

Michel Temer's All-Male Cabinet Enrages Brazilian Feminists

By [Al Arabiya](#)

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In his first [speech](#) as acting president, Michel Temer asked for the Brazilian population's trust and said that the government's new motto is "Order and Progress" - the words that illustrate the Brazilian flag.

However, many believe his new cabinet appears to contradict the idea of progress - at least for women and racial minorities.

Temer was appointed Brazil's interim president last week after Dilma Rouseff was suspended due to a Senate decision to move forward with her impeachment process.

He is the first president to appoint an [all-male cabinet](#) since 1979, a time in which Brazil was under a military dictatorship.

Brazil has long been known as a country of racial and cultural diversity, with [43.1% of its population consisting of people of mixed race](#) according to 2010 statistics.

However, with a series of predominantly white, all-male ministers, questions are being raised as to how the Temer government will be able to represent Brazil's various minorities.



Photo Caption: Women shout slogans during a protest against Brazil's interim President Michel Temer and in support of suspended President Dilma Rousseff at Paulista Avenue in Sao Paulo.
(Reuters)

he criticism was only aggravated by Temer's decision to merge the Ministry of Women, Racial Equality, Youth and Human Rights and the Ministry of Justice, creating a new ministry called Justice and Citizenship.

"No one in their right mind can deny that not having women in high ranking government offices is a regression," Brazilian lawyer Geraldo Affonso told Al Arabiya English.

"This goes against the global trend that women are gaining more space in all production, economic, cultural and governing sectors," he added.

Minority report

Women [represent 51%](#) of the Brazilian population according to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, however they are still seen as a minority in need of protection.

[Research](#) done by the Secretariat of Politics for Women of the Presidency of the Republic show that in the first ten months of 2015 alone there were 63,090 official complaints of violence against women. That's one complaint every seven minutes.

The absence of women in Temer's cabinet seems ironic, especially as he was the one who created the first police station for Women's Defense in Sao Paulo 30 years ago when he was the Secretary of Public Defense.

"Brazil has an extremely high rate of crimes against women and one of the biggest issues is that these women do not want to speak up about it," Anna Maria de Araujo, retired Deputy

for Brasilia's Women's Defense Police Station, told Al Arabiya English on Tuesday.

"Having a woman in power who can speak up about these issues and empower women to speak up can be very positive, not even only in politics but also in the media," she added. "Women need to be reminded that they don't come before or after men, they should stand side by side."

On social media, Brazilian users expressed outrage over the lack of women in cabinet to represent the struggling section of population.

Love how people in [#Brazil](#) use social media. [#Temer](#)
pic.twitter.com/fYYPnMhx6N

— Steph Reist (@StephReist) [May 12, 2016](#)

Inform the US embassy on this, [#Temer](#):
1000s take the streets of [#Brazil](#) to protest the illegitimate government.
pic.twitter.com/sXTGtUpuls

— rui borges (@homo_viator) [May 16, 2016](#)

This is not the first time the Temer name has made feminists cringe. In April, a profile of Temer's wife, Marcela Temer, headlined "[Beautiful, Prim and Homely](#)" made women all over the country enraged. The feature written by Veja, a Brazilian magazine that is vastly known for its opposition to Dilma's government, praised the 33-year-old's class and poise.

The portrayal of the former pageant competitor, who is 42 years younger than her husband, was criticized on social media and gave space to a hashtag where women made fun of Marcela's elegant demeanor. The criticism towards the new cabinet has even made international headlines, with international news channels such as [The Guardian](#), [The New York Times](#) and [Le Monde](#) commenting on the inexplicable lack of women. Even a wing of one of the parties that integrates Temer's government criticized the President. The National Women Secretariat for PSDB (Brazilian Social Democracy Party) posted [an open letter](#) online saying, "We can't understand, Mr. President, the lack of women in Your Excellency's cabinet, which can only be understood as a step back." Suspended President Dilma also spoke out on the case. "Black people and women are fundamental if you truly want to construct an inclusive country," she said on Friday, according to the [BBC Brasil](#).

Justification? The government's chief of staff, Eliseu Padilha, tried to [justify](#) Temer's decision:

"We tried to seek women but for reasons that we don't need to bring up here, we discussed it and it was not possible," he said. But many are still unhappy.

"It is clearly necessary to think and give value to gender and race, especially in a society like ours, where opportunities and history are devious and even unfair," Christina Guaraldo,

Brazilian retired psychology PUC Campinas professor told Al Arabiya English. “On the other hand, is this really the central issue at this time?” Guaraldo added, asking whether Brazil should focus on the gender of ministers or their capacity to lead the country forward. In her opinion, social change should first come from every individual and the cabinet doesn’t have the “magical powers” that people have attributed to it. On Monday, Temer appointed Maria Silva Bastos Marques as president of BNDES (National Bank of Economic and Social Development).

According to [Brazilian news channel G1](#), Minister of Planning Romero Juca denies that Temer’s choice reflects that he’s worried about having a woman in a high ranking government office after public outcry.

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