

Anti-Feminist Backlash in the Global South: Cross-Regional Discussions, Strategies, and Innovative Practices

Overview

The concept of anti-feminist backlash has grown in popularity around the world. The emergence of yet another “wave” of anti-feminist backlash over the past several years, and the consequent eruption of feminist responses to this backlash, is evidence of just how important the concept of backlash is to feminist theorizing and mobilizing. Around the world, feminist journals have devoted entire issues to the study of backlash ([Alter & Zürn, 2020](#); [Haas & Binard, 2022](#)). At the level of the UN, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) Working Group on discrimination against women and girls recently released a position paper on gender equality and gender backlash, where it argued that in light of the “increasing misuse of the concept of gender [and] attacks on gender (equality) and women’s rights,” it is “important to take stock of these developments, to counter the anti-gender attacks, and to clarify the use of the concept in relation to [OHCHR’s] mandate” ([Radačić & Facio, 2020, p. 1](#)). In 2019, the European Parliament adopted a resolution “on experiencing a backlash in women’s rights and gender equality,” ([Paternotte, 2020](#)), and *The New York Times* even published an article on backlash with the following tagline: “The rise of authoritarianism has catalyzed a rollback of gender violence protections and support systems” ([Gupta, 2019](#)).

While the concept of anti-feminist backlash is applied in different contexts around the world, it is important not to overlook local specificities of backlash. In Lebanon, anti-feminist backlash extends beyond its normative definition as a hostile *reaction* or *response* to progress made within or by the women’s movement. Instead, anti-feminist backlash is embedded across institutions and social structures in Lebanon. This makes anti-feminist backlash less of a targeted response to a singular event; rather, anti-feminist backlash is systemic and diffusive in several contexts in the Global South.

Call for Papers

As anti-feminist backlash continues to gain momentum, it is important for feminist organizers, activists, and researchers to collaborate across geopolitical and socioeconomic contexts to effectively counter anti-feminist backlash. With this in mind, The Arab Institute for Women (AiW) at the Lebanese American University is issuing a call for papers on the issue of anti-feminist backlash in the Arab region and beyond, as part of a four-day conference to be held in Beirut, Lebanon, on the Lebanese American University campus **on June 19, 20, 21, and 22, 2023**.

The goal of the conference is to **produce and build knowledge** on anti-feminist backlash, **compare and contrast anti-backlash strategies**, and to **build cross-sectoral and transnational alliances** among anti-backlash actors in the global South. Towards that end, the conference will include both academic and non-academic submissions. This can include academic papers, policy briefs and case studies, or presentations by civil society partners and activists on current programming, and reflections on countering the backlash.

Submission Guidelines

Interested participants should submit an abstract (300 words) to aiw@lau.edu.lb with “**Anti-Feminist Backlash in the Global South: Cross-Regional Discussions, Strategies, and Innovative Practices**” in the subject line by **April 1, 2023**, to be considered for the conference.

In your abstract, please identify whether your submission is academic or non-academic. If you are co-presenting or writing, please list the names of all authors/team members.

Topics or questions to consider for this conference may include, but are not limited to:

- Best practices or lessons learned for anti-backlash programming.
- Theoretical engagements with the concept of “backlash”: Is backlash a useful feminist concept? Why or why not? What can be done to expand the concept to make it more useful?
- Drivers of backlash across a wide spectrum: from fundamentalism and religious conservatism to capitalism.
- Comparative analyses of backlash across the global South, or between the global South and the global North: Does the current concept of backlash work in different historical contexts? How can backlash be modified to adapt to different socioeconomic and political contexts?
- Intersectional analyses of backlash: How do different racial and gender communities, or different classes and citizens/non-citizens experience backlash differently? How can backlash as a concept better accommodate intersectional experiences?
- Tracking the backlash online and offline: What are some of the best practices for documenting backlash as it happens? How can we think about bringing together different experiences of backlash to the global level for discussion and analysis?
- Advocacy: How can we raise awareness about backlash? What are some of the best practices and forms of activism for increasing awareness and dialogue about backlash? What types of anti-backlash policies or frameworks exist that can be used as examples for implementing policies attuned to backlash?
- Case studies about backlash and anti-backlash work in places around the world.

Publication

Select papers will be published in a special issue of Al-Raida that will highlight the conference proceedings and will comprise of both academic and non-academic submissions.

Non-academic Submissions

Non-academic submissions will not be peer-reviewed but will be assessed by the conference organizing committee. Submissions should be no longer than 4500 words and will be chosen for their clarity and their original contributions to the subject of countering anti-feminist backlash. These can include:

- Policy briefs;
- Reflection papers;



- Presentation and discussion of program results or achievements (discussion of best practices or challenges in anti-backlash programming).

Academic Submissions

Academic submissions will be peer-reviewed and must be approximately 6,000-8,000 words in length.

All submissions should be formatted using APA 7th Edition.