meaning of the faith message, but also normalizes dehumanization, deepens polarization, attacks gender justice, fractures the community fabric, and weakens rule of law and democratic principles.

In several South American countries, the convergence of fundamentalist movements has led to explicit alliances between conservative religious actors, political elites, and economic sectors. This creates an ecosystem of power that undermines the principles of gender justice, human dignity, and pluralism, which are fundamental pillars in any democratic society. ACT Forum Peru and the Gender Roundtable highlighted this in June 2025: *"We express our serious concern regarding the offensive driven by congressional representatives with ties to conservative sectors of Catholic and Evangelical churches.*

These groups have formed alliances to abruptly and regressively generate setbacks to the progress made in the defense of democracy, rights, justice, and equality. (...)"

1 Act Alliance LAC Regional Office: LinkedIn, Institutional publication, n.d., 2025. See: <https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7346221985200312321?actorCompanyId=103593282>

Legislative bills promote structural discrimination and encourage violence against historically marginalized groups. These measures are often validated through strategically instrumentalized religious rhetoric, used to influence public opinion, for example, against the so-called “gender ideology”, and thus justify authoritarian practices and significant setbacks in human, sexual, and reproductive rights.

The 2026 electoral cycle is key for several South American governments, with elections in Colombia, Peru, and Brazil.



In this context, fundamentalist actors and conservative religious sectors will intensify their campaigns, deepen sociopolitical polarization, and mobilize social fears to gain political influence. In the past, elections have acted as a catalyst in the region: narratives against gender equality, LGBTQI+ rights, and environmental protections are deliberately exacerbated to mobilize votes, weaken democratic institutions, and dominate public debate.

The Guatemala+5 process and the role of ACT Alliance’s South American Ecumenical Forum (FESUR)

Against this backdrop, the *Guatemala+5* process emerged as a coordinated regional response based on faith in action. Promoted by the national forums of ACT Alliance in Latin America and the Caribbean, *Guatemala+5* has its origins in the regional conference held in Guatemala in 2019. Churches, ecumenical organizations, and international agencies collectively identified the advance of fundamentalisms as one of the main structural challenges for the region.

Throughout the *Guatemala+5* process, the ACT Forums have documented how religious, political, and economic fundamentalisms are increasing and mutually reinforce each other, negatively impacting democratic stability, social cohesion, and the advancement of gender justice and human rights. The Argumentario “*Is It from God?*”², developed by the Community of Practice Gender Justice of the ACT Alliance, is a strategic resource that challenges the normalization of gender injustice and the use of religious frameworks to legitimize inequality, while promoting faith-based narratives grounded in dignity and autonomy. Likewise, in 2020, FESUR published the regional research report “*Fundamentalisms, the Crisis of Democracy, and the Threat to Human Rights in South America: Trends and Challenges for Action*,”³ coordinated by Magali do Nascimento Cunha. The report offered a critical and innovative lens to understand the rise of religious fundamentalism and its connection to authoritarian political projects in South America.

This analysis was continued at a high-level regional event held in Bogotá in May 2024. The event was attended by ten Forums from the region, international agencies, and churches from North America and Europe. The space not only sought to share national experiences but also identified regional patterns, common risks, and opportunities for joint action.

A key milestone was the November 2024 publication of *Together for Justice: A Coordinated Response to the*

2 Gender Justice Community of Practice (LAC), ACT Alliance: *Is it from God?* 2023. See: <https://actalliance.org/documents/will-it-be-of-god-gender-justice-argumentario/>

3 Magali Do Nascimento Cunha, FESUR: *Fundamentalisms, the crisis of democracy, and the threat to human rights in South America: trends and challenges for action*. Brazil, 2020. See: <https://kn.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/FundamentalismsIN.pdf>



Rise of Fundamentalisms - A Call to Action, by the ACT Alliance General Assembly. This document includes an initial definition of fundamentalism.⁴ The definition was reaffirmed by the ACT Alliance General Assembly Declaration issued that same month, underscoring the importance of international cooperation and solidarity to address current and future challenges.⁵

Throughout this journey, the South American ACT Ecumenical Forum (FESUR) has played a key role in the regional coordination, facilitating dialogue between national forums, promoting comparative analysis, and strengthening joint advocacy capacities. FESUR has helped to highlight the specificities of the South American context, where the convergence of fundamentalisms is intertwined with extractivist models, climate crises, high levels of inequality, and militarization, generating profound impacts on the territories and communities.

Fundamentalism is characterized by strict, literal, and uncompromising adherence to doctrinal principles that consider social roles based on class, gender, and ethnicity to be natural, sacred, and immutable.

Given the diversity of its sources—religious, economic, political, and cultural—it is appropriate to speak of a convergence of fundamentalisms. These are expressed through the instrumental use of religion, politics, and economics for the purposes of power and personal gain, and constitute a threat to democracies, as they translate into practices of discrimination and violation of the rights of women, indigenous peoples, sexual minorities, and progressive positions.

Fundamentalisms hinder transformative ecumenical diakonia aimed at addressing humanitarian, environmental, gender justice, and human security challenges. Far from being a spontaneous phenomenon, the convergence of fundamentalisms responds to a highly organized agenda.

4 ACT Alliance: Our collective action on fundamentalisms and democracy, Geneva, 2024. See: <https://actalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/PUB-07-Our-Collective-Action-on-Fundamentalisms-and-Democracy-FINAL.pdf>

5 ACT Alliance: General Assembly Message. Geneva, 2024. See: <https://actalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/PUB-19-Assembly-Message-FINAL.pdf>

The urgency to produce evidence in the face of a serious phenomenon

Although the impacts of fundamentalisms are increasingly visible in people's daily lives and in public debate, a significant gap remains in the systematization of evidence for a clear assessment of fundamentalism's scope, modes of operation, and consequences.

The absence of comparable data, qualitative analyses, and documented case studies limits the ability to influence decision-makers, multilateral organizations, and international stakeholders. This context is exacerbated by a massive use of fake news on these issues, hindering coordinated and sustained responses over time.

There is a need for social observatories that can report on these situations, expose manipulation and connections, and empower communities to resist attacks on their rights, while adequately informing decision-makers so that they can protect human rights through rapid response measures.

Given the absence of observatories in many countries, this systematization responds to the commitment established in the framework of Guatemala+5 and regional agreements reached in Bogotá, which identified the need to document the specific impacts of fundamentalisms through four case studies in Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, and Peru.

By compiling and analyzing these cases, the report seeks to create a deeper understanding of the phenomenon, highlight its differentiated impacts, strengthen proactive narratives from a faith perspective, provide clear action recommendations for decision-makers, and propose measures for ecumenical communication, political advocacy, and lobbying.





FUNDAMENTALISMS AND REGRESSIVE AGENDAS IN SOUTH AMERICA

South America is currently facing a context marked by the strengthening of regressive agendas and fundamentalist expressions across political, religious, and social spheres. In several countries, these dynamics have consolidated under far-right administrations; in others, they persist and operate as de facto powers even where governments identify as progressive.

Argentina is undergoing an accelerated process of democratic setbacks and a deterioration of human rights, marked by a far-right government with an anti-political, denialist, and punitive discourse. Austerity policies, the dismantling of social programs, the weakening of memory, truth, and justice policies, and the stigmatization of social, feminist, and human rights movements have created a climate of growing institutional and symbolic violence. In this context, ultra-conservative Christian sectors—Evangelicals and Catholics—have gained a privileged place in dialogue with political power, reinforcing anti-rights agendas in relation to comprehensive sexuality education, sexual and reproductive rights, and the recognition of diversity.

Brazil is undergoing a process of democratic re-composition under the Lula da Silva administration, following the profound polarization and institutional breakdown inherited from the Bolsonaro government. Although social, environmental, and international policies have

been reactivated, the executive faces major limitations due to a fragmented Congress mainly controlled by conservative parties. The alliance between religious conservatism, neoliberalism, and state militarization during the previous Jair Bolsonaro administration severely impacted the Brazilian political arena and continues to influence the public agenda. Consequences persist in the normalization of authoritarian and denialist discourses, often based on religious arguments and significant setbacks in human rights, environmental protections, and the rights of Indigenous peoples and quilombolas.⁶

In *Colombia*, despite having a progressive government, ultra-conservative power structures with Christian roots still have a significant influence. Fundamentalist churches and movements maintain alliances with conservative political sectors and deploy institutional, symbolic, and territorial harassment strategies against organizations that

⁶ Quilombola communities in Brazil are Afro-descendant communities formed by enslaved Africans who escaped the slave system and organized themselves into autonomous settlements called quilombos, mainly between the 16th and 19th centuries.

work for sexual and reproductive health, gender justice, and human rights. These dynamics illustrate how religious fundamentalisms operate as a structural and persistent power, capable of limiting the implementation of public policies regardless of the current administration's political leanings.

Meanwhile, *Peru* is undergoing a profound sociopolitical crisis marked by weak institutions and a rupture between the state and broad sectors of the population following the removal of President Pedro Castillo and Dina Boluarte taking power. Ms. Boluarte has now also been removed from office. State repression of social protests, especially in Andean and rural regions, has led to serious human rights violations with a persistence of the respective consequences. In this context, fundamentalist religious actors have strengthened their influence on the state apparatus, particularly on gender, sexual and reproductive rights, and diversity policies, weakening the secular character of the state and reinforcing narratives of order, punishment, and moral control.

This panorama reaffirms that *conservadurista*⁷ tendencies have been taking hold in Latin America and the Caribbean, presenting the expansion of rights and freedoms as a threat to the social order. In this context, diversity, bodily autonomy, social protest, and religious pluralism are construed as expressions of “disorder” that must be controlled through rigid, denialist, and punitive measures.

From a theoretical perspective, it is recognized that

... “religious fundamentalism” is understood to mean a set of actions and assumptions based on the following principles: a) the immutability of tradition, b) the infallibility of sacred books (the Koran, the Torah, the Gospels) through a literal interpretation, c) unrestricted respect for liturgical ceremonies, d) an anti-modern orientation, which should be extended to society as a whole. (Caro and Evgenia 2000).



It was found that constructing liberating biblical-theological frameworks helps establish *perspectives associated with a full life*. This lens can help mitigate the effects of regressive agendas on spiritual life.

7 To understand the term conservadurismo, Rita Segato argues: “The current struggles are not only fought over the distribution of resources, but also over the control of meaning, the administration of morality, and the power to decide over bodies.” Likewise, she states in several of her lectures that as long as there is a discourse against difference, associated with fear and the need for control, the logic of an “antidote” will continue to be presented against this difference. See: Rita Laura Segato: *Contra-pedagogías de la crueldad* (Counter-pedagogies of Cruelty). Buenos Aires: Prometeo, 2018.



Based on this understanding of fundamentalisms, it is possible to identify initial common characteristics included in this systematization:

01.

Absence of hermeneutics, accompanied by a literal interpretation of sacred texts, which has specific implications for the recognition and participation of women and the right to choose, among others.

02.

Biased narratives: When these gaps are present, narratives of exclusion and misrepresentation are established, such as the patriarchal image of God, an affirmation of women's inferiority, the establishment of adult-centrism, and male domination as God's exclusive envoys, justifying violence from these constructed positions. Violence perpetrated in the name of God has been present throughout history and continues to be prevalent today, where political spaces held by conservative governments promote a specific religious interpretation.

03.

Cross-cutting manifestation: Today, fundamentalism is no longer confined to the religious sphere and has become a cross-cutting manifestation that permeates various spheres of social, political, and cultural life. This phenomenon is expressed, on the one hand, in *political fundamentalism*, which promotes absolute power and turns it into a kind of religion of the Empire; on the other hand, economic fundamentalism elevates the market and capital to the status of modern and exclusive divinities.

Likewise, *patriarchal fundamentalism* reproduces the idea that men constitute the ethical and normative model of society, while ethnic and cultural fundamentalism uphold the superiority of one race or culture over others, validating symbolic and material domination. In the scientific sphere, fundamentalism manifests in the claim that *science has exclusive and total access to the truth*, rendering invisible other knowledge models. As a whole, these expressions reveal the persistence of power systems that seek to establish themselves as universal, limiting plurality, dialogue, and the construction of epistemological and social alternatives.

04.

Global strategies: all of the recorded events are part of extremely serious global dynamics, with highly organized, interconnected, disciplined agendas that receive significant funding.⁸ This has led to the dismantling of human rights protections on national, regional, and international levels, the undermining of democratic structures to weaken institutions, and attempts to delegitimize multilateralism by labeling it “elitist” or “external.”

05.

Polarization: social polarization increases by presenting gender equality, LGBTQI+ rights, and environmental protections as threats, while proposing “biblical truths” as a response, thus presenting themselves as “guardians of faith, morality, and tradition.”

⁸ EPF (European Parliamentary Forum for Sexual & Reproductive Rights): The Next Wave. Brussels, 2025.

OVERVIEW OF THE CASE STUDIES

Based on the decision to systematize cases that highlight the convergence of fundamentalisms in the region, and grounded in experiences shared by the accompanied organizations and communities, the following information gathering process was implemented:

- 1. Argentina Forum:** One case associated with personalized persecution using social media and other media outlets against a faith-based organization. Narratives were constructed about an alleged infiltration of people “outside the faith” in the churches, based on, for example, their defense of Comprehensive Sexuality Education. Subsequently, the attack was traced to an ultra-conservative religious leader with political influence.
- 2. Brazil Forum:** One case of rights violations in the Taipiri Ecumenical and Interreligious Forum,⁹ in Manaus (Amazonia), which shows how the acculturation and evangelization of Indigenous peoples and traditional communities, driven by conservative colonizing theologies, are linked to illegal economic interests and conservative political actors. The violations have generated deep-seated community tensions, fractures in identity, and violations of territorial, cultural, and spiritual rights.
- 3. Colombia Forum:** One case that, for security reasons, must remain anonymous. A human rights organization with extensive experience in sexual and reproductive rights faces systematic and coordinated attacks from conservative Christian actors, combining digital stigmatization, account blocking, direct harassment, physical intimidation at health-care facilities, and institutional pressure to restrict access to services, deter users, and invalidate their work through legal actions and anti-rights narratives.
- 4. Peru Forum:** One case stemming from a governmental supreme decree that represented setbacks to the rights of people with trans experiences, using mental health concepts to disqualify their identity as an illness.

⁹ Taipiri is an indigenous word meaning “hut where travelers take refuge.” Based on this meaning, the organization Coordenadoria Ecumênica de Serviço do Fórum do Brasil (CESE) organized a space for ecumenical and interreligious dialogue between organizations working in northern Brazil and the Amazon, to strengthen the struggles that promote and guarantee the rights of the Amazonian peoples and confront religious and political fundamentalism. Coordenadoria Ecumênica de Serviço (CESE): Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Taipiri Unites Faith Leaders and Traditional Peoples at the People’s Summit in Belém. Brazil, 2025. See: <https://cese.org.br/en/new/ecumenical-and-inter-religious-taipiri-unites-faith-leaders-and-traditional-peoples-at-the-peoples-summit-in-belem/>

This measure was supported by congressional representatives from conservative sectors of the Catholic and Evangelical churches and impacted the right to differentiated access to healthcare, as well as guarantees for ongoing access to necessary treatments in the context of gender transitions.



In-depth case analysis will increase our understanding of the origin and spread of fundamentalisms and regressive agendas. The denial of human rights is one of the most visible consequences; however, this analysis argues that practices such as defunding public policies, emotional manipulation, and the strategic use of social media are associated actions that reinforce the convergence of fundamentalisms.

Likewise, legislators and public employees with ties to conservative church movements were identified. They use their political platforms to promote biased rhetoric, transforming the discourse into viral and polarizing narratives, administrative actions, and bills that seriously undermine human dignity, rights, and diversity.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This conceptual framework is grounded in an understanding of the constructs that underpin the four case studies and help establish the existing and causal links between fundamentalisms and a violation of the aforementioned rights.

Civilizational crisis

In the contemporary global context, various critical currents have pointed to a civilizational crisis, understood as a burnout of the modern, capitalist, and patriarchal development model that has shaped human, social, and ecological relations since the European colonial expansion (Dussel, 2015; Escobar, 2016). This crisis is manifested on multiple dimensions: the environmental and climate crisis, increasing social inequalities, the erosion of community fabric, and the resurgence of fundamentalist religious discourse. In Latin America, one of the most significant phenomena is the advance of neo-Pentecostal movements, the evangelizing actions of which have taken on a marked political, media-centered, and territorial lens (Bastian, 2013).

The concept of *civilizational* crisis arises from the critique of Western modernity as a project founded on the idea of progress as sustained by development and control over nature. This crisis is not only environmental or economic, but also spiritual, ethical, and epistemological (Gudynas, 2011). From a decolonial perspective, authors such as Aníbal Quijano (2000) and Enrique Dussel (2015) argue that modernity is intrinsi-

cally linked to the coloniality of power, a structure that imposed racial, epistemic, and cultural hierarchies. On a theological level, this crisis is expressed through a weakening of community spiritualities and the instrumentalization of religion to serve the market and politics. As Leonardo Boff (2014) argues, humanity is at a civilizational crossroads: continue with consumerism or rebuild an ethics of care for the earth and its peoples.

Evangelization in Latin America has historically been tied to the European colonial project, which used religion as a tool for cultural and political domination. The theology of conquest justified the expropriation of lands, the subordination of Indigenous groups, and the imposition of a Euro-Christian worldview (Ribeiro, 1992). This process gave rise to what Franz Hinkelammert (2002) calls the myth of Western Christianity, an imaginary world in which Christianity is associated with civilization and modernity, while Indigenous and Afro-descendant groups are relegated to barbarism or paganism. Today, although formal colonialism has disappeared, its symbolic structures persist in new forms of evangelization characterized by a multiplicity of

conservative religious influences, which, at times, in association with Pentecostal movements, have expanded their presence in Latin America since the late 20th century.

Neo-Pentecostalism is characterized by dynamism, intensive media use, and adaptability to the contemporary religious market. These churches promote a theology of prosperity, in which faith is associated with economic success and divine blessing with consumption and material accumulation (Mariano, 1999). Unlike colonial Catholic missions, neo-Pentecostalism operates from the logic of spiritual entrepreneurship, offering personal solutions to structural problems. Its growth has been boosted in contexts of social crisis, poverty, and loss of institutional reference points, shaping a new kind of religious power that has a strong influence on public policy and moral debate (Burdick, 2018).

The relationship between neo-Pentecostalism and the civilizational crisis is ambivalent. On the one hand, these churches emerge as spiritual responses to the existential void left by the collapse of the modern model; on the other hand, they are vehicles to reproduce the very model of civilization they claim to combat. The theology of success and individualistic anthropology perpetuate neoliberal values by shifting responsibility for well-being from the community to the individual believer (Gutiérrez, 2017). From a critical perspective, this phenomenon can be considered part of the coloniality of the sacred, where religion is linked to economic and political power to sustain the hegemonic order.

Rights of Indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants, and environmental defenders

The rights of Indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants, and environmental defenders are categorized as collective rights, tied to the protection of nature, cultural identity, and self-determination. These rights have emerged in response to historical colonization, dispossession, and structural exclusion, and are based on the principle



that defending the territory is also defending life (Gudynas, 2011). Thus, recognizing these rights represents a paradigm shift in human rights theory and practice, incorporating community, intercultural, and ecological perspectives that transcend the liberal notion of the individual subject (Escobar, 2016).

From a collective rights perspective, communities are recognized as subjects of rights, with their own identity and an inseparable relationship with the territory. According to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966), all peoples have the right to self-determination, which includes control over their natural resources. Additionally, the human right to a healthy environment, recognized by the United Nations General Assembly (2022), establishes that environmental protection is an essential condition to exercise all other human rights. In Latin America, this vision has been strengthened by the Escazú Agreement (2018), which promotes environmental justice, public participation, and the protection of environmental defenders.

In relation to the life, participation, and protection of Indigenous peoples, differentiated rights are recognized that derive from their ancestral relationship with the land, their worldview, and their social organization systems. The most relevant international instruments include ILO Convention 169 (1989), which enshrines the right to free, prior, and informed consultation, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007), which extends protections to self-determination, control over natural resources, and respect for traditional knowledge. From an epistemological perspective, these rights are linked to the paradigm of *Buen Vivir* (Good Living) proposed by Andean Indigenous movements, which promotes a relationship of reciprocity and balance between human beings and nature (Acosta, 2013). Territorial defense, therefore, is not only an economic or political struggle, but is also spiritual and cultural.

Afro-descendant peoples have also historically suffered from the invisibility and structural racism inherited from colonialism. The vindication of their rights is based on memory, ancestry, and self-determination, essential elements for their cultural and community development (Quijano, 2000). In Colombia, Law 70 of 1993 recognizes the territorial and cultural rights of black communities, establishing mechanisms for the collective titling of their territories. Internationally, the Inter-American Convention against Racism (2013) and the International Decade for People of African Descent (2015–2024) reinforce the principles of justice,

recognition, and historical reparation. These regulatory frameworks seek to overcome the colonial matrix of power, which has subordinated Afro-descendant identities, while promoting racial and environmental equity as pillars of a just and pluralistic society.

These groups are also recognized as environmental defenders and key stakeholders in protecting ecosystems and human rights. The Escazú Agreement (2018) establishes that states must guarantee the comprehensive protection of these individuals, ensure their



participation in decision-making, and prevent the criminalization of their work. According to the organization Global Witness (2023), Latin America is the most dangerous region in the world for those who defend the land and the environment, with a high number of murders and threats, especially in Colombia, Brazil, and Mexico. This situation reflects the tension between extractive projects and collective rights in the context of a development model that prioritizes accumulation over sustainability (Svampa, 2019).

Comprehensive Sexuality Education

Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) is a fundamental pillar for exercising human rights, gender equality, and preventing violence. From a holistic perspective, it recognizes sexuality as a central dimension of human development that involves biological, emotional, social, cultural, and ethical aspects (UNES-



CO, 2018). However, in recent decades, CSE has faced growing opposition from conservative and religious fundamentalist sectors that seek to restrict sexual education, appealing to “gender ideology” and “protection of the family” narratives. (Mujica, 2019).

The concept of CSE is based on an emancipatory vision of education, aimed at forming critical, autonomous individuals who are aware of their rights. UNESCO (2009, 2018) defines CSE as a teaching-learning process

based on scientific evidence and human rights, which promotes respect, equality, and diversity. Authors such as Louro (2007) and Foucault (1998) emphasize that sexuality is a historical and political construct, marked by power relations. In this sense, CSE seeks to dismantle normative discourse on the body, gender, and desire, paving the way for new forms of recognition and freedom.

Additionally, CSE is recognized as a human right in various international instruments: the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 4 and 5). From this perspective, denying sexuality education is equivalent to violating fundamental rights such as information, health, bodily autonomy, and equality. According to Amnesty International (2020), a lack of CSE contributes to perpetuating undesired pregnancies, sexual violence, and gender inequality, particularly affecting girls, adolescents, and LGBTQI+ people.

In Latin America, progress on CSE public policies is facing a sharp setback, promoted by religious and far-right political movements that are organizing campaigns against “gender ideology.” These groups, often linked to Catholic and neo-Pentecostal fundamentalism, seek to exclude gender perspectives and diversity from school curricula (Vaggione, 2020). The denial of CSE is part of a civilizational offensive that seeks to reinstate patriarchal and heteronormative models, delegitimizing the sexual and reproductive rights won by feminist and sexual diversity movements (Correa & Paternotte, 2018).

Denying CSE in educational spaces deepens social and gender gaps. In schools, it prevents the creation of safe environments, limits the ability of young people and adolescents to make informed decisions, and contributes to the reproduction of sexist, homophobic, and transphobic violence (Sabsay, 2016). Furthermore, censorship and misinformation promoted by anti-rights groups undermine the secular character of public education, weakening democratic and pluralistic citizenship training (Carrión & Peñas, 2022).

In the face of these challenges, various critical and feminist pedagogies propose CSE as a space for social transformation. The pedagogy of tenderness (Freire, 1970; Walsh, 2017) and queer pedagogies (Britzman, 1995) promote the construction of affective and critical knowledge that denaturalizes sexual and gender hierarchies. From an intersectional perspective, CSE must address the multiple oppressions that bodies experience—gender, race, class, sexual orientation, and disability—by promoting inclusive, affective, and liberating education.

Sexual and reproductive rights

To establish a framework for sexual and reproductive rights, it is necessary to generate a conversation about the body, as existence is corporeal and therefore a sign and message that becomes the recipient of social, political, cultural, and religious control, more specifically and strictly on women, which is also associated with the biological nature of gestation and childbirth.

During debates on the right to choose, it is often ignored that women's bodies are subject to sinister forms of violence associated with sexual exploitation and human trafficking. One could go further by including events associated with the sale of organs (Lamas, 2007).

However, the debate focuses on women's agency in decisions regarding family planning, sterilization, or termination of pregnancy, as motherhood is assumed to be a duty and one of the sole purposes of their lives. An additional issue is associated with sperm donation, which has never been problematic or a matter of political debate relative to men's bodies, but there are policies promoting surrogacy (Silvia, 2024). Thus, it is understood that the conversation about sexual and reproductive rights falls on women's bodies as a means of social control.

This regulatory relationship is part of a broader conversation about its inscription in social inequality, specifically with class/caste, race/ethnicity, and colonialism/imperialism, among others (Wichterich, 2015), since voluntary termination of pregnancy, family planning, and education have different frameworks in terms

of treatment, access to rights, and even training and information.

It is women who have fought for a revision of sexual and reproductive rights, and they have brought into the public sphere what others have attempted to keep controlled in the privacy of the home, doctors' offices, and educational institutions. Wichterich (2015) expresses it this way:

"The paradigm of sexual and reproductive rights, which was initially promoted by women's movements from an emancipatory perspective in terms of liberation from violence, coercion, and discrimination, became a pawn between two global dynamics: that of the neoliberal transnational market and that of authoritarian political and religious fundamentalist regimes."



METHODOLOGY

The systematization of attacks due to the convergence of fundamentalisms is proposed from a “critical and interpretive analysis” that transcends description and moves towards reflection and the search for frameworks of influence that generate transformations. The interpretation is based on an analysis of global discourse and practices associated with religious, political, economic, patriarchal, ethnic, and cultural elements, among others, in addition to the examination of forms of resistance, negotiation, or transformation promoted by the affected communities to mitigate the impacts of these attacks.

The analysis has three dimensions:

- **STRUCTURAL:** Analyzes the historical, political, economic, and cultural conditions that enable the emergence of fundamentalism.
- **RELATIONAL:** Identifies the involved stakeholders (religious institutions, social organizations, communities, the state, the media, etc.) and how they interact.
- **SUBJECTIVE AND SYMBOLIC:** Addresses the meanings, beliefs, and emotions that shape fundamentalist practices and responses of resistance.

Critical analysis allows for a comparison with other perspectives to contrast information and construct situated interpretations. Interpretive analysis seeks transformative lessons that can be harvested from this document as action-oriented emancipatory practices to counteract the effects of fundamentalisms, in addition to seeking de-escalation. These dimensions are proposed because they unite the critical and interpretive to understand the cases and experiences associated with the convergence of fundamentalisms.





STRUCTURAL— YOU ARE STANDING ON HOLY GROUND

This dimension addresses the logics of power, the creation of regulatory and control instruments, permeated by the intersections between political conservatism and considerations that can be found in theologies of prosperity, domination, and spiritual warfare, contained in the multiplicity of religious systems, specifically those with highly conservative doctrines.

A relationship is established between factors associated with necropolitical systems¹⁰ that eliminate the possibilities of a full life, especially for those who historically have been most vulnerable, becoming a megaphone for “hate speech,” which quickly turns into

actions that establish a relationship of asymmetry and radical inequality between two parties: “them and us.”

This dimension is evident in the case of Brazil, *“You are the Salt of the Earth,”* which exposes the consequences of fundamentalist religious practices that deny the rights and struggles of Indigenous communities, their existence, and their identity.

RELATIONAL— WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?

Here, a relationship is established between subjects based on the denial of difference, of their otherness, and of the universal richness of capacities, joys, productive and creative forces that could create an axis of exchange in relationship with the other, but which currently sustain relationships based on the imposition of existence according to pre-established patterns. These are assumed to be inherent to avoid rethinking the forms of existence and processes of becoming subjects in frameworks of fulfillment, as well as to avoid having to confront fundamentalist violence.

When these forms of interaction are established with restrictions to the subject’s creative power, the suppressed cries of protest are averted until they become a deafening chorus. Analyzing this relationship allows us to challenge individual positions, identifying our own fundamentalist systems and move towards listening and then transformation.

In the Argentina case, *“Blessed are the Feet of Those who Proclaim Peace,”* the delegitimization of others’ actions, attacks, and the pursuit of the collapse of communities are all anchored in harassment, fear, and an invalidation of the impacted parties.

10 Di Renzo, Eleonora: Neocolonialismo europeo e criminalizzazione della solidarietà. Iris: Uniroma Sapienza University of Rome, 2025.

SUBJECTIVE AND SYMBOLIC

In the symbolic and subjective dimension, the senses of reality with which subjects position themselves in the world must be considered.

On the one hand, there is adherence to what exists in the memory, which is positioned as resistance, and then the recurring narratives of what existed and what is desired.

Therefore, it is evident that these two elements—sense of reality and adherence to memory—are mobilized through discourses that contain confirmation biases, which can be identified in categories such as:

- Education, childhood, and gender
- Family and moral order
- Religion and politics
- Sexual and reproductive rights
- Sexual and gender diversity
- Feminism and women's rights
- Politics and social order

In this classification, we can identify an initial symbolic order of those who are regulated in the fundamentalist agenda: children, women, people who are part of a sexually diverse population, the family institution, rights, and the capacity for organization.

In the Peru case, "Don't be Deceived", and in the Colombia case, "Ruth and Naomi," it is evident how this discourse becomes a bill and how organized resistance resolves the cases, yet frontal attacks are sustained through a legitimization of rights.





Case studies

ARGENTINA

BLESSED ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO PROCLAIM PEACE

01.

Case Summary

Case: Attack and public delegitimization of religious stakeholders committed to the expansion of human, sexual, and reproductive rights in Argentina.

Context: Work to promote sexual, reproductive, and non-reproductive rights carried out by the Protestant foundation Hora de Obrar, within the context of the public and legislative debate on the Voluntary Termination of Pregnancy (VTP) law and the implementation of Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE), in a context of major social and religious polarization.

Location: Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Reference date: June–July 2020.

Collective subjects: Hora de Obrar Protestant Foundation, team members, and other religious leaders committed to human rights.

External stakeholders: Pentecostal and conservative religious leadership. Church and communications networks that disseminated an anonymous message. Religious stakeholder with a history of public service.

Focus: Massive and anonymous dissemination, via WhatsApp, of a chain letter denouncing an alleged “infiltration” of “Marxists,” LGBTQ+ activists, defenders of VTP, CSE, and human rights in churches, exposing names, institutional affiliations, and rating their “danger” levels. The aim was to alert, discredit, and discipline religious communities and leaders.

02.

Reconstruction of the experience

The Protestant foundation Hora de Obrar took a public position in favor of expanding rights, in line with its work to promote sexual, reproductive, and non-reproductive rights, and an institutional trajectory rooted in faith and a commitment to social justice. The position was taken in a context of major social and religious polarization in Argentina, marked by the debate on the Voluntary Termination of Pregnancy Law, implementation of Comprehensive Sexuality Education, and a recognition of rights for the diverse community. In this context, feminists, women’s and diversity movements, together with faith-based organizations in favor of rights, were increasingly confronted by conservative religious sectors that opposed this agenda with support from exclusionary theological narratives.

It was in this context that an anonymous message began to circulate broadly through WhatsApp, denouncing an alleged infiltration of people from “outside the faith” into churches, accused of promoting Marxist ideas, LGBTQ+ activism, the legalization of abortion, comprehensive sexuality education, and human rights. The message included a list of first and last names of around thirty individuals, including members and leaders connected to the Hora de Obrar Foundation, publicly exposing them and singling them out as a threat to church communities. The dissemination of this chain letter generated negative repercussions in religious circles, damaged institutional legitimacy, and created a climate of harassment, fear, and suspicion. Subsequently, the origin of the attack was identified as a religious leader with significant political clout and ties to conservative Pentecostal circles. He has a background in public administration, revealing a connection between religious fundamentalism, political power, and ideological persecution strategies.



03.

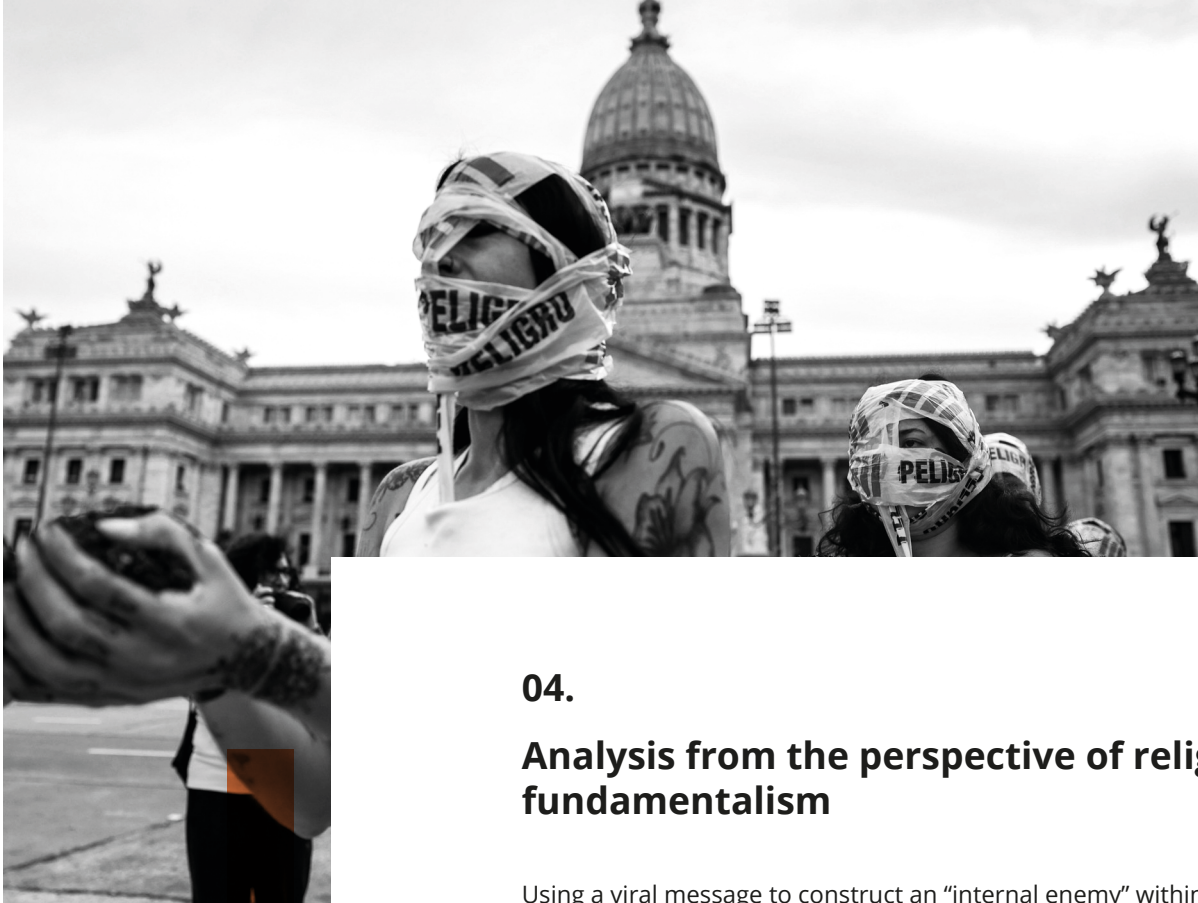
In light of the structural, relational, and symbolic dimensions

The debate about the voluntary termination of pregnancy has become a highly politicized public issue, associated with sin among fundamentalist sectors. Comprehensive sexuality education and related issues concerning sexual, reproductive, and non-reproductive rights are also used as a rallying point for alliances between conservative political sectors and churches that promote structural inequalities, affecting women, girls, trans people, rural populations, Indigenous peoples, and impoverished communities in different ways.

Moralistic narratives present rights as a threat, sin, ideology, and deviance, constructing symbolic enemies: feminism, human rights organizations, and church leaders who exercise liberating theologies, which then become targets of attack. The work is invalidated, using significant symbolic violence, shaping an alleged common sense, and justifying exclusion. Therefore, the relationships are associated with difference instead of with the power of defending dignity.

Arguments that place social order on a pedestal were generated through the increased use of expressions and symbols appropriated to confirm subjectivity.

Slogans are designed and disseminated based on associations with fear and function as a social influencer, creating a kind of singular stance. Thus, narratives such as “not with my kids,” associated with identity symbols like the sky-blue scarf, are configured as instruments of belonging and opposition, particularly in contrast to the green scarf and slogans such as “my body, my decision.” The difference between the two positions ultimately lies in the possibility—or negation—of exercising rights.



04.

Analysis from the perspective of religious fundamentalism

Using a viral message to construct an “internal enemy” within the faith communities appeals to the logic of “doctrinal purity,” where defenders of human rights, CSE, sexual diversity, and VTP are accused of being “pseudo-pastors,” “Marxists,” or infiltrators. This type of fundamentalist discourse operates through an exclusionary theology that defines who legitimately belongs in the religious community and who should be singled out, delegitimized, and symbolically expelled. In doing so, the right to freedom of conscience, expression, and theological interpretation is denied, closing off religious pluralism and presenting a single moral interpretation as absolute and unquestionable.

Identifying that the attack originated from a religious leader with state ties and mapping and intelligence capabilities reveals how fundamentalism transcends doctrine and becomes a social discipline practice. The use of lists, “danger level” classifications, and smear campaigns is a form of symbolic and political violence that denies fundamental rights such as security, privacy, and public participation. From this perspective, fundamentalism acts as an instrument of control that seeks to silence dissident voices, especially those who connect faith and human rights.

The impact is not limited to individual harm as it also has structural effects on faith communities and social advocacy more broadly. By instilling the idea that defending rights is “unrelated to the gospel,” there is an erosion of legitimacy for theologies committed to social justice, and the community fabric erodes due to isolation, suspicion, and silencing.



05.

Lessons learned and contributions from the case

One of the main lessons learned from this case is the need to recognize that religious fundamentalism not only operates as a theological discourse but also as organized strategies of power that combine symbolic, political, and communicational resources.

Experience shows that human rights organizations and defenders, even those with a long trajectory and ecclesiastical legitimacy, are not exempt from systematic attacks. This forces us to rethink institutional care, security, and accompaniment practices, in addition to anticipating scenarios of symbolic and digital violence in the current context of influence regarding rights, especially at the crossroads of faith, gender justice, and sexual and reproductive rights.

06.

A differentiated theological perspective

The prophetic voice is not an optional gesture or an ideological exaggeration, but an evangelical imperative that rises out of the cries of violated bodies and denied lives. The denunciation of religious fundamentalism that operates against sexual and reproductive rights is part of the biblical tradition of prophets who unmask structures of death legitimized in the name of God. “Woe to those who enact unjust laws and issue oppressive decrees!” (Is 10:1), warns the Scripture, reminding us that any religious or political regulation that condemns, excludes, or persecutes those who make decisions about their own bodies is betraying God’s plan.

Liberation theology affirms that God is revealed in concrete stories and in real bodies, not in decontextualized moral abstractions. Jesus breaks with the logic of control over bodies when he approaches women who are stigmatized, sick, or considered impure, restoring their dignity and voice (Mark 5:25–34; John 8:1–11). These Gospel stories offer a fundamental hermeneutical key for the defense of sexual and reproductive rights: the criterion is not the punitive norm, but the life that must be cared for. “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27) clearly expresses that no law—not even religious law—can be imposed by sacrificing people’s integrity, health, and autonomy, especially that of women and historically oppressed minorities.





BRAZIL

YOU ARE THE SALT OF THE EARTH

01.

Case Summary

Case: Impact of fundamentalist religious practices on the struggles for Indigenous peoples' rights.

Context: Indigenous leaders of the *Taipiri* Ecumenical and Interreligious Movement.

Location: Manaus, Amazonia, northern Brazil.

Reference date: September 5th, 2023.

Collective subjects: Indigenous leaders, traditional communities, quilombolas, and ecumenical organizations.

External stakeholders: Conservative churches and faith-based organizations, illegal economic agents (deforestation and land grabbing), conservative political actors.

Focus: Violation of the territorial, cultural, and spiritual rights of traditional communities in the face of acculturation, dispossession, and evangelization through symbolic violence and the breakdown of community and identity. Religious fundamentalism as a device for cultural colonization, territorial control, and the weakening of Indigenous autonomy, in convergence with economic and political interests over the land.

02.

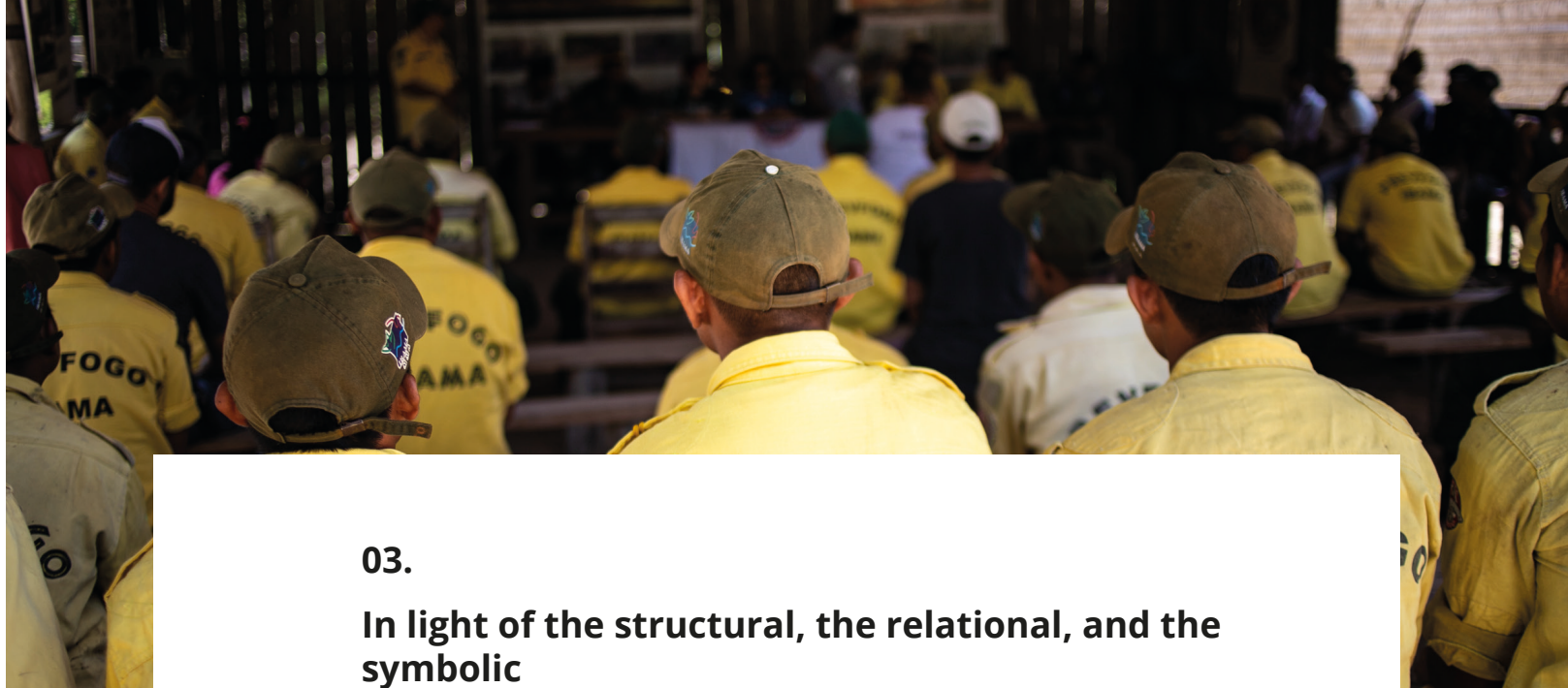
Reconstruction of the experience

During the *Taipiri* in Manaus, northern Brazil, a space for ecumenical and interreligious dialogue organized by CESE – Coordenadoria Ecumênica de Serviço of the ACT Forum of Brazil, Indigenous leaders collectively reflected on the impacts of religious practices on their struggles. The testimonies coincide in identifying a systematic advancement of religious fundamentalism in Indigenous territories, which is expressed through manipulative strategies for conversion, acculturation, and alliances with illegal economic interests. This is done by granting scholarships to Indigenous youth from the communities to pursue theological studies at external seminaries, upon return, establishing the evangelization of their ethnic communities according to the Western doctrines learned in these seminaries.

Fundamentalisms and their convergence not only seek to change belief systems but are also social control devices. The imposition of “conversion” for Indigenous youth, as a requirement for “salvation and prosperity,” dismantles

traditional systems, and ancestral authorities are plunged into a context of meaning loss regarding their role and influence in the community. Furthermore, the concept of “good living” is replaced by a capitalist narrative that erases its roots in community relations and harmony with nature.

Spiritual dispossession is accompanied by territorial dispossession driven by economic interests and the close relationship between newly established churches in Indigenous territories and agents linked to deforestation and land grabbing. Some of these churches act as mediators for loggers and invaders to generate internal support in the villages, compromising territorial control and collective rights. Some communities have managed to expel the religious agents but have reported significant internal resistance, as some of the local population support them, often seduced by promises and immediate material benefits.



03.

In light of the structural, the relational, and the symbolic

The discourse of compulsory conversion, associated with spiritual salvation and material property, has become a central feature of religious fundamentalism. This logic establishes an absolute, superior, and exclusive truth that discredits Indigenous spiritualities, presenting them as inferior, pagan, or demonic.

At this level of interaction, community fragmentation caused by the acculturation of youth, who return to their territory and reproduce Western doctrines distant from their identity, weakens the intergenerational transmission of ethnic knowledge, generating internal conflicts and religious hierarchies that can be described as pedagogies of cultural denial. As a result, the erosion of the Indigenous worldview increases, creating classifications of “converts and non-converts” in the community. This generates a discursive logic where material prosperity is promised to become a reality for the former, and the loss of collective rights and territorial destruction is normalized.

An additional element is the symbolic and spiritual violence, expressed in a denial of ancestral rituals and symbols that are labeled as having less value or directly as heretical, as these practices are seen as contrary to “faith and the true church.” However, the latter is seen to be in line with market production, resource extraction, and the idea of “development” as a strategy for salvation.

At this structural level, economic fundamentalism operates as a dimension that is inseparable from religious fundamentalism, validating accumulation models based on deforestation, land grabbing, and illegal economies. In this framework, Indigenous territories are no longer recognized as spaces of life, memory, and spirituality, but are instead conceived as resources available for economic exploitation. This facilitates the expansion of extractive projects and consolidates deeply asymmetrical power relations. The alliance not only accelerates territorial dispossession but also erodes the community foundations that have historically sustained care for the land, deepening inequality, socio-environmental violence, and the climate crisis in Indigenous territories.

04.

Analysis from the perspective of religious fundamentalism

The convergence of fundamentalisms operates in the aforementioned ethnic territories as contemporary colonization, reconfiguring power relations established mainly through territorial control and a nullification of community subjectivities. This is not merely a doctrinal dispute but a multifactorial phenomenon where religion, economics, and politics intertwine to establish dynamics of dispossession.



Religious fundamentalism thus advances in parallel to and in alliance with political and economic interests, forming a triad of power that directly threatens the autonomy, traditional knowledge, and self-determination of Indigenous peoples. In this framework, fundamentalist churches function as social mediators and moral enablers of illegal or predatory extractive economies. Religion is instrumentalized to justify regressive agendas that favor deforestation, land grabbing, and the expulsion of Indigenous communities, while disqualifying their demands as obstacles to economic growth.

The use of narratives and practices rooted in exclusionary assertions can lead to absolutist positions. Thus, legitimacy and, therefore, belonging, identity, and rights are denied by labeling other expressions as backward practices and undermining their horizons of meaning. The strategy used to acculturate youth generates an ethical and spiritual crisis; the loss of religious identity triggers other losses, adding to the global consequences of regressive agendas, increasing inequality, human migration under precarious conditions, and climate change. The latter is tied to the developmentalist models associated with the exploitation of nature.

05.

Lessons learned and contributions from the case

The structural relationship between religion, coloniality, and dispossession is undeniable; forced conversion, the promise of economic prosperity, and the denial of Indigenous or ancestral spiritualities have even permeated communities that considered themselves to be safe from these actions. The case shows that economic fundamentalism not only accompanies but also enhances

the advancement of religious fundamentalism by generating immediate material incentives that fragment communities and weaken collective resistance.

There is a need for deeper analysis and mobilization to protect Indigenous worldviews and spiritualities, because where fundamentalism advances, land protections and the defense of life are weakened. In contrast, ecumenical and interreligious spaces strengthen collective resistance and dignity.

06.

A differentiated theological perspective

From the perspective of the option for the poor, Indigenous peoples are not missionary objectives or passive recipients of evangelization, but theological subjects. The cry of the poor and the cry of the earth are manifested in their bodies, territories, and worldviews. The forest, water, and ancestral knowledge are spaces where God is revealed and speaks, challenging abstract and disconnected theologies.

Religious fundamentalism sides with a theology of domination, which places absolute value on conversion, promises individual prosperity, and fractures the community fabric. From the perspective of liberation theology, these practices are seen as expressions of structural sin because they deny the dignity and full life of Indigenous peoples. Economic fundamentalism places an absolutist value on the market, sacralizes accumulation, and validates the destruction of creation. The alliance between prosperity theologies and extractive economies constitutes a direct denial of the God of life, as it turns the land into a commodity and Indigenous peoples into obstacles to growth. Christian and liberating faith, on the other hand, is only faithful to its source when it is allied with those who suffer dispossession, recognizes spiritual plurality, and commits itself to historical justice.





COLOMBIA

BETWEEN RUTH AND NAOMI

01.

Case Summary

Case: Systematic physical and online attacks against an organization that works for sexual and reproductive health as an essential right.

Context: Organization working in Bogotá.

Location: Colombia.

Reference date: August 2025.

Collective subjects: Women leaders working in the defense of human rights, healthcare professionals in the field of sexual, reproductive, and non-reproductive rights.

External stakeholders: Churches with fundamentalist doctrines, representatives of conservative political parties in the Senate, and the 40 Days for Life movement.

Focus: Physical attacks on headquarters, attacks on service users, dissemination of messages, false reports to regulatory bodies, persecution on social media, political instrumentalization during electoral campaigns.

02.

Reconstruction of the experience

The organization, historically committed to guaranteeing sexual and reproductive rights in Colombia, has consistently faced the impacts of a convergence of fundamentalism that seeks to hinder its work. These attacks are not isolated incidents, but rather a systematic strategy that operates in coordination between three interrelated areas: digital, physical, and institutional.

In the digital sphere, stigmatization campaigns, mass content complaints, account blockages, and advertising restrictions were deployed, driven by both anti-rights groups and the platforms themselves. This has severely limited the ability to share information on sexual and reproductive health. Additionally, there has been direct harassment through user service channels with intimidating messages, identity theft, and scheduling sabotage, creating a hostile environment that seeks to prevent access to services.

In the physical sphere, healthcare facilities have become scenes of intimidation due to religious demonstrations, collective prayers, the instrumentalized use of minors, and disinformation

campaigns aimed at deterring potential users. These practices include interceptions on public roads, institutional impersonation, and the deliberate generation of unfounded health alerts, which have led to repeated official inspections. At the same time, institutional harassment has been observed in the form of excessive controls, disproportionate regulatory requirements, repeated legal actions, and public accusations that reinforce anti-rights rhetoric.

The consequences have been profound: reduced access to timely healthcare, increased social stigma, emotional and occupational burnout among staff, harm to the institutional reputation, and a weakening of the full access to rights. Although protection and resistance strategies have been implemented, they are insufficient given the magnitude and persistence of the attacks, which are part of a structural framework aimed at silencing voices, disciplining bodies, and restricting freedoms, posing urgent challenges to the collective defense of human rights.



03.

In light of the structural, relational, and symbolic

The control mechanisms applied to women are mainly associated with the body and reproductive work, sustained by conservative discourses, as the ultimate mission of every woman's life.

In this context, a campaign was launched in Colombia to promote motherhood—without mention of fatherhood—with the slogan “Save Colombia, Have Children,” tied to a narrative about the country's declining birth rate, as a social dynamic allegedly rooted in the right to choose, instead of in the country's socio-economic realities and conflict.

When social norms are established based on a logic of control and these are focused on starting a family in a single form (heteropatriarchal), mechanisms of violence are produced that directly target the voluntary termination of pregnancy as a violation of that moral structure. This situation must be analyzed in the arena of political debate, because as long as patriarchy-based state power regulates reproduction to manage the population, sexuality, the workforce, and the social order, life will continue to be objectified from a colonial perspective, denying women's will, rights, voice, action, and participation.

Sexual and reproductive rights cannot be approached from a sin-centered perspective or from the imposition of a moralizing norm. The approach must include a contextual, social, and political understanding, within the frameworks of reality that vary for each woman, but especially for those who have been victims of structural sin which is the denial of their rights.

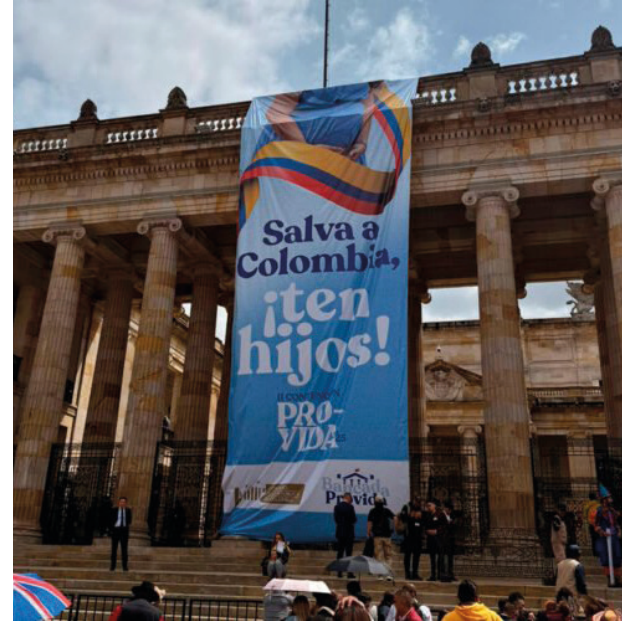
04.

Analysis from the perspective of religious fundamentalism

In this context, fundamentalism is no longer just a narrative, but an expression of power, and is one of the main structural obstacles for women to effectively exercise their sexual and reproductive rights. Far from being limited to the realm of individual beliefs, they operate as political projects that seek—and have succeed—in influencing legislation, public policy, and the configuration of conservative social morality, imposing a single vision and rigid, decentralized norms on life, the body, and motherhood.



A literal and ahistorical interpretation of sacred texts, the denial of women’s autonomy, and the sacralization of motherhood as a natural and inescapable destiny—in Catholicism associated with a single narrative construction of the Virgin—reproduces the reductionist idea that women must submit to their reproductive function, stripping them of their status as subjects of rights and nullifying legitimacy over their own bodies. In this context, abortion is presented as an absolute moral transgression, without taking into account the material, social, or violent conditions experienced by women and rendering invisible the multiple inequalities that condition them.



05.

Lessons learned and contributions from the case

When talking about abortion or sexual, reproductive, and non-reproductive rights, the focus of the conversation falls on women’s bodies and the social-moral conception of their lives. However, men are not involved in the narrative and practical configuration, constantly reiterating that life and caring for life are a female responsibility.

Moral frameworks are rigid and lack the ethical power of differentiated policies allowing women who decide to exercise their sexual and reproductive rights to be supported and cared for. Furthermore, criminalization and persecution permeate relationships, negating women’s decision-making, autonomy, and bodily sovereignty, which in turn becomes a public territory in times of war and during electoral campaigns.

06.

A differentiated theological perspective

Today, it is necessary to challenge doctrinal interpretations that are decontextualized and absolutist, ignoring the historical, social, and physical conditions experienced when deciding about pregnancy. Sexual and reproductive rights emerge as a concrete expression of human dignity, understood not as a theoretical abstraction, but as an embodied experience that demands justice, autonomy, and recognition.





Feminist, Black, Indigenous, and queer theologies, which present themselves as expressions of differentiated theology, deepen this critique by highlighting how traditional interpretations have been produced from positions of masculine, heteronormative, and colonial power. These perspectives question the sacralization of motherhood as a universal mandate and criticize the historical silencing of women's voices in the construction of theological discourse.

It is imperative to emphasize the need to establish a pastoral and social praxis committed to effectively guaranteeing sexual and reproductive rights. This implies accompanying, without judgment or condemnation, those who face difficult reproductive decisions, as well as speaking against the religious and political structures that perpetuate criminalization and suffering. In line with the Gospel's liberating vision, defending the right to choose is part of an ethic of liberation that prioritizes a fulfilling life, autonomy, and hope, reaffirming that the Christian faith can and must be a space of justice, care, and emancipation for women.





PERÚ

DO NOT BE DECEIVED

01.

Case Summary

Case: Supreme Decree No. 447-2024/ MINSA and violation of the rights of the LGBTQI+ population.

Context: Members of the LGBTQI+ community with trans, lesbian, intersex, transvestite, and transgender lived experiences in Peru, particularly members of the Independent Feminist Socialist Lesbians Association (LIFS for its acronym in Spanish), a member of the Gender Justice Roundtable.

Location: Lima, Peru.

Reference date: As of May 2024.

Collective subjects: People with non-hegemonic sexual identities and orientations.

External stakeholders: Ministry of Health, Ministry of Economy and Finance, Congress of the Republic, fundamentalist religious actors.

Focus: Violation of the rights to comprehensive physical and mental health, the right to equality and non-discrimination, the right to dignity, the right to gender identity and sexual orientation, and the right to live a life free from stigmatization and violence.



02.

Reconstruction of the experience

This case presents the human rights impacts experienced by the LGBTQI+ population in Peru following the approval of Supreme Decree No. 447-2024/MINSA, by means of which the Ministry of Health reincorporated pathologizing diagnostic categories for gender identity and sexual orientation, specific to ICD-10, into the Essential Health Insurance Plan. This measure, adopted in open contradiction to the international standards established by the World Health Organization in ICD-11, is a regulatory setback that instrumentalizes medical language to sanction exclusion, reinforce stigma, and restrict access to comprehensive and dignified care for the LGBTQI+ population, particularly transgender individuals.

The decree is part of a structural context of legal vulnerability and the advancement of conservative and fundamentalist agendas within the Peruvian state apparatus. The convergence of political actors, such as congressional representatives connected to conservative sectors of the Catholic and Evangelical churches, has allowed moral and dogmatic conceptions to become public policy, weakening the state's secular character and increasing institutional discrimination.

Faced with this scenario, the LGBTQI+ movement and human rights organizations responded with coordinated and sustained resistance, based on social mobilization, political advocacy, strategic litigation, and international complaints. Coordination with allies in Congress and backing from international standards made it possible to highlight the unconstitutional and unscientific nature of the decree, leading to its repeal and a declaration of unconstitutionality in August 2025.



03.

In light of the structural, the relational, and the symbolic

Structural setbacks demonstrate how biopolitical control mechanisms promoted from a place of “moral conscience” can operate. They seek to punish transgressors and establish a reputational distance between the parties.

The parties mentioned, which may be individuals from the LGBTQI+ community and others with beliefs based on an exclusionary faith, relate to each other through tense interactions, as they confront each other in an arena of power conceived in two distinct ways. The former (the LGBTQI+ population) seeks the power of existence: to be, to belong, and to live in a safe environment. The latter (the fundamentalist population) is positioned from a place of power/permission and power/authority to grant the former—considered to be outside the moral conscience— an authorization to belong under the canon that suits them, even when it is contrary to the ethical principle of unity.

This entire operation resorts to the stigmatization associated with illness, which is then presented as a punishment for sin. When the label of illness is applied, a cure is sought, and those who have the power/permission (pastors and the medical system) are the ones who define whether a cure will be provided. This classification is extremely violent and discriminatory, because even though it is not real or true, it promotes pathologization and setbacks in protected rights using erroneous legal frameworks.

04.

Analysis from the perspective of religious fundamentalism

Through a literalist interpretation of sacred texts, fundamentalist movements construct a notion of “natural order” where heterosexuality and the gender binary are presented as an unquestionable divine plan, associated with the story of Genesis and the creation of Adam and Eve. Diverse sexual orientations and non-normative gender identities are thus pushed into the realm of sin, deviance, or moral illness, enabling their regulation and control.

In addition, these networks use a discourse in defense of the “family,” “life,” and “moral health” to position sexual diversity as a social and spiritual threat, generating moral panic that validates the restriction of rights. The construction of the LGBTQI+

subject as a sinner justifies their exclusion from the political sphere and their subordination in the legal and social spheres. In this case, fundamentalism not only confronts human rights agendas, but also reconfigures power relations by granting religious legitimacy to authoritarian and conservative projects, reducing pluralism and weakening democratic practices.



05.

Lessons learned from the case

Religious fundamentalism does not act solely on a symbolic or doctrinal level; it also operates as an organized political actor seeking to influence the State's regulatory structure. Through alliances with powerful conservative sectors, these movements translate moralizing theological frameworks into public policy that validates exclusion.

Coordinated collective action is a decisive factor to defend and recover rights. The combination of social mobilization, political advocacy, institutional alliances, and the use of international standards shows that setbacks are not irreversible. However, this lesson also reveals a structural fragility: the guarantee of rights continues to depend on the capacity to organize and create social pressure, instead of being able to enjoy a sustained state commitment.



06.

Differentiated theological perspective

Feminist and liberation theologies have challenged theological anthropologies that reduce humanity to a single, heterosexual, patriarchal model, affirming that dignity does not depend on conformity to a moral norm, but on the plurality of how life is expressed.

Any religious discourse that pathologizes or condemns sexual diversity is at odds with the ethical core of Christianity, which is centered on affirming the dignity of all people.

The moral condemnation of sexual diversity does not respond to a revealed truth, but to situated theological constructions that have historically served to legitimize hierarchies, silencing, and violence. A theological reinterpretation of sin involves shifting it from the realm of identity to that of unjust relationships: diversity is not the sin, instead it is exclusion and the denial of rights in God's name.

FINDINGS AND COMMON DENOMINATORS

The four cases, described and analyzed in six steps in the previous section, demonstrate the following:

01.

A regional pattern of setbacks to rights through hybrid tactics such as the instrumentalization of faith, moral panic, the sacralization of “development and the market,” acculturation, and administrative *lawfare*, combined with digital and in-person harassment.



04.

Those primarily responsible for the harm are far-right politicians, illegal economic agents, legislators, and, of course, church leaders and fundamentalist religious actors.

02.

The *main affected groups* are Afro-descendant communities and Indigenous peoples, women, LGBTQI+ individuals, and progressive religious leaders.



03.

A variety of *instruments* are used to target these groups: decrees, harassment, public discreditation, acculturation practices, among others.



The following comparative table seeks to show how the impact was generated in each case and why it can be attributed to the convergence of fundamentalisms. The table also presents risks and opportunities so that decision-makers can act based on the identification of fundamentalisms as a significant factor causing setbacks to rights and democratic destabilization.

COUNTRY / CASE	STRATEGIES APPLIED BY FUNDAMENTALIST ACTORS	CAUSAL MECHANISM
Argentina - WhatsApp chain/CSE-VTP	Conservative religious leaders, coordinated through digital moral panic to influence the public sphere using chain messages with “danger lists.” Generation of internal discipline and erosion of pluralism.	(1) Activation of religious leadership → (2) Mass digital distribution → (3) Moral panic → (4) Social/educational harassment → (5) Erosion of consensus on CSE/ VTP policies.
Brazil - Evangelization and acculturation	Religious networks with instrumentalized theological training, alliances with illegal economies, and acculturation that erodes traditional practices and unite communities around rigid doctrines.	(1) Theological scholarships → (2) Return with evangelizing mission → (3) Social control → (4) Community fragmentation → (5) Territorial reconfiguration/ dispossession.
Colombia - Hybrid harassment	Coordination between fundamentalist churches, conservative senators, and public mobilization (40 Days for Life). Use of hybrid tactics: digital stigmatization + in-person pressure + institutional harassment.	(1) Digital stigmatization → (2) In-person mobilization → (3) Political intervention/institutional harassment of NGOs, activists, and service providers.
Peru -SD 447-2024/MINSA and pathologization	Political-religious alliance that reinstated pathologizing categories opposing ICD-11. Subsequent repeal confirms causality: conservative pressure → regulatory setback → advocacy → reversal.	(1) Political-religious momentum → (2) Issuance of pathologizing regulation → (3) Stigma and setbacks in services → (4) Multi-actor advocacy → (5) Repeal.



MAIN RISKS	OPPORTUNITIES	EVIDENCE PRESENTED
Setbacks in CSE; pressure on schools; reduction of pluralism; mass disinformation.	Strong educational institutions; verification capacity; teacher networks.	WhatsApp chain; scope analysis; mapping of religious authorship.
Land dispossession; social fragmentation; loss of local governance; cultural substitution.	High community capacity for organization; cultural mediators; Indigenous territorial systems.	Evangelization practices; community testimonies; records of land disputes.
Blockade of SRH services; intimidation of staff; pressure on healthcare / educational institutions.	Robust constitutional framework (C-055/2022); major civil mobilization; advanced case law.	Evidence of online/ offline harassment; political interventions; administrative actions.
Risk of reissuance of regressive regulations; stigmatization of LGBTQI+ people; legal uncertainty.	International technical evidence (WHO/ICD-11); advocacy networks; specialized press.	Text of the decree; comparative analysis; repeal documents.

The four cases exhibit instruments of moral power (narratives/theologies), political-institutional anchors (parliamentarians/regulations), and implementation instruments (digital platforms, churches, street actions, administrative procedures), which converge to *restrict rights, close civic space, and modify the behavior of authorities and communities*. These last three issues—the restriction of rights, civic space, and respect from authorities and communities—should be addressed by decision-makers.

The comparative table also allows us to group the impacts into three broad religious typologies. These categories may be useful for decision-makers to design and implement response instruments:

Religious colonialism

Exercised through the religious validation of a hegemonic development model and denial of Afro-descendant and Indigenous spiritualities (case of Brazil). The impacts are demonstrated to be dispossession and a fracturing of Afro and Indigenous communities.

Religious moralism

Through moral panic and the disciplining of women's bodies and sexualities (cases of Argentina and Colombia). The impacts are an erosion of religious pluralism and the harassment suffered by healthcare organizations that promote sexual and reproductive rights.

The religious instrumentalization

Of medical language (case of Peru), through the reincorporation of pathologizing diagnostic categories, affects gender identity and sexual orientation, as well as access to comprehensive care for LGBTQI+ people.

CONCLUSIONS

The case analysis also allows us to highlight five conclusions for decision-makers to consider:

1. The cases show that fundamentalisms are not solely violent impositions of religious belief systems, but also projects for power where political parties, economic interests, and state stakeholders have a responsibility: power projects that operate as projects to establish a social order. They not only seek to impose religious beliefs, but also to govern, regain control, and dominate historically vulnerable subjects.
2. The cases show that symbolic violence is the first layer of threats and attacks carried out by fundamentalist actors and is applied through stigmatization and moral judgment. However, violence has multiple layers: digital violence (harassment and campaigns), territorial violence (acculturation and dispossession), institutional violence (regressive regulations), physical violence (harassment and intimidation), and spiritual violence (denial of Indigenous identities), which are demonstrated in the documented cases.
3. Fundamentalisms specifically seek to regulate reproduction and motherhood (cases in Colombia and Argentina), gender identity and sexual orientation (case in Peru), spirituality, and Afro- and Indigenous territories (case in Brazil). In each case, the central objective of fundamentalisms is to establish a single truth that institutes control, dispossession, and the domination of bodies through an absolutist moral order. This order defines which bodies are valid, who does or does not belong to a group, and who should be corrected, expelled, or saved. All of this constitutes a violation of democratic, pluralistic, and human rights principles.
4. The cases show that community fragmentation and attacks against organizations that connect faith and human rights are domination strategies that create internal fragmentation, the stigmatization of leaders, and the establishment of internal enemies. In the case of Brazil, these strategies look to replace traditional authorities with fundamentalist actors. In the cases of Argentina and Colombia, leaders are subject to censorship to silence them and destabilize their work in the promotion and defense of rights.
5. Finally, the cases show a clear and direct impact on the secular state due to the use of religious discourse to justify decrees and regulations (Peru case). These cases prove that the democratic order is destabilized through the institutional capture of ministries, Congress, and other state platforms by fundamentalist stakeholders. The cases also demonstrate the religious pressure that these groups exert on public policies on healthcare, education, and sexual and reproductive rights.



TEN RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DECISION-MAKERS AND FAITH-BASED CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

1. Strengthen the secular character of the state

Adopt mandatory guidelines on secularism in public policies on health, education, and justice. Avoid religious influence in regulations, protocols, and administrative acts. Establish mechanisms to respond to religious influence in state decisions. Train ministries (Health, Education, Women, Culture) to analyze fundamentalism.

2. Create early warning systems for fundamentalist violence

Create and implement digital monitoring of hate speech and its mechanisms. It is essential to ensure an identification of stakeholders who articulate religion with political violence, and it is of vital importance to create rapid protection mechanisms for progressive religious, feminist, and community leaders.

3. Guarantee comprehensive protection for individuals and organizations affected by the convergence of fundamentalisms

Security protocols for sexual and reproductive rights organizations must be strengthened and focused. Community self-protection strategies must be designed and implemented for Indigenous peoples facing coercive evangelization. It is vital to promote and ensure coordination between state entities and civil society to prevent attacks.

4. Promote public communication that defuses “moral panic”

At least three dimensions are required in this field: a) State campaigns based on evidence and human rights. b) Alliances with rights affirming religious leaders. c) Media literacy programs to reduce digital manipulation.

5. Fund and strengthen liberating and pluralistic theologies

FESUR recommends four actions: a) Promote ecumenical and interreligious spaces that promote dignity, peace, and justice. b) Fund research and think tanks that document resistance. c) Strengthen training programs for religious leadership with a focus on human rights. d) Fund the creation and implementation of a regional observatory on fundamentalisms.

6. Integrate analysis of fundamentalisms into international mechanisms

Systematically incorporate analysis of the convergence of fundamentalisms into special reports, monitoring mechanisms, and international human rights systems, including United Nations bodies, to activate specific recommendations and monitoring and protection measures.

7. Promote faith-based advocacy to prevent hate speech and absolutist actions that deny rights in the name of faith and go against the prophetic voice of the Gospel

Strengthen the public advocacy of churches, faith communities, and ecumenical spaces committed to human rights. Support prophetic pronouncements, public statements, and educational actions that reaffirm human dignity, religious pluralism, and gender justice. In this context, guarantee protective measures for progressive religious leaders exposed to stigmatization and harassment.

8. Investigate alliances between religion, capital, and illegal economies

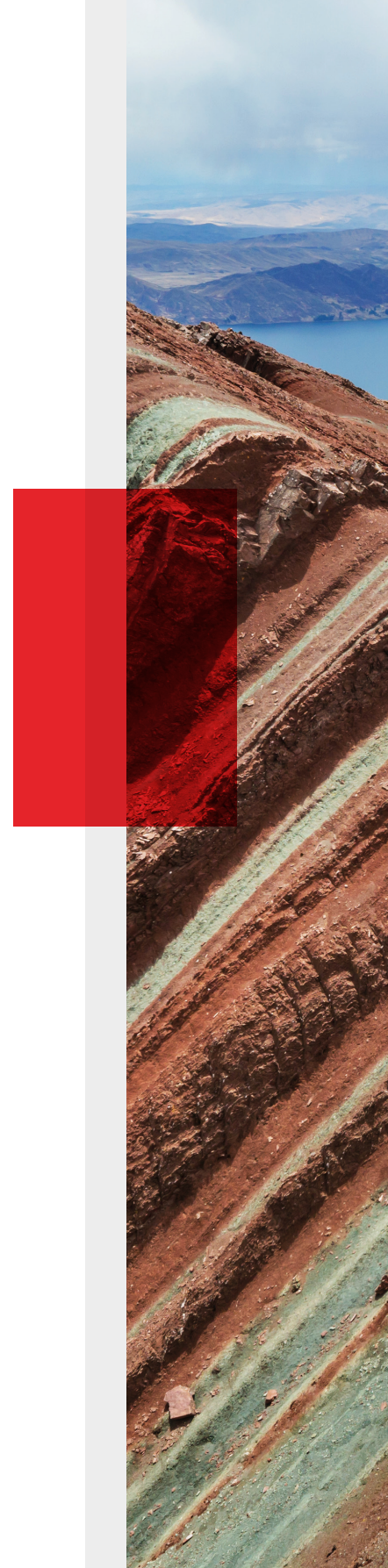
Develop systematic research on the ties between fundamentalist religious actors, investment flows, extractive economies, and illegal economies. Use the findings to strengthen political and legal advocacy strategies that connect spiritual defense to the defense of the territory and common good.

9. Conduct territorial observation and documentation missions

Promote on-site visits and ecumenical missions to affected territories to highlight human rights violations and impacts on local spiritualities. Publish reports with concrete recommendations that contribute to the protection of at-risk communities.

10. Strengthen regional and international cooperation

Strengthen international cooperation and regional responses: promote regional and international cooperation mechanisms to exchange of information, best practices, and coordinated responses related to the advancement of fundamentalism, including technical and political support for states and civil society organizations.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

Acosta, A. (2013). *Buen vivir (sumak kawsay): An opportunity to imagine other worlds*. Abya-Yala.

Amnesty International. (2020). *Comprehensive sexuality education: A key human right for equality and health*. Amnesty International.

Arendt, H. (1958). *The human condition*. University of Chicago Press.

Bastian, J.-P. (2013). *Religious transformation in Latin America*. Fondo de Cultura Económica.

Boff, L. (2014). *Caring for life: Ethics of the human, compassion for the Earth*. Trotta.

Britzman, D. (1995). Is there a queer pedagogy? Or, stop reading straight. *Educational Theory*, 45(2), 151–165.

Burdick, J. (2018). *The color of sound: Race, religion, and music in Brazil*. New York University Press.

Han, B.-C. (2021). *Non-things: Upheavals in the lifeworld*. Taurus.

Caro, I., & Fediakova, E. (2000). *Religious fundamentalisms: Stages and contexts of emergence*. Fermentum.

Gender Justice Community of Practice (LAC), ACT Alliance. (2023). *Is it from God? Theological position paper and mapping of inputs for discussing gender justice in Abya Yala*.

Coordenação Ecumênica de Serviço (CESE). (2025). *Accounts of converging fundamentalisms in Brazil: Taipiri Ecuménico 2022–2025*.

Corrêa, S., & Paternotte, D. (2018). *Anti-gender campaigns in Europe and Latin America: Mobilizing against equality*. Rowman & Littlefield International.

Cortina, A. (2017). *Aporophobia: The rejection of the poor—A challenge for democracy*. Paidós.

Di Renzo, E. (2025). *European neocolonialism and the criminalization of solidarity*. Sapienza Università di Roma.

Do Nascimento Cunha, M. (2020). *Fundamentalisms, crisis of democracy, and threats to human rights in South America*.

Dussel, E. (2015). *Philosophy of liberation*. Fondo de Cultura Económica.

Escobar, A. (2016). *Sentipensar with the Earth*. Universidad Autónoma Latinoamericana.

European Parliamentary Forum for Sexual & Reproductive Rights. (2025). *The new wave*.

Federici, S. (2010). *Caliban and the witch: Women, the body and primitive accumulation*. Tinta Limón.

Freire, P. (2005). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (30th ed.). Siglo XXI Editores.

Foucault, M. (1998). *The history of sexuality*. Siglo XXI.

Global Witness. (2023). *Standing firm: The land and environmental defenders on the frontlines of the climate crisis*. Global Witness.

Gudynas, E. (2011). Development, extractivism, and civilizational crisis. In Oxfam & CIDES UMSA (Eds.), *Development in question: Reflections from Latin America* (pp. 379–410). Oxfam/CIDES-UMSA.

Hinkelammert, F. (2002). *The subject and the law*. DEI.

Holloway, J. (2022). *Hope in times of hopelessness*. Prosa del Mundo.

Lamas, M. (2007). *Body: Sexual difference and gender*. Taurus.

Lozano-Lerma, B. R. (2024). Religious fundamentalism, racial capitalism, and civilizational crisis. *Brazilian Journal of Latin American Studies*.

Louro, G. L. (2007). *A strange body: Essays on sexuality and queer theory*. Autêntica.

Mariano, R. (1999). *Neo-Pentecostals: Sociology of the new Pentecostalism in Brazil*. Edições Loyola.

Mujica, J. (2019). *Political economy of the body and gender*. Fondo Editorial de la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú.

Nussbaum, M. (2019). *The monarchy of fear*. Paidós.

Quijano, A. (2000). Coloniality of power and social classification. *Journal of World-Systems Research*, 6(2), 342–386.

Ribeiro, D. (1992). *The Americas and civilization*. Biblioteca Ayacucho.

Sabsay, L. (2016). *The political imaginary of sexual freedom: Subjectivity and power in the new sexual democratic turn*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Segato, R. L. (2018). *Counter-pedagogies of cruelty*. Prometeo.

Sandoval, S. M. (2024). *Regulation of motherhood and assisted reproductive technologies in Colombia*. Universidad Cooperativa de Colombia.

UNESCO. (2009/2018). *International technical guidance on sexuality education*.

Vaggione, J. M. (2020). The politicization of sexuality and anti-gender movements in Latin America. In M. C. Feijóo (Ed.), *Gender and politics in Latin America*. CLACSO.

Walsh, C. (2017). *Decolonial pedagogies: Insurgent practices of resisting, (re)existing and (re)living* (Vol. II). Abya-Yala.

Wichterich, C. (2015). *Gender, sexual politics and the global economy: Political and feminist perspectives*. Zed Books.



actalliance

**kerk
in actie**

act
Church of Sweden