

# ICGC COLLOQUIUM SERIES



Photo credit: Jules Marzec

**Interdisciplinary Center**  
*for the Study of* **Global Change**

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

## Instrumentalization of Women by the State: The Complexities of Addressing Gender-Based Violence in Ecuador

Jules Marzec (she/her)

PhD candidate, Humphrey School for Public Affairs & Fellow, ICGC.

Friday, March 22, 12 -1 pm CT

537 Heller Hall (ICGC)

Live Stream Available @ [www.icgc.umn.edu](http://www.icgc.umn.edu)

This project examines the femicide of María Belén Bernal's 2022 in Ecuador and the subsequent state response characterized by a strategic instrumentalization of women. Despite widespread public outcry and a flawed investigation marked by systemic failures, the government employed symbolic measures to convey a commitment to addressing gender-based violence (GBV). This strategic use of women as visual props during official events, policy announcements, and leadership changes aimed to create an impression of progress without addressing the structural causes of GBV. I will argue that while the government's actions may be perceived as steps toward gender equality, they ultimately fall short because these symbolic measures, while raising awareness, lack the depth necessary to bring about substantive changes in policies, procedures, and training to combat GBV. Furthermore, I will emphasize the potential for these symbolic gestures to serve political agendas and divert attention from violence against other marginalized groups.