

# Using Gender-Based Violence Frameworks to Eradicate Conversion Practices in Latin America

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## **Outright International works together for better LGBTIQ lives.**

Outright is dedicated to working with partners around the globe to strengthen the capacity of the LGBTIQ human rights movement, document and amplify human rights violations against LGBTIQ people, and advocate for inclusion and equality.

Founded in 1990, with staff in over a dozen countries, Outright works with the United Nations, regional human rights monitoring bodies, governments, humanitarian and development institutions, and civil society partners. Outright holds consultative status at the United Nations, where it serves as the secretariat of the UN LGBTI Core Group.

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# Summary

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Outright International collaborates with national lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, and queer (LGBTIQ) organizations worldwide on a diverse set of issues within and beyond the human rights agenda. In this specific initiative, we partnered with Asociación Familias Diversas de Argentina (AFDA) in Argentina, Visibles in Guatemala, and Mujer & Mujer in Ecuador to examine conversion practices—efforts to change or suppress a person’s sexual orientation or gender identity, sometimes inaccurately referred to as “conversion therapy.” The partnerships between Outright and the organizations in Latin America allowed each organization to highlight the voices and experiences of local LGBTQ communities, providing essential insights into the unique challenges that conversion practices present in each national context while synthesizing findings in order to identify broader trends across the continent. This effort is part of a broader goal to bring greater visibility to this issue across Latin America.

This document summarizes the three investigations conducted by each organization in their respective countries, with support from Outright. The full reports will be available on the websites of the national organizations and on Outright’s website, offering a comprehensive view of the findings and providing further details for those interested in the issue.

In Argentina, Ecuador, and Guatemala, we have focused on the impact of conversion practices as a form of gender-based violence. These interventions persist and are often presented as “therapeutic” or corrective by family members, religious institutions, or healthcare providers. By gathering data and testimonies in each country, we aim to document the physical, psychological, and emotional harm caused by conversion practices and to expose the structural dynamics that allow them to continue.

Across the three countries, common denominators emerge that show the widespread nature of these practices. In each context, conversion practices are often framed as legitimate care by religious groups and families who invoke cultural or moral values to justify them. Additionally, a lack of adequate response from state actors leaves LGBTQ individuals vulnerable to these harmful interventions. Social and institutional acceptance of conversion practices continues to normalize these acts, allowing them to persist unchallenged. Finally, the rise of gender-restrictive ideologies—belief systems that promote essentialist and binary understandings of sex and gender and frame LGBTQ people as a threat to family, tradition, culture, and nation—give new fuel to conversion practitioners, particularly within religious settings. These shared patterns underscore the need for regional advocacy that addresses both the specific and common aspects of conversion practices in Latin America.

One of the critical takeaways for Outright from this project is the importance of understanding conversion practices as a form of gender-based violence. Recognizing these practices as violence offers a clearer framework for advocating against them and underscores the urgent need to protect LGBTQ individuals. By supporting national organizations in documenting and challenging these abuses, Outright is committed to fostering a safer, more inclusive Latin America where LGBTQ individuals are free from coercion and harm.

# I. Conversion Practices as Gender-Based Violence: A Conceptual Analysis

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Conversion practices, also known as sexual orientation and gender identity change efforts, are interventions aimed at modifying a person's sexual orientation or gender identity to align with heteronormative and cisnormative standards.<sup>1</sup> Conceptually, these practices constitute gender-based violence because they exert coercive control over the bodies, identities, and desires of individuals who do not conform to normative gender expectations. This report explores, from a conceptual perspective, how and why conversion practices are a form of gender-based violence.

## A. CONCEPTUALIZING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Gender-based violence refers to any form of violence directed at a person based on their gender, which includes violence perpetrated against individuals due to their real or perceived sex characteristics, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. According to the United Nations, this violence encompasses acts that cause physical, sexual, psychological, or emotional harm and can manifest in physical assaults, emotional coercion, psychological manipulation, and symbolic violence.<sup>2</sup> Conversion practices, as acts that attempt to modify a person's gender identity or sexual orientation, clearly fall within this definition.

At the core of gender-based violence is the imposition of rigid gender roles and expectations, usually in alignment with patriarchal norms. Conversion practices are predicated on the belief that deviations from heteronormative and cisnormative standards are inherently wrong and need to be corrected. This enforcement of binary gender roles and heteronormativity is what constitutes the essence of gender-based violence in the context of conversion practices.

The concept of heteronormativity refers to the belief system that privileges heterosexual relationships as the default or normal form of sexual orientation. It assumes that all individuals should adhere to a traditional heterosexual structure according to which sexual attraction between men and women is considered natural.<sup>3</sup> Cisnormativity, on the other hand,

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<sup>1</sup> Outright International, *Harmful Treatment: The Global Reach of So-Called Conversion Therapy*, 2019, <https://outrightinternational.org/our-work/human-rights-research/global-reach-so-called-conversion-therapy>.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations General Assembly, Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, adopted 19 December 1993, A/RES/48/104, art. 1, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/declaration-elimination-violence-against-women>.

<sup>3</sup> Celia Kitzinger, "Heteronormativity in Action: Reproducing the Heterosexual Nuclear Family in After-Hours Medical Calls," *Social Problems* 52, no. 4 (2005): 477–98, <https://doi.org/10.1525/sp.2005.52.4.477>.



refers to the assumption that an individual's gender identity must align with the sex assigned to them at birth.<sup>4</sup> These two normative frameworks create a social structure that marginalizes anyone whose sexual orientation or gender identity falls outside these predefined boundaries.

Conversion practices emerge as a mechanism to enforce these norms, specifically targeting individuals whose gender identities or sexual orientations challenge them. The violence inherent in conversion practices comes from the attempt to erase the identity of an individual who does not conform to these rigid norms, denying them the right to express themselves authentically. This coercion is an attack on personal autonomy and bodily integrity, critical aspects of gender-based violence.

Additionally, conversion practices seek to maintain the status quo of heteronormativity and cisnormativity by reinforcing the notion that being heterosexual and cisgender is the only acceptable way to exist. This perpetuates a cultural system that privileges certain identities over others, contributing to a broader cycle of discrimination, exclusion, and systemic violence against those who are LGBTQ.

## B. CONTROL OVER IDENTITY, BODY AND DESIRE: A DYNAMIC OF POWER

At the heart of gender-based violence is the dynamic of power and control. Michel Foucault's work on biopower highlights how societies exert control over individuals' bodies and identities through institutions, laws, and social norms.<sup>5</sup> Gender-based violence, particularly in its structural forms, involves the regulation and policing of bodies based on their adherence to societal gender norms.<sup>6</sup> Conversion practices are a direct manifestation of this control, as they aim to forcibly reshape a person's identity to conform to heteronormative and cisnormative ideals.

In the broader context of gender-based violence, the control of bodies, identities, and desires is central to maintaining patriarchal power. Gender policing refers to the various mechanisms, both formal and informal, that enforce gender norms within a society. Conversion practices act as a form of gender policing by explicitly targeting individuals whose gender identities or sexual orientations are deemed unacceptable. This policing often takes the form of psychological manipulation, emotional coercion, and, in some cases, physical violence.

Conversion practices exert coercive control in ways that are similar to other forms of gender-based violence, such as domestic violence. In these scenarios, power is used to subjugate and force individuals into specific roles, denying them their agency and autonomy. In the case of conversion practices, the goal is to make LGBTQ individuals suppress their authentic selves in order to fit within socially accepted gender and sexual norms. This suppression can lead to long-lasting emotional and psychological trauma, similar to the impacts seen in other forms of gender-based violence.

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<sup>4</sup> Mark Henrickson et al., "Research Ethics with Gender and Sexually Diverse Persons," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 17, no. 18 (2020): 6615, <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17186615>.

<sup>5</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction* (Pantheon Books, 1978).

<sup>6</sup> Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (Routledge, 2004).

The coercive essence of conversion practices reinforces patriarchal structures by compelling conformity to cisgender, heterosexual norms. This systemic enforcement not only harms individuals but also perpetuates a broader cycle of structural violence, marginalizing non-normative identities under the guise of correction.

## C. THE PATHOLOGIZATION OF DIVERSE IDENTITIES: A HISTORICAL ROOT OF VIOLENCE

The pathologization of LGBTQ identities has deep historical roots, particularly rooted in European models of morality and psychology, which eventually extended to Latin America and beyond. This legacy serves as a foundation for understanding why conversion practices are a form of gender-based violence. This process of pathologization refers to the treatment of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities as mental illnesses or moral failures that need to be “corrected.” During the Spanish colonization of Latin America, the criminalization and stigmatization of indigenous and diverse sexual practices became widespread, framing them as deviations that needed suppression. This external influence planted early seeds of control and correction over non-heteronormative identities, a process that has persisted in various forms to this day.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the development of psychoanalysis and early psychiatry contributed significantly to the classification of homosexuality and gender nonconformity as mental disorders. Sigmund Freud and his followers conceptualized homosexuality as a failure of sexual development, a belief that informed early efforts to “cure” individuals through psychoanalysis. By the mid-20th century, these views had extended into the fields of psychiatry and clinical psychology, leading to the classification of homosexuality and gender variance as mental illnesses in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) and the International Classification of Diseases (ICD). This classification not only framed LGBTQ identities as pathological but also legitimized various harmful interventions, including aversion therapy, electroshock therapy, and hormone treatments.

Conversion practices are the modern manifestation of this historical legacy. Although homosexuality was removed from the DSM in 1973 and from the ICD in 1990, gender diversity was only depathologized by the World Health Organization in 2019, and the belief that diverse sexual orientations and gender identities require correction persists in many societies. The persistence of conversion practices reflects this ongoing pathologization, reinforcing the idea that LGBTQ individuals are in need of medical or psychological intervention to conform to cisheteronormative expectations.<sup>7</sup>

This pathologization has significant implications for gender-based violence. By framing LGBTQ identities as illnesses, society legitimizes coercive treatments that aim to “cure” or “correct” these identities. This process strips individuals of their autonomy and reinforces societal control over their bodies and minds. The act of labeling someone’s identity as a disorder can itself be experienced as violence, as it invalidates their experiences and justifies coercive interventions. This aligns conversion practices with broader patterns of gender-based violence, where power is exerted over women and other marginalized groups to enforce conformity to and compliance with dominant social norms.

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<sup>7</sup> Outright, *Harmful Treatment*.

The medicalization of LGBTQ identities is deeply intertwined with gender-based power dynamics. Women, transgender individuals, and nonbinary people have historically faced particularly aggressive forms of pathologization, as their non-conforming gender identities and sexual orientations challenge patriarchal structures of power.

Conversion practices seek not only to correct perceived deviations in sexual orientation or gender identity but also to reinforce traditional gender roles. For transgender individuals, in particular, conversion practices aim to force them to conform to the gender they were assigned at birth, reinforcing a strict understanding of gender. This can be experienced as a form of gender-based violence because it denies individuals the right to self-determine their gender identity and enforces patriarchal norms that privilege cisgender identities.

## D. A QUESTION OF LANGUAGE

Recent critiques caution against the exclusive or excessive reliance on criminalization frameworks for addressing gender-based violence. A recent report by the Feminist Fault Lines group, comprising Amnesty International, CREA, IWRAP Asia Pacific, RESURJ, and the Global Health Justice Partnership of the Yale Law School and Yale School of Public Health, challenges “why dominant narratives in human rights and popular media seem to deem it essential for all harms to be classified as ‘violence’ or be deemed exceptional forms of violence (for e.g., sexual violence in conflict, apartheid or genocide) in order to receive a ‘serious’ political response.”<sup>8</sup> The report argues that the framing harm as “violence” can reinforce punitive systems, sometimes at the expense of non-punitive, structural approaches that address root causes of harm.

Outright is in alignment with this approach, and welcomes the interrogation of what has been described “carceral feminism” as well as a growing carceral turn in within LGBTIQ movements, according to which some activists strongly lean in to criminalization and the power of the carceral state to prohibit by law all harms impacting our communities: conversion practices, discrimination, and hate speech.<sup>9</sup> Our own language at Outright has evolved from calling on states to “ban” conversion practices—which militate for the use of criminal law, a blunt weapon, to tackle a complex problem—to calling for the eradication of conversion practices. In other words, we privilege a more nuanced and holistic approach that aims to address root causes, which may sometimes best be undertaken through the use of the law, and sometimes through other approaches.<sup>10</sup>

In the context of conversion practices, we do find that naming these acts as “violence” can also allow for an imagining of possibilities. One of Outright’s research findings is that conversion practices almost inevitably cause harm—which many survivors experience as violence, even survivors who proactively sought out conversion practices themselves. One technique favored by conversion practitioners is the gaslighting of LGBTQ people to cause us to question our very identities, genders, and desires. Framing this gaslighting as “violence” highlights the coercive control exerted over LGBTQ individuals’ identities and bodies in these circumstances. This framing strengthens advocacy efforts by demanding urgent, protective

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<sup>8</sup> Amnesty International et al., *Imagining Possibilities: Moving Beyond Criminalization as Our Dominant Response to Gender-Based Violence*, October 2024, <https://resurj.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Imagining-possibilities-report.pdf>, 8.

<sup>9</sup> Ryan Thoreson, “Decriminalization: Sexuality and the Carceral Turn in Human Rights Law,” *California Law Review* 110, no. 2 (April 2022), <https://doi.org/10.15779/Z381V5BF2Q>.

<sup>10</sup> Outright, *Pathways for Eliminating Conversion Practices*, 21 December 2022, <https://outrightinternational.org/our-work/human-rights-research/pathways-eliminating-conversion-practices>.

responses from the state and society—which may or may not rely on criminal legal systems—and underscores the immediate need to safeguard individual autonomy, particularly in regions where systemic discrimination remains pervasive. While mindful of the limitations, this approach aligns with the urgency of addressing conversion practices as a direct threat to fundamental rights.

Further, “gender-based violence” is itself, conceptually, a site of organizing. The concept is compelling and tenacious, it is a source of networking and strategizing, and it gets a seat at many decision-making tables. At the moment, LGBTQ and intersex people usually do not have a seat at the table during high-level conversations on gender-based violence because many stakeholders conflate “gender” with “women,” imagine all survivors as heterosexual and cisgender women, and invisibilize violence against trans and intersex people and queer men.<sup>11</sup> *Imagining Possibilities* notes: “for queer and gender-diverse communities that face criminalization and are not included in GBV response and redress mechanisms, the goal may be to fight for equality, not anti-carcerality.”<sup>12</sup> Outright does strive for equal participation in strategic discussions of gendered harms, and this may be a valid reason to accept or embrace language that is imperfect.

For the purposes of this report, Outright will describe conversion practices as “gender-based violence,” while acknowledging critiques of this terminology and seeking to position ourselves in ongoing dialogue with these critiques. Crucially, the use of this term does not indicate agreement that every form of conversion practice, or of any kind of gender-based violence, should necessarily be criminalized.



**Right:** March for the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, in Guayaquil, Ecuador, 2024. The sign reads “I exist because I resist”. (Mujer & Mujer)

<sup>11</sup> Neela Ghoshal, “What Gender-Based Violence Looks Like When You Are Queer, Trans, or Intersex,” Outright International, 25 November 2024, <https://outrightinternational.org/insights/what-gender-based-violence-looks-when-you-are-queer-trans-or-intersex>.

<sup>12</sup> Amnesty International et al., *Imagining Possibilities: Moving Beyond Criminalization as Our Dominant Response to Gender-Based Violence*, October 2024, <https://resurj.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Imagining-possibilities-report.pdf>, 34.

# II. Conversion Practices in Guatemala, Ecuador, and Argentina

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## A. OVERVIEW

The harmful impact of conversion practices as gender-based violence is vividly documented across the reports from Argentina, Ecuador, and Guatemala. While each country provides a unique context, the underlying dynamics of control, coercion, and violence against non-heteronormative identities are consistent.

In Argentina, despite progressive legal frameworks protecting LGBTQ people's rights, conversion practices continue. These practices are often justified through moral or spiritual rhetoric, rooted in religious beliefs, and framed as efforts to "correct" or "heal" LGBTQ individuals. Psychological manipulation, exorcisms, and in some cases physical harm are reported, all aimed at suppressing non-heteronormative identities to align them with cisgender, heterosexual norms. These practices are deeply entrenched in both structural and symbolic violence, operating within institutions that hold significant power in society. Religious groups in particular play a key role in perpetuating these harmful interventions, despite the legal protections in place.

In Ecuador, the interplay between cultural norms, family expectations, and religious influence is especially strong. Conversion practices are not only imposed by religious institutions but also by families who believe they are upholding cultural or moral values by forcing LGBTQ individuals into these harmful interventions. The report reveals that these practices are deeply embedded in societal stigmatization of non-heteronormative identities, leading to psychological and emotional coercion. Family members often enforce conversion practices under the guise of care, believing they are protecting the individual or the family's reputation. This reflects a form of symbolic violence, where the coercion is disguised as an act of love or moral duty, making it even more difficult for the LGBTQ individual to resist or escape.

In Guatemala, the report points to institutional and political complicity in allowing conversion practices to continue unchecked. Religious organizations and healthcare providers play a central role, but what stands out in the Guatemalan context is the state's failure to regulate these practices. This lack of initiative to prevent conversion practices or, where relevant, hold perpetrators accountable may be understood as a form of structural violence, whereby the state's inaction perpetuates harm against LGBTQ individuals, particularly young people in their teens and early 20s, who are coerced into these practices by their families or religious communities. The influence of anti-gender political movements further exacerbates the situation, creating an environment where conversion practices are normalized. In Guatemala,

the psychological violence is particularly severe, with LGBTQ individuals being made to believe that their identities are sinful or mental illness, a form of symbolic violence that internalizes guilt and shame. This is particularly true for women and transgender individuals, who are more vulnerable to these interventions, highlighting the intersection of gender-based violence with systemic social discrimination.

Across all three reports, conversion practitioners frame such practices as therapeutic or corrective, masking the coercion and violence they entail. The religious, familial, and institutional actors involved in these practices operate within systems that maintain patriarchal and heteronormative power structures, making it difficult for victims to escape. These practices are not isolated acts but are part of a broader system of symbolic and structural violence that legitimizes harm against LGBTQ individuals. The consistent findings across Argentina, Ecuador, and Guatemala show us the urgent need to address conversion practices as a form of gender-based violence that transcends national boundaries and is deeply rooted in societal norms of control over non-conforming identities.

**Table 1: Relevant Legal and Policy Frameworks**

GUATEMALA	ECUADOR	ARGENTINA
<b>EXISTING LEGAL AND POLICY PROTECTIONS OF LGBTQ PEOPLE</b>		
<p>There is no specific regulation on this subject.</p> <p>Although the Constitution states that “in Guatemala, all human beings are free and equal in dignity and rights,” in practice, this does not translate into equal rights for LGBTQ people.</p>	<p>The Constitution of Ecuador prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity (2008).</p> <p>Constitutional Court legalized same-sex marriage (2019).</p> <p>Gender identity law reform to allow self-determination (2024).</p>	<p>Various local laws protect individuals from discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.</p> <p>First Latin American country to legalize same-sex marriage (2010).</p> <p>Gender identity law, with self-determination (2012).</p> <p>Formal Employment Access For Trans people Law (2020).</p>
<b>EXISTING LEGISLATION AND POLICY AIMED AT ERADICATING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE</b>		
<p>Law Against Femicide and Other Forms of Violence Against Women (2008).</p> <p>National Plan for the Prevention and Eradication of Violence Against Women (2020–2029).</p>	<p>Criminal Code Reform to Include Femicide Classification (2014).</p> <p>Comprehensive Organic Law to Prevent and Eradicate Violence Against Women (2018).</p> <p>National Plan to Prevent and Eradicate Violence Against Women (2019–2025).</p>	<p>Comprehensive Protection Law to Prevent, Punish, and Eradicate Violence Against Women in the Context of Their Interpersonal Relationships (2009).</p> <p>Criminal Code Reform to Include Femicide Classification (2012).</p> <p>National Action Plan Against Gender-Based Violence (2022–2024).</p>
<b>EXISTING LEGISLATION AND POLICY AIMED AT ERADICATING CONVERSION PRACTICES</b>		
<p>There is no regulation on this subject.</p>	<p>Criminal Code criminalizes any act of torture carried out with the intention of attempting to change someone’s sexual orientation (2014).</p>	<p>Mental Health Law states that a person cannot receive a mental health diagnosis based on their sexual choice or identity (2010).</p>

## B. GUATEMALA

### Country Context

The LGBTQ rights landscape in Guatemala is marked by a political climate where anti-gender ideologies have deeply influenced state policy in opposition to sexual and gender diversity. In recent years, conservative groups, both domestic and international, have strengthened their presence across all three branches of government, promoting an agenda that restricts LGBTQ rights and enforces a cisheteronormative framework. As shown in the Guatemalan report, this movement, supported by alliances with religious organizations and international anti-gender actors, has driven a narrative of “life and family” that positions LGBTQ identities as a threat to traditional values.

In recent years, this anti-gender stance has also been visible through symbolic and legislative actions, such as the establishment of public spaces and commemorative events celebrating “life and family” as a direct counter to LGBTQ people’s human rights. An example of this is the Protection of Life and Family Bill, which sought to increase penalties for abortion, prohibit same-sex marriage, and restrict education on gender and sexual diversity topics. Conservative congresspeople unexpectedly placed the bill on the agenda and approved it on 8 March 2022 (International Women’s Day), in a brazen affront to women’s rights and feminist principles.<sup>13</sup> Human Rights Watch called the bill “extraordinarily regressive” and stated that it “severely undermines the rights of women and LGBT people in the country.”<sup>14</sup> However, the president announced his intention to veto it, and subsequently, Congress decided to shelve it due to the strong social backlash its contents provoked.<sup>15</sup>

These political actions underscore the extent to which anti-gender ideology has become embedded in Guatemala’s official stance, presenting a substantial barrier to progress toward inclusive rights and protections. Within this context, Guatemala still lacks legislation for both marriage equality and legal recognition for gender identity, leaving LGBTQ individuals without fundamental rights afforded to cisgender, heterosexual citizens.

Since January 2024, Guatemala has been led by a new government known for its progressive stance on social issues. However, Congress remains predominantly conservative and there is a political leadership deficit on LGBTQ rights, with no initiatives being advanced by either the government or Congress.

**Right:** Guatemala Pride March, 2022. Signs read: “Heterosexuality is not normal, it’s just common” and “I am not sick”. (Visibles)

<sup>13</sup> “Guatemala: el Congreso aprueba una ley que prohíbe el matrimonio homosexual y eleva las penas por aborto,” *BBC News Mundo*, 9 March 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-america-latina-60677336>.

<sup>14</sup> Cristian González Cabrera and Juan Pappier, “La ley de la vida y la familia es una cortina de humo para la corrupción,” Human Rights Watch, 15 March 2022, <https://www.hrw.org/es/news/2022/03/15/la-ley-de-la-vida-y-la-familia-es-una-cortina-de-humo-para-la-corrupcion>.

<sup>15</sup> “Guatemala: el Congreso archiva la polémica ley que prohibía el matrimonio homosexual y elevaba las penas por aborto,” *BBC News Mundo*, 16 March, 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-america-latina-60746369>.





## Research Findings

The investigation conducted by Visibles explores how anti-gender ideologies have influenced state institutions in Guatemala, generating and perpetuating a climate in which conversion practices targeting LGBTQ individuals are normalized. These practices are embedded within a broader anti-LGBTQ agenda, sustained by alliances between state actors and anti-gender groups. The study provides a critical look into how state complicity, combined with societal pressures and religious influence, contributes to an environment that tolerates and enables such harmful practices.

Researchers conducted an online survey and interviews with key informants, supplemented by public information requests and desk research. The online survey targeted individuals who had experienced conversion practices or knew of places where these practices were conducted, gathering insights on the profiles of practitioners and collecting personal testimonies.

One of the investigation's key findings is the identification of where and how conversion practices are carried out. The main types of interventions documented both by testimonies and informants in the survey were psychotherapy or counseling and religious interventions. To a lesser extent, cases of aversive therapies, use of medication, and use of sexual violence as forms of corrective practices were also identified.

Among all reported cases of corrective practices, a significant percentage were carried out by mental health professionals, many of them working in private clinics. These treatments are based on the idea that variations in sexual orientation and gender identity, beyond deviating from social norms, have a "curable" medical component. One interviewee, a cisgender woman who identified as bisexual and pansexual, described this kind of counseling to the researchers:

*We had a session where my parents were brought in, and I was forced to come out to them. I spent about two years attending weekly sessions with [a psychologist], and she would tell my parents that I was too young to know if I was bisexual, that the issue was I had depression and was projecting it by wanting to have a girlfriend. Then they sent me to a psychiatrist who prescribed sertraline to 'cure' the depression and stop me from being bisexual. The psychologist would say very hurtful things, like that I was confused, that I was hurting my parents by being this way, that it was wrong for me to have a girlfriend, that I didn't really like women, but rather I just had depression and poor adaptations to the depression.*

The testimonies reveal a range of religious methodologies used as forms of corrective practice, including prayers, Bible study, sermons, individual or group workshops, and religious retreats. In some cases, religious retreats include "sexual purity" workshops addressing not only homosexuality but also infidelity and other sexual behaviors considered "impure."

In some cases, there is no clear distinction between religious and mental health-centered conversion practices. Several cases have been recorded where licensed healthcare professionals perform religious-based corrective practices in clinics, retreats, or other religious settings. Similarly, cases were identified where mental health professionals use religious techniques when implementing corrective practices in health settings.

One cisgender gay man reflected this complexity when referring to the mental health professional who “treated” him:

*The person who evaluated and ‘treated’ me was Catholic and recommended that I read the Bible during my visits. I would say she belonged to the psychoanalytic school, if I had to categorize her, based on the kinds of questions she asked and the techniques she used. She also tried to use techniques like hypnosis, but I just went along with it when she did.*

Corrective practices in educational settings can take various forms, particularly involving “social punishment.” Although these punishments are not, in themselves, conversion practices, they can create an exclusionary environment that pushes students toward such interventions. Various studies underline how some educational authorities and actors engage in or permit bullying and social punishments as a way to enforce cisheteronormative norms, using tactics of humiliation and control to regulate behavior and identity.<sup>16</sup> Additionally, schools can be complicit in referring students to outsourced corrective practices. One respondent, a trans woman, reported that her private Catholic school in Guatemala City organized campaigns to promote external corrective services:

*At my school (...) various campaigns were conducted to refer students to a conversion therapy clinic. Workshops were held where sexual diversity was treated as a mental illness. For example, they would say that being gay is the result of lacking friendships or parental love. Additionally, the priest who sometimes visited the school was instructed to report to school authorities if any student mentioned being LGBTI+ or having doubts about it in confessions or conversations.*

A heterosexual transgender man told the researchers that in his evangelical private school, students who were suspected of being LGBTQ were required to undertake corrective practices as a condition for their education:

*They speak with your tutors or guardians and go as far as requiring them to support or implement certain restrictive measures at home, such as removing mirrors, choosing your clothes for you, prohibiting phone and television use, restricting contact with people outside the family, and having only a bed and desk in your room to do schoolwork. If these measures associated with conversion therapy are not followed, you are not allowed to attend school. During school hours, they assign an authority figure to monitor you and generally prevent you from speaking with anyone.*

This investigation underscores that conversion practices in Guatemala are not isolated actions. They are part of a broader effort by a network of anti-gender organizations working closely with state institutions to impose an anti-LGBTQ approach to gender issues in society.

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<sup>16</sup> United Nations Free & Equal, “LGBTIQ+ Youth: Bullying and Violence in School,” 2023, <https://www.unfe.org/sites/default/files/download/Bullying-factsheet-2023-EN.pdf>.

## C. ECUADOR

### Country Context

Ecuador has made notable progress in recognizing LGBTQ people's human rights, yet challenges persist in fully realizing these rights amidst a cultural and political backdrop still marked by conservative and anti-gender influences. The country's legal framework includes significant protections. The 2008 Constitution enshrines principles of non-discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Over the years, Ecuador has advanced in areas like the recognition of diverse families, recognition of the right to gender identity of trans persons, and marriage equality, though some rights, like adoption by same-sex couples, remain limited.

Government bodies, including the Ministry of Women and Human Rights, have taken steps to address violence and discrimination against LGBTQ people. Recent initiatives include the establishment of the Subsecretariat of Diversities, which works with multiple state entities to uphold LGBTQ rights. Additionally, in 2023, the Ministry of Women and Human Rights led the development of a multisectorial route to identify, respond to, and prosecute illegal attempts to alter an individual's sexual orientation or gender identity, underscoring Ecuador's commitment to protecting LGBTQ citizens from harmful practices.

Despite these advancements, the current political climate in Ecuador, marked by instability and escalating violence, exacerbates the vulnerability of already marginalized populations. A recent report by Ecuadorian organization Asociación Silueta documents at least 27 murders of LGBTQ people in 2023, 23 of which were connected to organized crime and contract killings.<sup>17</sup> In this political context, authorities have allowed their commitments to advancing LGBTQ rights to be overshadowed by broader crises, relegated to an afterthought, leaving gaps in enforcement and support. According to the same report, "The inaction of the State, particularly the Ministry of Women and Human Rights and the Undersecretariat for Diversities, is a factor that aggravates the situation. The lack of forceful measures to prevent violence, protect victims and punish those responsible generates a climate of impunity and distrust in institutions."<sup>18</sup>

The Ecuadorian case underscores the challenges of relying solely or primarily on punitive measures to address conversion practices. While criminal legal frameworks are often perceived as a foundation for accountability, they frequently fall short in contexts where religious and familial spaces are deeply involved. The threat of criminal penalties for perpetrators can create significant disincentives for survivors to come forward, driven by fear of ostracism or reprisals, or, alternatively, by affective bonds.

**Right:** Guayaquil Pride March, 2023. The signs read "We deserve to love and be loved" and "To the closet never again." (Mujer & Mujer)

<sup>17</sup> Asociación Silueta X, "Runa Sipiy Informe 2023: Transfeminicidios y asesinatos LGBTQ+," 2023, <https://redsilueta.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/ult-ver-informe-del-observatorio-runa-sipiy-asesinatos-lgbt-plus-y-transfeminicidios-ecuador-2023-asociacion-silueta-signed.pdf>.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 37.



## Research Findings

The investigation conducted by Mujer & Mujer examines the persistence and impact of conversion practices in Ecuador, drawing attention to how these harmful interventions are sustained within a socio-cultural context marked by heteronormativity and patriarchal norms. Conversion practices in Ecuador are deeply embedded in family dynamics, religious influence, and institutional structures. The study sheds light on how societal stigma and cultural expectations, combined with insufficient state regulation, create an environment where conversion practices are tolerated and perpetuated.

Researchers adopted a qualitative methodology to capture the lived experiences of those affected by conversion practices. Data collection methods included focus groups and semi-structured interviews conducted across multiple cities—Guayaquil, Cuenca, Quito, and Ibarra—providing a comprehensive view of the issue's regional variations. These methods allowed the team to document in-depth testimonies from survivors and identify the systemic and cultural factors enabling these interventions. The study underscores how family members and religious institutions act as primary enforcers of conversion practices under the guise of care or moral duty.

The report identifies a range of conversion practices employed to suppress or change the sexual orientation or gender identity of LGBTQ individuals in Ecuador. Psychological interventions are common, with individuals being forced into counseling sessions or therapy framed as corrective. Some interviewees described the use of aversive methods, including verbal abuse, isolation, and in extreme cases, physical harm. These practices are frequently disguised as care or rehabilitation, further complicating their identification and condemnation.

The investigation highlights the central role of religious institutions in perpetuating conversion practices in Ecuador. Evangelical and Catholic institutions in particular often frame these interventions as acts of spiritual care or moral salvation. The methods employed include prayers, religious retreats, Bible readings, and group workshops aimed at “correcting” the sexual orientation or gender identity of LGBTQ individuals. These practices not only cause psychological harm but also reinforce the narrative that diverse identities are incompatible with religious values, exacerbating stigma and social exclusion.

Families emerge as key actors in enforcing conversion practices, often under the premise of protecting family honor or upholding cultural values. Many of these interventions are driven by the desire to maintain social appearances and avoid community rejection. Survivors reported being subjected to emotional manipulation, coercion, and threats by family members in their efforts to suppress LGBTQ identities. A 26-year-old bisexual man from Otavalo told researchers:

*The family starts seeing you as a problem; from there, they begin to threaten you: ‘We’ll disinherit you, we won’t support your education unless you change, unless you stop that, unless you do what we want.’*

Another testimony points out the coercion faced by a young man from Imbabura:

*(...) He wanted to come out, to be who he was, but his family didn't let him; they put up countless obstacles. In the end, out of fear of society, out of fear of ending up who knows where, and due to the threats that they would send him to one of those conversion places, he ended up forming a family. They practically forced him to get married and have children.*

The testimony of a nonbinary person assigned female at birth shows the veiled forms that these threats can take, camouflaging themselves as a solution to other behaviors perceived as problematic:

*The threat from [my parents] is to send me to a detox clinic for cannabis use, but there are comments and words from my mother like, 'They're going to teach you how to behave like a woman,' which by that description tells you that it wasn't exactly a detox clinic.*

This familial coercion, often combined with religious pressure, creates an environment where victims feel they have no choice but to conform, making it extremely difficult for them to resist or report these abuses. The emotional toll of these actions leaves survivors with deep psychological scars, as they are forced to deny their identities and live inauthentic lives to meet the expectations imposed by their families.

The testimony of a 29-year-old lesbian woman shows how difficult it is to act when family members are involved and when the only response offered by the State involves recourse to the criminal legal system:

*There are many people who do not denounce and we do not denounce either. On the other hand, what the state offers families are punitive forms of punishment. Is that really what is needed? It is urgent to find a solution, since the situation in the prisons is alarming.*

The education system also appears as a setting where conversion practices and related harmful ideologies are normalized. In religious and private institutions especially, policies and campaigns promote pathologizing discourses on sexual and gender diversity. Some schools go as far as referring students to external conversion programs or imposing disciplinary measures such as prohibiting expressions of their gender identity. One 20-year-old gay man reported:

*I studied my whole life in a military school, and I suffered a lot of harassment—not from my classmates but rather from my teachers. The school psychologist would take out a Bible and read it with me during our therapy sessions. Later, they sent me to a rehabilitation clinic where we were made to exercise naked alongside naked girls.*

Such practices perpetuate an environment of humiliation and control, using educational spaces as tools for enforcing heteronormative and cisnormative ideals. This not only violates the rights of LGBTQ students but also fosters a culture of exclusion and violence, undermining the very purpose of education as a safe and inclusive space for personal development.

The report demonstrates the profound and enduring harm caused by the lack of acceptance faced by LGBTQ individuals, particularly from their families and communities. This rejection often leads to significant psychological distress, including heightened levels of depression, anxiety, and feelings of unworthiness. Individuals recount experiencing shame, guilt, and

confusion as a result of being compelled to suppress their authentic selves to meet societal or familial expectations. The invalidation of their identities, combined with societal stigma, isolates individuals from vital support networks, leaving them vulnerable to further harm. As other reports have shown, we know that, in extreme cases, the emotional toll manifests in self-harm or suicidal ideation.<sup>19</sup>

Ecuador has made important legal and institutional strides in addressing conversion practices. In 2012, the Ministry of Public Health issued regulations prohibiting treatment centers from offering, practicing, or recommending therapies aimed at changing an individual's sexual orientation or gender identity, recognizing these interventions as violations of human rights.<sup>20</sup> In 2014, the Comprehensive Organic Penal Code criminalized any act of torture carried out with the intention of trying to change somebody's sexual orientation, establishing prison sentences of seven to ten years for those who engage in them.<sup>21</sup> The "Interinstitutional Route for the Identification, Rescue, Care, Closure, and Prosecution of Natural or Legal Persons Offering to Suppress or Modify Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and/or Expression" represents the latest advancement against conversion practices. This protocol, approved by the Ministry of Women and Human Rights in September 2023, establishes clear mechanisms to identify those responsible, ensure victim protection, provide comprehensive care, and pursue legal sanctions against individuals or entities that perpetuate these practices. It is still too early to assess the results and effectiveness of the protocol, but it would be beneficial to adjust or create indicators that enable effective monitoring and evaluation.

This issue's complexity lies in its deep entanglement with family and religious spaces, where conservative views often justify and perpetuate these practices. Addressing the cisheteronormative cultural framework is essential to promote respect for diversity and ensure an environment where the rights of LGBTQ individuals are fully protected, fostering acceptance and inclusion in all spheres of society.

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<sup>19</sup> Share-Net Colombia, "Salud mental en la población LGBTQ+, una mirada desde América Latina," 26 July 2022, <https://share-net-colombia.org/news/salud-mental-en-la-poblacion-lgbtq-una-mirada-desde-america-latina/>.

<sup>20</sup> Republic of Ecuador, Ministry of Public Health, Ministerial Agreement 767, 11 May 2012, [https://database.ilga.org/api/downloader/download/1/EC%20-%20EXE%20-%20Ministerial%20Order%20No.%20767%20\(2012\)%20-%20OR-OFF\(es\).pdf](https://database.ilga.org/api/downloader/download/1/EC%20-%20EXE%20-%20Ministerial%20Order%20No.%20767%20(2012)%20-%20OR-OFF(es).pdf).

<sup>21</sup> Republic of Ecuador, Comprehensive Organic Penal Code, 2014, [https://www.oas.org/juridico/PDFs/mesicic5\\_ecu\\_ane\\_con\\_judi\\_c%C3%B3d\\_org\\_int\\_pen.pdf](https://www.oas.org/juridico/PDFs/mesicic5_ecu_ane_con_judi_c%C3%B3d_org_int_pen.pdf), art. 151(3).

## D. ARGENTINA

### Country Context

Argentina has historically been a global leader on LGBTIQ people's rights. In 2010, it became the first country in Latin America to legalize same-sex marriage, and in 2012, it enacted one of the most progressive gender identity laws in the world, allowing self-determination without medical or other abusive requirements. In 2020, the Transgender Labor Quota Law ensured job opportunities for transgender individuals in the public sector. These measures established Argentina as a regional leader in human rights.

In late 2023, voters elected to power a libertarian government with marked anti-gender politics, leading to significant institutional changes. Newly elected President Javier Milei eliminated the Ministry of Women, Genders, and Diversity, the National Institute Against Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Racism (INADI), and all public policies related to diversity. Furthermore, a congressperson from Milei's party has introduced a bill to amend the Gender Identity Law, seeking to prohibit minors from changing their registered gender.<sup>22</sup> Media reports indicate that the government is reviewing regulations already in place related to LGBTIQ people's rights, raising concerns about potential rollbacks or changes to existing protections, including the National Identity Document (DNI) for nonbinary individuals, which currently provides legal recognition for their gender identity.<sup>23</sup> These developments mark a significant shift in Argentina's policies on diversity and inclusion, contrasting with its previous trajectory of progressive advancements.

These concrete, regressive steps by the government have been accompanied by confrontational rhetoric regarding human rights and diversity from sectors of the ruling party, including the president and the vice-president. Government officials have insulted political opponents and journalists<sup>24</sup> and called for censorship of books in school libraries.<sup>25</sup> Also, it has disparaged so-called



**Right:** Buenos Aires Pride March, 2024. Activists with signs that reads "No to conversion practices" and "Sex education to decide". (AFDA)

<sup>22</sup> "Un diputado mendocino propuso prohibir el cambio de género hasta los 18 años," NDI, 19 November 2024, <https://diariondi.com/un-diputado-mendocino-propuso-prohibir-el-cambio-de-genero-hasta-los-18-anos/>.

<sup>23</sup> "El gobierno estudia anular por decreto el DNI no binario que impulsó la gestión anterior," Infobae, 29 November 2024, <https://www.infobae.com/politica/2024/11/29/el-gobierno-estudia-anular-por-decreto-el-dni-no-binario-que-impulso-la-gestion-anterior/>.

<sup>24</sup> "Horacio Rodríguez Larreta reapareció con una carta a Javier Milei y un cálculo sobre sus insultos en redes," Clarín, 26 November 2024, [https://www.clarin.com/politica/horacio-rodriguez-larreta-reaparecio-carta-javier-milei-calculo-insultos-redes\\_0\\_GSvrggetEmi.html#google\\_vignette](https://www.clarin.com/politica/horacio-rodriguez-larreta-reaparecio-carta-javier-milei-calculo-insultos-redes_0_GSvrggetEmi.html#google_vignette).

<sup>25</sup> Javier Lorca, "El Gobierno de Milei avala una campaña de censura contra libros con contenido sexual," *El País*, 13 November 2024, <https://elpais.com/argentina/2024-11-14/el-gobierno-de-milei-avala-una-campana-de-censura-contra-libros-con-contenido-sexual.html>.

gender ideology, empowering anti-gender groups.<sup>26</sup> Officially sanctioned homophobia and transphobia may also contribute to violence: on 6 May 2024, in a horrific hate crime, a male resident of a tenement hotel murdered three lesbian women staying in the same hotel. They had previously filed harassment complaints against him with a government office, but no clear measures were taken to ensure their protection.<sup>27</sup>

## Research Findings

AFDA conducted the report using a mixed-methods approach to gather information, combining quantitative and qualitative methodologies. A national survey was carried out with 839 participants from the LGBTQ community to explore both general perceptions and specific experiences related to conversion practices. The survey was disseminated through various strategies, including collaborations with LGBTQ leaders, community organizations, and targeted social media campaigns. Additionally, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 29 individuals, including 20 survivors and 9 key stakeholders, to delve deeper into the dynamics and impact of these practices. This comprehensive approach allowed the organization to identify relevant patterns, current modalities, and the long-term effects of conversion practices.

Despite Argentina's significant progress in advancing the rights of LGBTQ individuals, the report reveals the troubling persistence of conversion practices in certain segments of society. These practices demonstrate that, while many strides have been made toward equality, the presence of discrimination and prejudice enables such harmful interventions to persist. As in the reports from Guatemala and Ecuador, AFDA's report identifies key actors involved in promoting and carrying out conversion practices in Argentina. Religious leaders, particularly those from fundamentalist evangelical movements, and families emerge as the primary drivers of these interventions. Additionally, mental health professionals, educators, and public figures play a role in perpetuating these harmful practices, either directly or indirectly.

The report shows that these actors are often not operating independently but are part of interconnected dynamics. Families may act under the influence of religious leaders or follow the guidance of mental health professionals promoting anti-LGBTQ ideologies, while public figures and educators amplify these narratives, legitimizing conversion practices in multiple arenas. The testimony of a trans woman shows the interrelation of family, religion, and school:

*For my mom, seeing a trans girl grow up was a huge conflict. Every time a trans woman appeared on TV, she used it to torment me. Since she couldn't change me that way, she sent me to a Catholic boys' school. There, I was bullied, with the priest encouraging it from behind the scenes. They called her to the principal's office two or three times because I was locked in bathrooms, booed, and severely mistreated. In those meetings, she would say they weren't trying hard enough—something she still repeats to this day. At the time, she also demanded the school step up their efforts, while at home she allowed my brother to beat me up and leave me completely shattered.*

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<sup>26</sup> "La Casa Rosada alerta contra la 'ideología de género' que 'atenta contra la integridad' de los niños," Infobae, 18 August 2024, <https://www.infobae.com/america/agencias/2024/08/18/la-casa-rosada-alerta-contra-la-ideologia-de-genero-que-atenta-contra-la-integridad-de-los-ninos/>.

<sup>27</sup> Andre Rivas and Laura Piazza, "Killing of Three Lesbians in Argentina Signals Need for Attention to Anti-LBQ Violence," Outright International, 28 June 2024, <https://outrightinternational.org/insights/killing-three-lesbians-argentina-signals-need-attention-anti-lbq-violence>.



The testimony of a lesbian woman shows the co-responsibility of the family and a mental health professional:

*When my family found out that I was a lesbian they forced me to go to therapy under the threat of being left with nothing. I didn't want to lose the opportunity to study, to be at home, with my family and lose everything, so I went to the psychologist they chose for me.*

The testimony of another lesbian woman exemplifies the use of pseudoscientific therapies within religious contexts:

*I had initiated therapy with the church. It was an evangelical church. The pastor is a psychologist and the pastor's wife is a sexologist. They work together and offered this kind of psychological therapy. They were trying to cure me so that I would not be a lesbian. So the practices were to stop dressing as a male, to start wearing my hair long. Everything contrary to what I was. Then we had days where we would pray and ask for forgiveness for our sexual orientation. We had days where we would sit and spend the whole day praying and asking for healing.*

This interconnectedness underscores the systemic nature of these practices, revealing how different actors and institutions collaborate to sustain and legitimize conversion practices. The overlapping roles of families, religious leaders, and professionals create a network where harmful ideologies are reinforced across personal, spiritual, and institutional domains.

The report underscores how digital platforms play a critical role in the promotion and perpetuation of conversion practices, serving as spaces where anti-LGBTQ narratives are amplified and harmful interventions are normalized. These platforms provide a means for groups advocating conversion practices to reach wide audiences, bypassing traditional scrutiny or oversight. They are used to share pseudoscientific claims, testimonies, and messages that legitimize these practices under the guise of therapy, spirituality, or parental support. The unregulated nature of many digital spaces allows these messages to spread unchecked, further embedding discrimination and prejudice against LGBTQ individuals.

For example, organizations promoting conversion practices upload videos to YouTube featuring detransitioners and health professionals who endorse so-called “exploratory therapies,” presenting them as credible paths to “realignment” with one’s sex assigned at birth. These videos not only disseminate misinformation but also foster a narrative that stigmatizes LGBTQ identities, contributing to the persistence of conversion practices. This example shows the urgent need for accountability and oversight on platforms that facilitate the spread of such harmful content.

The report also reveals how the current political climate in Argentina under President Javier Milei has created fertile ground for anti-gender groups to gain influence and legitimacy. For example, Vice President Victoria Villarroel was part of a seminar in the Senate in November of 2024 called “Seminar II: Gender and identity: The problem of child sexualization,” at which anti-gender narratives were openly promoted.<sup>28</sup> During this event, Patricia Galarza, the president of an association advocating for “exploratory therapies” for transgender minors, claimed that it was impossible for a child to self-identify, “It is impossible for a child to

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<sup>28</sup> Senado Argentina, “Victoria Villarroel participó del Seminario II: Género e Identidad: El problema de la sexualización infantil,” 7 November 2024, <https://www.senado.gob.ar/prensa/22212/noticias>.

self-identify as the opposite sex. No one is born in the wrong body.”<sup>29</sup> The report highlights that Galarza said they work with over 500 families, organizing online sessions with health professionals and “detransitioners” to enforce their children’s assigned sex at birth.

The promotion of conversion ideology aligns with broader political initiatives from the current administration. Shortly after the seminar, Libertad Avanza introduced a bill to prohibit minors under 18 from accessing gender identity recognition. In August 2024, the government launched a Children’s Day campaign which stated, “Our purpose is for all children to grow up in a healthy and safe environment, far from those who promote gender ideology, which threatens their integrity.”<sup>30</sup> These developments, as documented in AFDA’s findings, illustrate how the government’s rhetoric and policy proposals amplify discriminatory practices and endanger the rights and wellbeing of LGBTQ individuals in Argentina.

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> “La Casa Rosada alerta contra la ‘ideología de género’ que ‘atenta contra la integridad’ de los niños,” Infobae, 18 August 2024, <https://www.infobae.com/america/agencias/2024/08/18/la-casa-rosada-alerta-contra-la-ideologia-de-genero-que-atenta-contra-la-integridad-de-los-ninos/>.

### III.

# Recommendations

# III. Recommendations

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Taking into account the findings and proposals outlined in the reports from Argentina, Ecuador, and Guatemala, Outright International presents a set of recommendations aimed at addressing the issue of conversion practices across Latin America. These recommendations build on the insights provided by the local organizations in each country, emphasizing the need for comprehensive, context-sensitive measures that can effectively prevent and respond to these harmful interventions.

- 1. Establish a legal and policy framework that is robust in its protection of LGBTIQ people from all forms of violence and discrimination.** This includes the adoption and enforcement of comprehensive non-discrimination legislation, legal gender recognition, and legal recognition of diverse family structures.
- 2. Apply existing legal and policy frameworks on gender-based violence to conversion practices, with an eye to both prevention and, where appropriate, retribution.** Governments already have established services for survivors of gender-based violence, such as shelters, psychological support for survivors, and specialized staff in police stations. These same resources should be adapted and applied to address conversion practices, enabling an efficient and structured response to these forms of violence. This support infrastructure should be visible and available in both urban and rural areas.
- 3. Launch nationwide awareness campaigns to educate the public on the harm caused by conversion practices.** These campaigns can draw on existing best practices to build awareness of the harms of gender-based violence. They should involve collaborations with LGBTQ organizations, emphasize the rights to dignity and self-determination, and counter anti-gender rhetoric that fuels discrimination.
- 4. Prioritize preventive approaches in any new legislation.** If countries opt for legislative action, they should prioritize preventive approaches that mobilize the state's tools and resources to confront the root causes of conversion practices. Such legislation should include measures that focus on education, awareness, and accountability, ensuring that both public and private entities understand the harmful impact of these practices.
- 5. Ensure institutional accountability and oversight.** Strengthen oversight mechanisms within health, educational, and social welfare institutions to prevent overt or covert support of conversion practices. Ministries of Health should update diagnostic and therapeutic protocols to avoid pathologizing LGBTQ identities and intersex status and ensure that healthcare providers are educated on affirmative care practices. Countries should also implement mechanisms within educational institutions to prevent discrimination and bullying, remove heteronormative bias from curricula, and promote LGBTIQ-inclusive comprehensive sexuality education.

- 6. Implement targeted training for state and social workers.** Implement mandatory training programs for law enforcement, healthcare professionals, educators, and social workers on recognizing and addressing conversion practices as a human rights violation. This training should equip state actors with knowledge about the human rights of LGBTIQ people, the psychological impact of conversion practices, and the appropriate responses when encountering such cases in their professional roles
- 7. Implement targeted training for state and social workers.** Develop and mandate training programs for law enforcement, healthcare professionals, educators, and social workers focused on recognizing and addressing conversion practices as a human rights violation. These programs should not only equip state actors with knowledge about the psychological impact of conversion practices and appropriate professional responses but also emphasize the importance of ensuring that government officials themselves do not promote, endorse, or tolerate conversion practices or other elements of anti-gender ideology, aligning their actions with human rights principles.



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