

MEETING BETWEEN FELLOW SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS ACTIVISTS FROM MENA AND LAC



South-South Solidarity

Convening of fellow Sexual and
Reproductive Rights activists from
MENA and LAC¹

اجتماع التضامن في جنوب - جنوب غرب آسيا،
وشمال أفريقيا، وأمريكا الوسطى وأمريكا الجنوبية

Brasil, January 2025



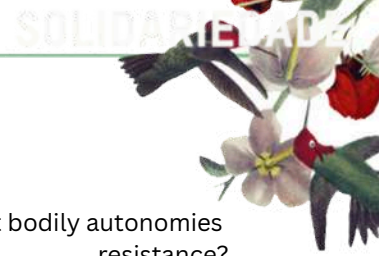
¹MENA; acronym that stands for the Middle East-North Africa region.
LAC; acronym that stands for Latin America and the Caribbean.



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“What story could your territory or community tell us about bodily autonomies resistance?”

I see my drawing, and my imagination turned out very intense, very powerful, in this image, the different nationalities, and different political lines from the same country,
Participant: MENA²

Acknowledgements

We deeply thank the 37 fellow activists who joined this convening and exchange. The gathering took place amid a terrible humanitarian crisis within one of the participating territories, where sadly much of humanity in recent months has witnessed a televised genocide. In this context, writing, sharing, and reflecting required an enormous collective effort on our part, through which we hope that our words and reflections can inspire other activists and international organizations to connect more between movements as a form of healing and collective learning in these times.



Image 1. Drawings made by the participants to answer the question: What story could your territory or community tell us about the resistance of bodily autonomy?

² Collective poetic political document, created by Eve Alcalá González, produced in São Paulo, Brazil, during the OXFAM MENA-LAC Convening, January 2025. Creative Commons



Notes on Collective Authorship

This document was built on the decolonial principles of OXFAM LAC, so it focuses on not being extractivist and being careful with the risks and safety of activists and their movements. For this reason, it was decided not to mention the names of the participants, following the change of government in the presidency of the United States at the end of January 2025. From this date onwards, there would be an escalation of violence and repression against activists who oppose the genocide in Palestine, a situation that would invite us to be very careful about the visibility of activists and their organizations.

This document was written collectively based on Kristina and Perla's facilitation of the meeting; the collective poetic documents created by Eve Alcalá González, as well as contributions from Elizabeth Lopez; Denia Arteaga's revision and adjustments; Perla Vázquez's revision; Diana Campos's narrative integration; and Laura Vergara's final graphic design.

Since multi-handed writing (collaborative authorship) always involves inherent risks, this document's writing always tried to respect each participant's contributions as faithfully as possible. Thus, this final version incorporates all consolidated contributions to give the document the necessary importance. This publication has a Creative Commons license, meaning it is collective knowledge that can be used and/or cited.



Introduction: “It is not our differences that separate us, but our silence”



Stories filled with violence, occupied and exploited territories, genocides, dictatorships, wars, persecutions, extractivisms, inequalities, and centuries of patriarchal and colonial exploitation.

Yes, but we have our bodily autonomies.

Yes, but we are women who organize.

Yes, but we fight for the defense of sexual and reproductive rights.

Yes, but we gather. Yes, but we recognize ourselves.

Yes, but we embody one another.

Yes, but we think together, and tell our stories, and take care of the collective through creativity, courage, tenderness and words.

Taking care of ourselves, naming ourselves, and defending from what we share, and from what makes us different.

What happens when MENA and LAC feminists meet? What kind of powerful reflections arise? What kind of resistances do they share? How do they organize to establish comprehensive communication? Which topics do they prioritize? In which realities do they recognize each other, and in which do they see themselves as completely different? What can they build together?

This text aims to tell a story. The story of 37 feminists from MENA and LAC who came together in Brazil during January 2025 at a convening called **South-South Solidarity**. This is the story of a convening full of complexities, learnings, reflections, and of course personal and collective stories.



Photograph: @Alalucha
Image 2.- Activists at the South-South Solidarity meeting



Here we tell a story. This story is an invitation to journey along a path never walked before of reflections, learning, and recommendations. A new trail built with the strength of solidarity of activists from 15 countries in Brazil. **South-South Solidarity** was an unprecedented convening of women leaders and activists for sexual and reproductive rights from the **MENA and LAC** regions, organized by **OXFAM LAC and MENA**, and co-facilitated by the Latin American cooperative **Sukuamis** and the Lebanese organization **Female**.

The meeting sought to strengthen **South-South** solidarity and political articulation between both regions through the exchange of strategies, lessons learned, and reflections on their cultural, political, and social contexts. The key discussions centered on the need for cooperation and mutual support to guarantee bodily autonomy. They also emphasized the urgency of confronting fundamentalism, as well as the setbacks in rights and the impact on women and youth, always positioning art as a tool for expression and struggle.



Image 3.-Drawing made to answer the question: What story could your territory or community tell us about the resistances of bodily autonomies?

They were difficult but transformative conversations, complex and painful, filled with solidarity and deep listening. Collective care was placed at the center of the process, via a careful and curated methodology and a strategy to facilitate dialogue that began several months before the face-to-face meeting, using online conversations that allowed them to get to know and recognize each other before meeting in Brazil.



Image 4.-Drawing made to answer the question: What story could your territory or community tell us about the resistances of bodily autonomies?



The **South-South Solidarity** event and the previous dialogue processes were an unprecedented and innovative meeting point, in which similarities, struggles, and possibilities for coordination were identified and analyzed with a view to strengthening movements in favor of women's right to choose, as well as the resistance of feminist movements in the face of **conservative attacks** and the genocidal and structural violence shared by both regions.

The social and cultural differences among the participants did not prevent the identification of common challenges and strategies. For example, both material and political constraints in accessing safe abortion or the advance of religious and political fascisms. In addition to this, the importance of self-care and collective care was identified as essential strategies to sustain activists in hostile contexts. This was one of the most important insights from the convening; the certainty that in the face of identifying these shared challenges, it is vital to think about common strategies.

Indeed, in the current global scenario where the dignified life of the majority is so threatened by multiple forms of violence and inequalities, transnational articulation and solidarity between movements for the defense of sexual and reproductive rights proves to be key and urgent to defend freedom and justice.. In this context, it becomes essential to address the genocide in Gaza and the armed conflicts in Lebanon and Syria during 2024 —events that broadened the dialogue toward imperialism in relation to gender and sexual dissident embodiments, the advance of fascism, Zionism, and dictatorships

The convening involved multiple learnings, some expected, others surprising, and was shaped by challenges, opportunities, certainties, and new questions. This document aims to delve a little deeper into the complexity involved in designing it, developing it, experiencing it, and systematizing the learnings. Writing something like this, holding so many emotions and such commitment, was not easy.



It is not easy to name hope amid so much pain. We know that much of what was lived, learned, and understood will remain outside this text; this piece is an attempt to name the hope that activists build when they come together. An attempt to systematize reflections on a powerful, exploratory, and deeply transformative event.

Photograph: @Alalucha

Image 5.-Activists at the South-South Solidarity meeting



*"After October 7th, you must know about our body,
which is different from the body that runs free, the body is different, our body is different.
What information does my body want to express?
We must talk about the land to talk about the freedom of the body,
the tanks, the soldiers, the war, all of this puts the body at risk,
we can draw freedom because it's inside us,
in schools to the new generations, to share with them that we need a project for freedom,
a project that gives us meaning, we need to free ourselves from war tanks"*
Participant MENA.³

Context for a convening between feminists from Latin America and the MENA region

The Interregional Convening of Activist Leaders for Sexual and Reproductive Rights was an initiative of the OXFAM LAC and MENA offices, and was supported by OXFAM Brazil. The proposal is the result of conversations that began in early 2023, as part of the Poder Elegir (Power to Choose - PE), whose goal is to improve access to and exercise of human rights related to sexual and reproductive health for all people living in vulnerable conditions and experiencing marginalization.

During an experience-exchange meeting held in Ghana with the seven countries and regions involved in Oxfam's PE project, the idea emerged of organizing the first Interregional Convening of Activist Leaders for Sexual and Reproductive Rights. The aim would be sharing strategies, challenges, and opportunities for building connections in contexts where civic spaces and public policies are becoming more restrictive for feminist and women's movements.



Photograph: @Alalucha

Image 6.-Activists using art to express their feelings - Collages

³ Collective poetic political document, created by Eve Alcalá González, produced in São Paulo, Brazil, during the OXFAM MENA-LAC Convening, January 2025. Creative Commons



The organization process started in early 2024, focusing on the Latin America and MENA regions. To achieve this, a co-creation team was established with various OXFAM organizations and offices and organizations from each region were invited to facilitate the process. Cooperativa Sukuamis joined from Latin America, an organization that supports organizational strengthening of youth collectives in the region. **Female**, a leading Lebanese organization known for defending women's rights in the region, represented the MENA region. OXFAM Brazil joined in late 2024 as the host organization responsible for receiving the activists, bringing all the experience of Afro-Brazilian women's movements' struggle and resistance in the country.

The convening was designed considering the complexity of linguistic and cultural diversity among participating countries and regions, as well as generational differences and multiple organizational forms. Preparation focused on sharing and recognizing participants' expectations through online meetings.

To advance this approach, three webinars were held in the months before the in-person convening as a strategy to initiate dialogue and build connections. The conversations and reflections from these virtual spaces became the foundation for content and themes at the in-person convening. The meetings enabled regional and intersectional sharing among participating territories, creating opportunities to listen across age differences while participants connected with each other, shared activist experiences, found support, and started understanding each other's hopes and struggles.



Photograph: @Alalucha

Image 7.-Activists at the South-South Solidaritymeeting





Naming this convening **South-South Solidarity** was a consensual decision meant to emphasize how Global South movements connect beyond geographic barriers, sharing the reality of territories defined by dispossession, wars, and historical control over embodiments through the same mechanisms of oppression and power. The convening highlighted this shared experience, emphasizing the possibility of building solidarity in both regions through alliances based on trust or on the shared struggles and inspiration. It also provided an opportunity for MENA organized activists to learn about Latin American struggles and resistance in São Paulo, Brazil.



Image 8.-Drawings made by the activists to answer the question: What story could your territory or community tell us about the resistance of bodily autonomies?

The convening brought together **37 feminist activist** leaders from diverse organizations and countries: Jordan, Egypt, Palestine, Morocco, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon from the MENA region; Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico, Paraguay, Bolivia from Latin America; and of course Brazil as the host. Along with coordination and facilitation teams, they created an interesting mosaic of feminist struggles globally, emphasizing Global South participation:

- Takatoat from Jordan
- The Sex talk in Arabic from Egypt
- Kayan feminist organization from Palestine
- Israr/ Part of OXFAM SPARK 1 from Morocco,
- Dowar for art- OXFAM Masarouna partner from Egypt
- Activist from Syria
- Queer Light from Iraq
- Miftah/Palestine director
- Enlace Continental de Mujeres Indígenas” por “Comunidad Internacional de Pueblos Indígenas y Afrodescendientes de América Latina y el Caribe from Guatemala
- Colectiva BeradFem Xela from Guatemala
- Red de Mujeres Afrolatinoamericanas Afrocaribeñas y de la Diáspora capítulo del El Salvador





- Las Borders from Mexico
- Di Ramona from Mexico
- LICAS from Bolivia
- RedLAC from Paraguay
- Colectiva Iranú from Mexico
- UDIMUF from Honduras
- Campaña 28 de septiembre from Bolivia
- Executive Director- FEMALE from Lebanon
- Programs Coordinator-FEMALE from Lebanon
- HR & Procurement Officer-FEMALE from Lebanon
- OI MENA REGIONAL GENDER COORDINATOR from Palestine
- Gender Justice Project Manager- OXFAM MENA from Palestine
- Change with Them from Brazil
- Pólis Institute from Brazil,
- Black Women Network of Pernambuco from Brazil
- Institute in Defense of the Black Population – IDPN from Brazil
- Black transgender lawyer and activist from Brazil



Photograph: @Alalucha

Image 9.- Activists at the end of the "BlackRoute-Brazil" route



Why MENA and LAC?

Women, youth and children in MENA and LAC regions face severe limitations on their autonomy, freedom of choice, and right to organize. Both regions share extensive histories of feminist resistance that, despite different challenges and realities, offer valuable lessons for mutual learning.

Legal and normative framework in the MENA region:

*"In Lebanon, talking about safe abortion is very difficult because we also have the context of wars, sexual health is not a priority in our communities, women don't have their basic needs covered."
Participant: Lebanon⁴*

*We have many problems at the health level,
gender equality, I'm here for my dreams.,
In Brazil we have great respect for our families and our ancestors.
I want to support all young people, I am my family's dream
-I hope you are your family's dream-.
Participant: Brazil⁵*

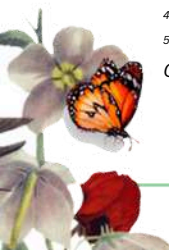
In the MENA region, the lack of reliable data on unsafe abortion is due to its clandestine status and criminalization across many states, which prevents data collection and publication and limits visibility of the situations women are experiencing. In fact, criminalization heightens the risks that human rights activists face when mobilizing.

In these countries, restrictions endanger women's and feminist youth groups promoting sexual and reproductive rights while blocking dialogue about the right to decide and LGBTIQ rights. Furthermore, genocide and forced displacement in countries such as Palestine and Lebanon have intensified human rights violations against communities, worsening the structural and imperialist violence that women, youth, and children experience.



⁴ Webinar 2. Date: December 16, 2024.

⁵ DCollective poetic political document, created by Eve Alcalá González, produced in São Paulo, Brazil, during the OXFAM MENA-LAC Convening, January 2025. Creative Commons





Sexual and reproductive rights in the MENA region:

The MENA region presents a complex landscape in terms of women's rights, influenced by legal systems that combine Sharia (Islamic law), civil codes, and tribal traditions. Although some countries have adopted progressive reforms, structural inequalities persist.

- **Legal status and autonomy:** In countries like Saudi Arabia (before the 2019 reforms), Iran, and Yemen, women face restrictions on their ability to travel, work, or marry without permission from a male guardian (mahram) (Human Rights Watch, 2022).
- **Marriage and divorce:** Polygamy is still legal across most MENA countries. Men in nations such as Egypt and Iraq have easier access to divorce than women (UN Women, 2021).
- **Gender-based violence:** Few countries, including Tunisia, Morocco, and Lebanon, have enacted specific domestic violence legislation. Others, such as Syria and Libya, lack a clear legal framework for protecting women (Amnesty International, 2023).

Sexual and reproductive rights in the MENA region:

Sexual and reproductive rights in the MENA region are strongly influenced by religious and cultural norms. Concerning the main issues, the following can be stated:

- **Abortion:** Access is highly restricted and allowed only when the mother's life is at risk, with the exception of Tunisia, where it is legal until the first trimester (Guttmacher Institute, 2022).
- **Sexual Education:** It is practically nonexistent in formal education systems, contributing to high rates of unwanted pregnancies and child marriage (UNFPA, 2022).
- **Access to contraceptives:** It varies by country. Tunisia and Lebanon have greater availability, while in Afghanistan and Yemen access is limited due to religious and cultural restrictions (WHO, 2021).



Women's Rights and Sexual and Reproductive Rights in Latin America.



Restrictive abortion laws in Latin America and the Caribbean vary considerably among countries, ranging from allowing it only in cases of rape or risk to the mother's life to criminalizing it under all circumstances. Likewise, social inequality and rising poverty disproportionately impact women, youth, and children. These situations restrict access to sexual and reproductive health services and increase health risks for women, youth, children, and trans or LGBTIQ communities (IPPF, 2022).

For instance, abortion in Brazil is currently permitted only in cases of sexual violence or when the mother's life is at risk. In Paraguay, Peru, and Guatemala, it is allowed only to prevent danger to the mother's life and health. Chile and Bolivia include cases of rape and fetal non viability as grounds for decriminalization. In El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua, it is criminalized under all circumstances. CEPAL reports that poverty disproportionately impacts specific groups, affecting over 45% of children and women between 20-59 years old, limiting their access to sexual and reproductive health services. This results in unplanned and unsafe pregnancies, increases women's health risks, and perpetuates gender inequalities.



Image 10-Drawing made to answer the question: What story could your territory or community tell us about the resistances of bodily autonomies?

Legal and normative framework

América Latina America has achieved significant progress on women's rights, although gaps persist in their implementation and there is enormous diversity of situations in the region related to this issue:

- **Political participation:** Countries like Mexico, Bolivia, and Argentina have implemented gender quotas, increasing women's representation in their parliaments (CEPAL, 2023).
- **Gender-based violence:** Although laws such as Mexico's Ley Olimpia and Argentina's Ley de Feminicidio exist, the region still records high femicide rates, particularly in Central America (OAS, 2022)
- **Child marriage:** Although it has decreased, it remains a problem in rural areas and indigenous communities (UNICEF, 2021)





Sexual and reproductive rights in Latin America

*"We accompany our action with the abortion medication that comes from Mexico and we pass it towards the south."
Participant: Guatemala.⁶*

Latin America has been the setting for important feminist fights for abortion decriminalization and access to reproductive health.

- **Abortion:** Abortion was legalized in Argentina (2020), Colombia (2022), Uruguay, Cuba, and Mexico City, yet it remains penalized in countries such as El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua, where women face prosecution even for spontaneous abortions (Center for Reproductive Rights, 2023).
- **Sexual education:** There is progress in countries such as Argentina and Uruguay, which have implemented comprehensive programs, while nations like Paraguay and Guatemala face strong opposition from conservative groups (IPPF, 2022).
- **Access to contraceptives:** While access is generally wider than in MENA, barriers remain in specific areas, primarily rural zones and indigenous communities (PAHO, 2021).

Feminist, youth, and LGBTIQ organizations and movements have been key actors in resisting and promoting sexual and reproductive rights. However they currently face increasing attacks from conservative groups that persecute and criminalize them. Under these circumstances, these movements must struggle against funding restrictions and cuts - a clear example being USAID's official closure in February 2025.⁷

In Central America, international cooperation enabled advances in sexual health, an example being access to the morning-after pill in Honduras - a situation that, due to USAID's closure, puts government support for sexual health services at risk.

⁶Webinar 2. Date: December 16, 2024.

⁷ USAID Closure, Cited in El País, February 2025.

At <https://elpais.com/planeta-futuro/2025-02-11/cierre-de-usaid-preparemonos-con-urgencia-para-un-mundo-mas-tenebroso.html>





MENA and LAC - Why is dialogue between both regions not common?

When we say this convening was an unexplored path never walked before, we speak with certainty that feminist movements from both regions have had limited connection and closeness. This limited connection extends beyond feminisms and relates to broader historical and geopolitical processes. Despite the complexities of these regions, direct exchange between Latin American and MENA countries has not been common due to economic, political, cultural, and diplomatic restrictions and/or differences.

LAC has historically focused its integration efforts toward the United States, Europe, and in recent decades, Asia, mainly because of consolidated economic and geopolitical connections. This trend has relegated MENA to a secondary role, viewing the region as a peripheral partner of lesser relevance than other regions.

Mean while, MENA countries have concentrated on Europe —the primary consumer of their energy resources— along with Asia and Africa, regions with stronger historical and cultural connections. This divergent approach has prevented the development of a solid bilateral agenda between them.

Another decisive factor is the absence of clear foreign policy between both regions. LAC has stayed neutral in MENA conflicts (like Arab-Israeli tensions or Iran-Saudi rivalry), while Middle Eastern countries view Latin America and the Caribbean as lacking the unity needed for strategic partnerships. Added to this, MENA is internally fragmented by sectarian divisions and regional conflicts, making a coordinated approach toward LAC even more difficult. Without shared geopolitical interests or common agendas, cooperation efforts remain sporadic and discontinuous.

Finally, economic and commercial barriers have reinforced this lack of connection. Trade between both regions represents less than 3% of their total trade according to CEPAL data (2022), limited mainly to exports from LAC (such as soybeans and minerals) and hydrocarbon imports from MENA. The lack of economic complementarity, along with logistical and tariff obstacles, has discouraged mutual investment. Unlike established value chains with Asia or Europe, LAC and MENA haven't developed productive interdependencies to foster more dynamic relations. This reflects both geographic distance and missing institutional frameworks for deeper integration.





Image 11.- Drawing made to answer the question: What story could your territory or community tell us about the resistances of bodily autonomies?

The limited cooperation and connection between regions created significant logistical challenges for the organizing team, caused by restrictions on visa requirements and limitations in finding feminist interpreters of Spanish, Arabic, and Portuguese living in Brazil.

"I bring Portuñol to this space, committed to democracy, climate justice, racial and gender justice, and the violence against Black youth."
Participant: Brazil⁸

The space was launched precisely because these same limitations that restricted historical cooperation created the need for exchange and understanding about how movements and struggles can inspire one another. This is why creating South-South spaces to build solidarity and political power among feminist and youth movements is completely innovative and relevant.

As we deepened our analysis, we wondered: Why do women and their movements in MENA and LAC, despite being so similar, face so many barriers to connecting and engaging in dialogue? Why do patriarchal, state, and colonialist systems limit exchange between feminist movements from the Global South itself? Despite concrete limitations around travel and language, we learned and managed to explore how to answer these questions.

⁸ Webinar 2. Date: December 16, 2024..



Getting ready for a path never walked before

"We feel supported by one another, hopeful about meeting here and for the resistances each of us carries from our territories, honoring our female ancestors' fights. Yet we cannot ignore the complexity that faces the Palestinian region with the ongoing genocide, as well as the challenging contexts around Sexual and Reproductive Rights in Latin America."
Participant: Guatemala⁹

Creating a convening like this between activists from two regions - historically, culturally, and geographically distant but with so much shared and much to uncover - required preparatory work facilitated by regional teams: **Sukuamis** for Latin America, **Female** for MENA, with ongoing support from a coordinating committee of Oxfam MENA, LAC, and Brazil."



Photograph: @Alalucha

Image 12.- activists sharing their drawing at the south-south solidarity meeting

The strategy involved three webinars designed to help facilitation teams, the coordinating committee, and activists connect and recognize one another. This aimed to initiate the valuable listening process about what it means to be activists and part of a collective, making this a crucial step for participating in these experience-exchange spaces.

The organizing team chose to engage from decolonial feminist approaches as a form of political positioning that allowed the webinars to connect with hope, allowing to prioritize collective care. To achieve this, the facilitation team opted for methodologies focused on narrative practices, art, and symbolic language, which enabled a more careful, creative, and sensitive approach to the complexities that participants were living and sharing about their territories, their embodiments, and their activism experiences.

⁹ Webinar 1. Date: November 14, 2024.





Photograph: @Alalucha

Image 13.- activists using art as a tool of expression - collages

"We forgot how to sleep because we don't feel safe, there's always noise and we keep moving but the bombings continue."
Participant: Iran¹⁰

Facilitators were careful to create safe and supportive environments, particularly for participants from the MENA region, who are experiencing a violent context where they daily confront war, genocide, displacement, and other consequences stemming from conflict in their territories.

The webinars fostered meaningful dialogues that reveal the enormous commitment and depth of reflections. Participants shared their hope in community and communal life, connection, family, feminisms, love, and resistance. They also shared their dreams of a world with less violence, more justice and equality, where all people can decide about their own bodies. Broadly speaking, these dialogues focused on:

- The convening's objectives, agenda, methodology, and timeline were shared, along with the meaning of South-South solidarity.
- The value of connecting with female ancestors and their dreams: This exploration involved reflecting on personal hopes while considering ancestral affections and longings, and imagining what these women might say about current resistances.
- Convening preparation: Addressing expectations and hopes through participant discussions about their aspirations for the gathering and preferred approaches to experiencing it.
- Regional realities; participants discussed topics including occupation, gender equity, access to sexual and reproductive rights, racism, dictatorship, abortion, and violence.



¹⁰ Webinar 2. Fecha 16 de Diciembre 2024



From these preparation sessions, participants offered general recommendations that were relevant for building the in-person convening's methodology. Examples of their input included:

"Make it conversational and not just presentations - not only those in front should speak, make it dynamic and playful and not just going to sit in front of a slide"
Participant: El Salvador¹¹

*I imagine living this space where we can disconnect from negative and stressful daily environments and connect with our bodies and collective energy. Our convening excites me because I know we will bring both reflection and hope and strength back to women in our territories and organizations."*¹²

Spaces for emotional support, I think we should include self-care and collective care time. I suggest each of us bring something meaningful to share, if possible."
Participant: Paraguay¹³



Image 13.- drawing made to answer the question: what story could your territory or community tell us about the resistance of bodily autonomies?

Convening in Brazil: a path of solidarity.

The **South-South Solidarity** convening bringing together fellow activists from LAC and MENA was held in São Paulo, Brazil from January 27-30, 2025. This event represented a significant and unprecedented **South-South** dialogue effort focused on sexual and reproductive rights.



¹¹ Webinar 3. Date: January 10, 2025

¹² Webinar 3. Date: January 10, 2025

¹³ Webinar 3. Date: January 10, 2025





The event's diverse composition -10 participants from each region, 6 Brazilians, 6 OXFAM representatives, plus Sukuamis and Female facilitators- revealed both the immense potential such spaces hold and the inherent structural challenges of transregional coordination. The initial schedule change due to immigration barriers exemplified the logistical complexities typical of such exchanges.

The participatory methodology combined innovative and traditional elements: from rituals connecting with ancestral knowledge to artistic expressions as vehicles for territory narratives. Nevertheless, the language barrier in a space needing three-language interpretation (Spanish-Arabic-Portuguese) challenged full reciprocity in exchanges, especially for Arabic-speaking participants.

Although communicating across different languages, complex social and territorial processes, and embodied experiences that are difficult to verbalize posed challenges, there were significant and powerful convergences in regional struggles around the convening's core themes: bodily autonomy, structural racism, and feminist genealogies.



Photograph: @Alalucha

Image 14- Activists sharing in the south - south solidarity meeting





The discussion of Brazil's Black route and its connection to MENA slavery experiences uncovered shared colonial patterns oppressing racialized bodies. Abortion stories - ranging from Mexico's green wave to Lebanon's reality- confirmed what Correa and Petchesky (2020) call "transnational patriarchal regimes" with distinct local expressions.

Day three highlighted the potential and tensions inherent in constructing **South-South** alliances. Intergenerational discussions and collage creation as decolonial practice demonstrated the necessity of moving beyond individualistic, Western-influenced feminism. Yet linguistic imbalances and the missing cultural translation infrastructure create significant barriers to effective coordination. The persistent question 'how do we build collective power' captures exactly this tension between political commitment and material limitation of transnational solidarity.

This convening exemplified a paradigmatic case of current efforts to develop non-Eurocentric feminist epistemologies, though it also exposed persistent structural limitations in such dialogues. Participants emphasized that building effective alliances means going beyond language barriers to create shared conceptual frameworks recognizing both shared oppressions and each context's historical specificities.



Image 15.- Drawings made by activists to answer the question, what story could your territory or community tell us about resistances of bodily autonomies



Gathering to learn from our challenges

This section addresses core findings and challenges from the convening's conversations, focusing on obstacles activists face in their daily territorial work as they build support networks, confront multiple oppressions, and develop collective transformation strategies. It explores insights emerging from South-South Solidarity practices as a central contribution to decolonial feminist praxis to understanding solidarity—its opportunities and challenges as fundamental elements of political action and everyday existence.

SeBeing feminist activists in these territories means recognizing that struggles go beyond their own contexts, even though pressures and violence take different forms across geographies. **A central and shared element is when and how political action becomes a way of being that crosses through embodiments, histories, and even hopes and memory of past resistances.**

Translating the wealth of insights from this convening into words was challenging, which is why the organizing team decided to prioritize art, symbolic language, and other forms of expression for topics that are difficult to address and name. However, this dialogue space made clear that reflections move in various directions - from broad historical and geopolitical processes crossing borders to personal narratives, subjectivities, and daily activist experiences.

EstThe ongoing dialogue between social and individual aspects brought enormous richness to the discussion. The dialogue explored both structural and personal aspects of activism. It enabled authentic connection and recognition. **A central, powerful insight was confirming that other types of feminisms exist - those from the South, decolonial ones (whose nature involves naming colonialist power relations) positioned beyond hegemonic white feminism.** Coming together to name and discuss this proves invaluable as a learning, because doing so enriches dialogue and allows deeper understanding of how contexts are understood and how feminisms are practiced in territories.



Photograph: @Alalucha

Image 16- Activists sharing in the south - south solidarity meeting



"We believe the answers lie in feminisms from the South, not in white imperialist feminism that dictates, oppresses, and fails to recognize our humanity..."
"Identifying and recognizing ourselves as women activists from the Global South who fight for sexual and reproductive rights"
Participant: Árabe¹⁴

"What drawing represents you from your territories? Fighting and resisting flows through our bodies, our emotions, our hope of creating a better world for the women who follow us"
Participant El Salvador¹⁵

"They inherited strength from their female ancestors, who accompany and sustain them, who also resisted"
Participant: Mexico¹⁶

"We always return to hope, seeing ourselves in others and knowing many are fighting for the same cause - it definitely feels like taking a deep breath"
Participant: Brazil¹⁷

In a context where the MENA region is marked by war, occupation, and genocide, and globally where violence, inequalities, and anti-rights policies predominantly prevail, the activists who gathered at the convening demonstrated enormous capacity for resistance and transformation that challenges patriarchal order with new strategies. Far from weakening, feminist movements not only resist but expand, deepen their fights, and constantly strengthen themselves

LaLebanon and Jordan activists commented that "there's an increase in feminist organizations supporting groups working in favor of abortion, though in hidden, clandestine, and discreet ways," a situation that encourages us because it shows that although the territory has a complex context, resistance is present and growing.



Image 17.- Drawings made by activists to answer the question, what story could your territory or community tell us about resistances of bodily autonomies

¹⁴ Collective poetic political document, created by Eve Alcalá González, produced in São Paulo, Brazil, during the OXFAM MENA-LAC Convening, January 2025. Creative Commons

¹⁵ Collective poetic political document, created by Eve Alcalá González, produced in São Paulo, Brazil, during the OXFAM MENA-LAC Convening, January 2025. Creative Commons

¹⁶ Collective poetic political document, created by Eve Alcalá González, produced in São Paulo, Brazil, during the OXFAM MENA-LAC Convening, January 2025. Creative Commons

¹⁷ Collective poetic political document, created by Eve Alcalá González, produced in São Paulo, Brazil, during the OXFAM MENA-LAC Convening, January 2025. Creative Commons

¹⁸ Collective poetic political document, created by Eve Alcalá González, produced in São Paulo, Brazil, during the OXFAM MENA-LAC Convening, January 2025. Creative Commons



Additionally, in Lebanon "there's an alliance between the government, religious groups, and tribes to determine where funding goes and interfere with women's bodily autonomy,"¹⁹ the activists shared.

Other examples emerged when discussing Latin America. In "Brazil, resistance is currently taking place against a law that attempts to deprive young women, girls, and minors of freedom when they have an abortion due to rape, which highlights conservatism and misogyny by criminalizing and punishing the woman rather than the rapist."

It is clear that state conservatism and patriarchy not only restricts women's freedom to decide about their bodies and defend their autonomy, since they live and resist in territories where authorities make hierarchical and oppressive decisions about many aspects of their lives - they also decide on the religion they will practice and/or the poverty or wealth they will have. This is not only a tangible reality for MENA countries; important examples can be found in Latin America, such as Nicaragua, which "is another country living under dictatorship, if you call yourself a feminist it's like putting a cross on your back or ending up in jail, talking about autonomy is forbidden, there's no access to free, safe, and legal abortion."²⁰ Or El Salvador's case where "women are deprived of their freedom for having a spontaneous abortion...women faced jail time because of this, they're now free and organizing to decriminalize abortion" participant: El Salvador"²¹.

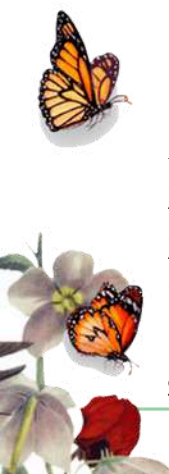


Photograph: @Alalucha
Image 18.- Offering of the south -south solidarity meeting

¹⁹ Collective poetic political document, created by Eve Alcalá González, produced in São Paulo, Brazil, during the OXFAM MENA-LAC Convening, January 2025. Creative Commons

²⁰ Collective poetic political document, created by Eve Alcalá González, produced in São Paulo, Brazil, during the OXFAM MENA-LAC Convening, January 2025. Creative Commons

²¹ DoCollective poetic political document, created by Eve Alcalá González, produced in São Paulo, Brazil, during the OXFAM MENA-LAC Convening, January 2025. Creative Commons





The discussion became more complex when each participant had the opportunity to present their territories and contexts. They talked about death, displacement, and the multiple ways women's rights are violated in both regions - painful and heartbreaking topics. Sharing and listening to the systematic dehumanization of treatment toward women led to naming anger, frustrations, rage, and pain.

The geographic distance between MENA and LAC countries is enormous, yet they share the impressive work activists do within hostile realities as they defend sexual and reproductive rights. In this regard, lack of access to safe abortion particularly affects women, youth, and people in vulnerable situations.

Another point activists brought to the discussion was how the so-called "gender ideology" carries significant weight in both regions' societies and plays a central role in limiting access to information about rights. "This approach is used by anti-rights power groups (evangelical church, Catholic church, political and economic elites, and mass media serving these elites) to position narratives that seek to polarize actions within women's and feminist movements, creating collective panic among youth and women"²²

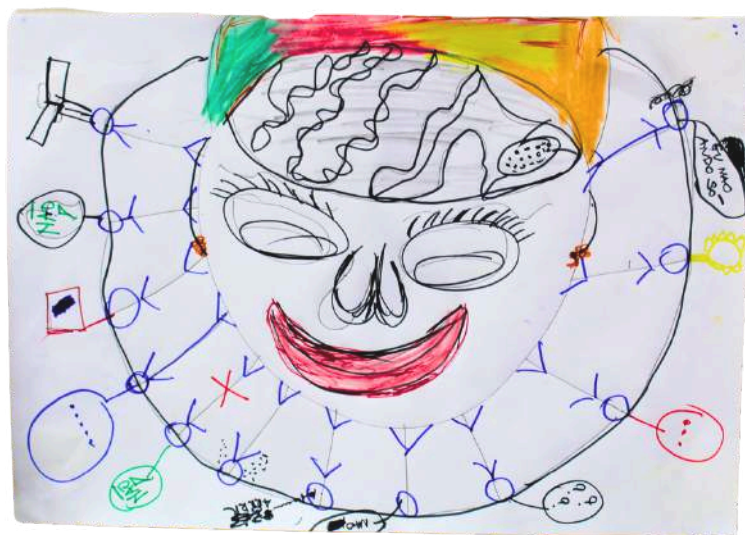


Image 19.- Drawings made by activists to answer the question, what story could your territory or community tell us about resistances of bodily autonomies

"Drawing was a denial of my body, because of the racism that immobilizes us, and I went backward, I thought you can't think about bodily autonomy without talking about slavery, my ancestors were enslaved, in my drawing the circularity, that's how I think my ancestry, the earth, birth, circularity, and in the head, in the braids, those paths, where the escape routes were, the freedom letters...and inside the smile walks forward, in my drawing I painted the lips, my trans and travesti friends are there, they paint themselves, and that smile opposes the hypersexualization of our bodies, my body walks as I want, respect my color that isn't for sexual service, in the hair the black power, there women connected to that circular head, Changó's strength, go with courage to war Rosa, Rosa, brave woman, they call me that because they don't understand my strength, Rosa, woman of justice, we're learning to say yes or no, the questions, the doubts, the denials, we scream the swear words, the hatred, the insults, we scream 'go to hell!', that's how we free ourselves, screaming it is liberation. Image 19 Participant: Brazil²³

²² Collective poetic political document, created by Eve Alcalá González, produced in São Paulo, Brazil, during the OXFAM MENA-LAC Convening, January 2025. Creative Commons

²³ Collective poetic political document, created by Eve Alcalá González, produced in São Paulo, Brazil, during the OXFAM MENA-LAC Convening, January 2025. Creative Commons



Finally, a key insight from this exchange process was understanding that one of activists' main strategies is building alliances between collectives working on the same issues and situated in the same territory to address the challenges each country faces.

“Some of the achievements are criminalizing rape and cancellation of the law that dismisses all charges of rapists as they marry their victims, moreover the continued work to create a civil status laws that inactivate religious status law, which in turn demolishes minors marriage, unjust inheritance and custody laws and abortion laws.”
Participant: Lebanon²⁴

“Through joint initiatives to increase visibility of the problems we face, in experience-sharing or training processes through virtual sessions”
Participant: Mexico²⁵

During the convening in Brazil, it was mentioned:

“...we acknowledge the contribution and struggle of Black and impoverished women's movements, whose efforts led to the recognition of misoprostol as the medication used for medical abortion. This meant liberation and access to dignified abortion”. Participant: Brazi ²⁶. The inspiration of the other sustains me in the struggle, the living hope of leaving behind a world without violence for women, for children—a world where war and genocide do not exist, where dictatorships and fascism are absent, where all bodies have freedom of expression and can make their own decisions. Continuing to seek alternatives to promote sexual and reproductive rights, to accompany careful abortions.”²⁷



Photograph: @Alalucha
Imagen 20.- Activists on the “Black route Brazil” tour

²⁴ Drawn from the post-test of the gathering in São Paulo, Brazil 2025

²⁵ Drawn from the post-test of the gathering in São Paulo, Brazil 2025

²⁶ Collective poetic political document, created by Eve Alcalá González, produced in São Paulo, Brazil, during the OXFAM MENA-LAC Convening, January 2025. Creative Commons

²⁷ Webinar 2. Date: December 16, 2024.





Image 21.- Drawings made by activists to answer the question, what story could your territory or community tell us about resistances of bodily autonomies

“One must speak of the land to speak of the body's freedom, the tanks, the soldiers, the war—all this endangers the body, freedom we can draw because it lies within us, in schools, to the new generations, conveying that we need a project for freedom, a project that gives us meaning, we need to free ourselves from the tanks of war that are like the Berlin Wall”
Participant: Líbano²⁸

What we learned about our contexts: To break those silences



Image 22.- Activists in the south - south solidarity meeting

“Our movement is an organic entity that, confronting a wave of structural violences, can come together as a body to resist—our hope resides in tenderness, in love, political friendships, and collective care. Our revenge is to be happy”
Participant: Bolivia²⁹

“Protests, campaigns, like the campaign to enact a gender-sensitive law for domestic violence in Lebanon. In Kuwait, the Abolish 153 collective just managed to abolish the article from Kuwaiti law after over a decade of campaigning and raising awareness about the law that offers lightened punishment for ‘honor crimes’. It took over a decade of campaigning.” Participant: Lebanon³⁰

Patriarchy, colonialism, and capitalism express themselves specifically in each region, yet they are common processes that, when named and recognized as shared oppressions, invite us to think of collective strategies. This was the starting point for conceiving South-South Solidarity as an invitation to think through similarities and differences—crucial for a feminist solidarity that respects and embraces diversities while fostering collective building. To this end, using art as a way of expression was not only fundamental but mobilizing and transformative. Through art, we answered the questions posed in the process, expressing what words cannot capture, by playing and releasing through the colors and materials employed.

²⁸ Collective poetic political document, created by Eve Alcalá González, produced in São Paulo, Brazil, during the OXFAM MENA-LAC Convening, January 2025. Creative Commons

²⁹ Drawn from the post-test of the gathering in São Paulo, Brazil 2025

³⁰ Drawn from the post-test of the gathering in São Paulo, Brazil 2025



Through these activities, we reached new depths of collective reflection. Our discussions of safe abortion and sexual and reproductive rights revealed that the struggle takes time, resistance, and creative alternatives—above all, it needs to be named. We can't afford to be passive; we must keep building collective embodiment and weaving networks that fuel our movement. These methodological approaches brought us face to face with questions that often go unanswered: How do we care for our bodies to ensure they can sustain this work?

One contribution that truly energized and captured the spirit of the event was a phrase inspired by the writings of Audre Lorde—the African American feminist writer, lesbian, and civil rights activist: 'It is not our differences that separate us, but our silences.' This reflection invited activists to consider how we might break these silences in multiple ways: through network-building, collective thinking, and reimagining our place in activism—all essential dimensions of our struggles.

This invitation to break silences, sparked by Audre Lorde's work, was also a call to think alternative narratives, new ways of naming ourselves, communicating, and seeking information. Mass media, through their hegemonic narratives, perpetuate disinformation—they don't transmit reality, nor the perspectives, much less the contributions of feminist movements in each region..³¹

Finally, a moving lesson was understanding that although connecting struggles that are geographically distant, seemingly different, yet fundamentally similar poses immense challenges—in conception, design, implementation, funding, and naming—the mere desire to try, to claim our right to dream of such connections, becomes a powerful way to break those silences.



Photograph: @Alalucha
Image 23.- Activists in the south - south solidarity meeting

³¹ Collective poetic political document, created by Eve Alcalá González, produced in São Paulo, Brazil, during the OXFAM MENA-LAC Convening, January 2025. Creative Commons





Photograph: @Alalucha
Image 24.- Activists in the south - south solidarity meeting

“Our group genuinely desires cross-regional articulation, but we recognize it's both frightening and challenging due to differences in languages, time zones, contexts, abilities, and knowledge bases.”
Participants: Tunisia, Bolivia, Mexico, El Salvador

“I see articulation as a perfect opportunity for each organization, country, and region to amplify the voices fighting daily in different territories. It's beautiful that this gathering has already allowed us to meet and truly see zone another, moving us toward collective struggle with shared conviction. I'd like to build spaces where we can share challenges from our diverse territories while developing collective actions that deconstruct dominant narratives.”
Participant: Guatemala³²

Claiming our right to dream of greater **South-South Solidarity** connections becomes a powerful tool—one that enables us to build concretely from hope itself. We do this by breaking silences, by naming both what we share and our different experiences in accessing and defending sexual and reproductive rights.

Shared Points

- Ensuring safe and careful abortion can be extremely complex in most of the countries represented.
- “Every region recognizes this time of monsters, of fascisms and fundamentalisms—a time when the violence against our bodies cannot be separated from that against our territories—understanding bodies and territories as interconnected sites of struggle, where Capital acts as the patriarchal colonizer, manifesting in genocide, extractivism, classism, racism, and sexism.”³³
- Individual and collective care for activists must be prioritized, especially because we cannot continue resisting with exhausted bodies.
- To be a woman—bisexual, African-descendant—working for sexual and reproductive rights in certain territories means living with constant paralysis and fear of assembly.



³²Drawn from the post-test of the gathering in São Paulo, Brazil 2025

³³Collective poetic political document, created by Eve Alcalá González, produced in São Paulo, Brazil, during the OXFAM MENA-LAC Convening, January 2025. Creative Commons





Differences

- Participants noticed a significant difference in worldviews between both regions—MENA and LAC. In Latin America, there's a turn toward ancestral practices, indigenous community practices linked to relationships with the land, with space, and the beings that inhabit it. Meanwhile, MENA territories exist in constant alert due to ongoing genocide, which raises questions of urgency and priority. Living with death as a parallel reality complicates the fundamental question: What is my fight? Yet in their context, to resist is already to struggle.
- “We identified limited articulation between feminist movement agendas in these countries.”³⁴
- While in Mexico and Latin America protests can happen regularly without confrontation, in MENA countries, 'the last street protest was in 2005, demanding the right to legal, safe, and free abortion. After that, there were no further mobilizations. There is no awakened, conscious young feminist movement. “From 2005 to 2018, there was an absence of feminist activism on the streets.”

Faced with these realities, we naturally arrive at the following questions: What can we build with these similarities and differences? By naming them, do activists contribute to the hope of robust connections? How do we both create and believe in **South-South Solidarity**?



Photograph: @Alalucha

Image 25.- Activists in the south - south solidarity meeting

³⁴ Collective poetic political document, created by Eve Alcalá González, produced in São Paulo, Brazil, during the OXFAM MENA-LAC Convening, January 2025. Creative Commons



Conclusions: To break the silence to create South-South Solidarity

“Those who give us strength and hope are the women surrounding us, along with the ancestresses who struggled before us and are guiding us in these fights”

Participant: Paraguay³⁵

Via collective interregional advocacy and on-the-ground action—through transformative feminist solidarity that crosses borders—I believe our most urgent task is challenging shrinking civic spaces and the global rise of anti-rights movements. We must defy censorship and forced global oppressions to safeguard our achievements and maintain our activism, present and proud, in both virtual and physical space.

Participant: Lebanon³⁶

How can feminist movements create and believe in **South-South Solidarity**? How can feminist movements from MENA and LAC resist the attacks of the current context and build solidarities between their countries and organizations for the next decade of struggle for peace, autonomy and freedom of women and sexual and gender dissidents?

The **South-South** Solidarity transregional gathering between MENA and LAC activists demonstrated that the building of **South-South** solidarities around sexual and reproductive rights is grounded in three key axes through three particular pathways:



Photograph: @Alalucha

Image 26.- Offering and activists in the south-south solidarity meeting

³⁵ Webinar 2. Date: December 16, 2024.

³⁶ Drawn from the post-test of the gathering in São Paulo, Brazil 2025



First, **memories of ancestral resistance and contemporary struggles against patriarchal regimes create a shared identification as political subjects of the global south.** This identification transcends geographical distances. As testimonies from Brazil, Lebanon and Nicaragua illustrate, the criminalization of abortion and state surveillance of female bodies operate under similar colonial logics, although with particular nuances. Participants agreed that this systemic and systematic oppression —articulated through alliances between governments, religious groups and economic elites— demands collective responses that recognize both the differences and historical convergences.

A second crucial finding revealed **how art and embodied knowledge function as decolonial methodology.** Drawing, collages and performative rituals —including one that portrayed enslaved female ancestors' escape routes— emerged as epistemological instruments that give voice to the unspeakable within repressive contexts. This creative approach made it possible to make visible how racism, hypersexualization and extractivist violence inscribe themselves on bodies in differentiated yet interconnected ways. The symbolic circularity in artistic expressions described earlier —from braided hair as maps of freedom, to land as a metaphor for autonomy— revealed a common substrate; the struggle for the decolonization of body-territories.



Photograph: @Alalucha

Image 27.- Activists using art to express their feelings - Collages

“I feel invited to connect more deeply with the underlying "history" of the contexts in which we live, to connect through art and listening, and thereby deconstruct those narratives that often weaken our agency.”
Participant: Guatemala³⁷

³⁷ Drawn from the post-test of the gathering in São Paulo, Brazil 2025





Finally, the dialogue unveiled **structural tensions that constrain South-South articulation**. Linguistic asymmetries, disparities in street mobilization (where Arab feminists have been confined to clandestine operation since 2005, in contrast to relative Latin American permissiveness), and inequity in activism resources expose the limits of the hegemonic paradigm of global solidarity. As participants noted, while white imperialist feminism homogenizes demands, southern feminisms require building networks that respect situated temporalities and priorities —whether connecting with ancestry in LAC, or surviving in the face of genocides in MENA territories—. The emerging proposal calls for an **ethic of radical care** that recognizes —without romanticism— that "resisting" constitutes an act of struggle in contexts where feminist existence itself is already subversive.

This process demonstrated that despite material restrictions, the possibility of a **South-South** agenda exists, weaving itself together by naming shared oppressions, by translating —not only linguistically but politically— experiences, and by insisting that "we draw freedom because it is within us" and "experimenting with art as a way to heal and transform realities."³⁸

The challenge is to institutionalize these dialogues without bureaucratizing their transformative potential —a delicate balance that requires centering the voices of those who exist at the margins of the margins.

"The dream I fight for is that women can be free, that there will no longer be homophobia, lesbophobia, transphobia, to have clean water, a world where plastic is no longer in our lives, that we become diverse families within the ecosystem, that humanity becomes sororal"
Participant: Mexico³⁹



Photograph: @Alalucha

Image 30.- Activists in the south - south solidarity meeting

³⁸ Drawn from the post-test of the gathering in São Paulo, Brazil 2025

³⁹ Webinar 3. Date: December 16, 2024.



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Photograph: @Alalucha

Image 31.- Activists at the South-South Solidarity meeting



