



## **VI INTERNATIONAL COURSE**

### **Women in Struggle.**

### **Gender and Human Rights in the recent history of Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean**

**October 24 to November 3, 2022**

#### **FUNDAMENTALS:**

The development of gender studies and women's and feminist history has had a strong impact on the field of Human Rights, causing a deep renewal both in the theoretical-analytical dimensions and in those related to the design of public policies of States and supranational organizations interested in ensuring their full respect. Subjects, coercive practices, wars, extreme violence carried out by States under dictatorships or not, began to be investigated from an intersectional perspective in which the intersections between gender, class, ethnicity and marks of color came to occupy a central place in defining, interpreting or typifying repressive actions as crimes against humanity or serious violations of human rights. In this analytical deployment, the intersectional perspective denotes its validity to recognize, in addition, the actions of resistance activated by several social and political groups, and to notice the individual and collective demands for memory, truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-repetition.

Despite this, the contributions made by the intersection between gender and human rights are still unknown to numerous sectors committed to the investigation, prosecution and punishment of those responsible for the commission of crimes against humanity, and to the construction of history and memory of these events. There is still little diffusion of the knowledge produced in academic and activist circles regarding the specificities of the exercise of repressive violence against women, children and sexual diversities. The same applies to studies on the generic differential impacts caused by wars and armed conflicts, which, although profuse, have a restricted circulation.



Based on UNESCO's global priorities - such as Africa and gender equality - and the objectives of the organization, especially the promotion of intercultural dialogue and the promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, this International Course expects to contribute to this horizon by examining a set of topics selected for the relevance and density of their reflective development as well as for their impact on the redefining of the meanings, definitions and scope of Human Rights.

This course is organized by the International Center for the Promotion of Human Rights - UNESCO, which headquarters are located in Buenos Aires city, Argentina. Since the recovery of democracy in 1983, Argentina has been the scene of several actions to penalize the serious human rights violations that took place during the last civil-military dictatorship (1976-1983). These have included legal proceedings brought by ordinary courts and encouraged by local human rights organizations. Their persistence and ability to mobilize large sectors of the society under the slogan of "Trial and Punishment for the guilty" made possible to judge and condemn those responsible for the armed and security forces, even charging some representatives of the ecclesiastical hierarchy and business leaders. Undoubtedly, the leading role played by the Madres and Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo (Mothers and Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo), whose initiatives are internationally recognized, was central to this result. The critical reflections and denunciations of feminist organizations also played an important role in this sense, as they succeeded in indexing the sexual violence perpetrated in clandestine detention centers as crimes against humanity.

Another uniqueness of Argentine history is related to the South Atlantic Conflict. In 2022, it will be commemorated the 40th anniversary of the Argentine landing on the Malvinas Islands. For this reason, this event offers a valuable opportunity to discuss the role of women in conventional war conflicts, a topic that has been increasingly addressed in recent years by gender studies.

These specific features enable the critical examination of several artists of repressive and war violence from the perspective of Human Rights in a gender perspective, allowing, in addition, to raise questions about the Latin American region as a whole.



The rest of the Latin American states have implemented other policies, many of which oscillated between "reconciliation" and oblivion, even encouraging a negationism only confronted by civil society organizations committed to denouncing state terrorism. Two relevant examples of this can be found in the investigations promoted early on and materialized in reports such as "Uruguay Nunca Más" (Uruguay Never Again) or "Brasil Nunca Más" (Brazil Never Again), during the 1980s. For these reasons, it becomes even more valuable to analyze the various Latin American realities from a comparative perspective. In their recent history, African countries have rarely opted for national courts to deal with the past traumas. They have been more inclined to set up truth commissions of diverse capacities and scopes. Just to name a few, we should recall the well-known Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa set up by Nelson Mandela's government in 1996 or that of Morocco in 2004.

International initiatives were also strongly anchored in the form of action against crimes and offenses committed in the post-colonial period in Africa. For our purposes, it is worth pointing out that it was at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda where it was sanctioned that rape constituted torture, that widespread rape constituted an act of genocide (the case of Jean Paul Akayesu), and where for the first time in history a woman was convicted for the crime of genocide. These varied continental experiences facing common problems invite us to connect these historical processes explored from an intersectional and interdisciplinary perspective, with a view focused on the South.

A related analysis of these dimensions of the past between Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean makes it possible to highlight the multiplicity of possible approaches to the violation of human rights, encouraging us to avoid the imposed reductionism around alleged single and univocal solutions to reverse these serious experiences or prevent their recurrence.

It also enables to emphasize the centrality of gender in the exercise of violence against societies as well as in the construction of diverse forms of collective resistance, indexing a deep discussion on the incidence of racialization in the perpetration of crimes and violations of Human Rights as well as in the demands for punishment and reparation.



Finally, the connection offered here, encourages a more dense study on issues that affect the relations between Southern regions, often masked under global frameworks and regulations. This course aims to be a space for these reflections based on the past and present experiences, and to imagine projects for the future in order to fully enforce Human Rights.

The topics addressed focus on the conceptualization of Human Rights from a gender perspective, the relevance of racialized marks and gender in the exercise of violence, the place of women in war conflicts, in guerrilla organizations and in the rise of the right-wing. They will also consider how gender shapes social and political resistance against authoritarian regimes, its usefulness for the judicial investigation of crimes against humanity and severe human rights violations, as well as its significance for memorial initiatives about the past. In order to examine these topics, synchronous meetings will take place over 9 (nine) consecutive days with the participation of specialists from different regions and scientific disciplines, and with a selection of specific bibliography. In addition, asynchronous activities will be organized based on proposals for the analysis of films, documentaries and virtual guided visits to museums.

In short, this course aims to strengthen the link between gender and human rights in terms of different experiences: the search for justice for the victims of crimes against humanity, historical, economic and cultural reparation and the construction of collective memory.

In this opportunity, the VI International Course "Women in struggle: gender and human rights in the recent history of Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean" is framed as an official activity prior to the World Forum on Human Rights to be held in the Buenos Aires city, Argentina, in 2023. This Forum is a space for public debate on Human Rights in the world, the main advances and challenges focused on respect for differences, social participation, reduction of inequalities, promoting equity and social inclusion. It is designed to bring together and integrate national, regional and international organizations committed to human rights.