



Resolution 1454 (2005)¹

Disappearance and murder of a great number of women and girls in Mexico

Parliamentary Assembly

1. Since 1993, hundreds of women and girls, an estimated number of between 350 and 500, have been brutally murdered in the northern Mexican border State of Chihuahua. The exact number of victims is disputed but most of them were killed in or around the border town of Ciudad Juárez, others in the state capital of Chihuahua. Many were abducted and sexually abused before they were killed and their bodies dumped in the desert; others were victims of domestic violence taken to the extreme; a few seem to have been involved in the drugs trade and revenge killings. Some were maquiladoras workers, others students and schoolchildren; many were young mothers; most were poor and aged between 13 and 30. In addition to the hundreds of women and girls killed, many have disappeared (presumed to have been abducted) and are still missing.

2. An integrative approach is needed to understand what all these crimes have in common and what makes them so different from the murders of women committed in every country all over the world every day. These women were killed because they were women. The Mexican Chamber of Deputies' "special commission to study and review the investigations of murders perpetrated against women in Mexico and promote justice for the victims of feminicide" has coined the term "feminicide" to describe these murders which result from a climate of generalised violence and discrimination against women, leading to an attitude that "women are expendable and can be routinely used, abused and discarded".

3. The initial reaction to the feminicides, particularly at the state level, was denial: neither were these crimes adequately investigated and punished, nor were the root causes of the violence against the women in Ciudad Juárez and Chihuahua addressed which led to a climate of impunity. Following campaigns by victims' families and non-governmental organisations, the problem was widely reported in the national and international media and seeped into Mexico's national consciousness, prompting action especially by the federal authorities, who submitted themselves to international review. Considerable efforts are now being made by the Mexican authorities at all levels (municipal, state and federal) to repair the social fabric of these cities, to fight violence against women state- and nationwide, to investigate the murders and disappearances of women in Ciudad Juárez and Chihuahua and bring to justice both the authors of the crimes and those officials who initially botched the investigations and perverted the course of justice.

4. In the past few months, arrests have been made in some of the cases, including in "cold" cases going back several years, thanks to a co-ordinated prosecutorial effort on the level of the State of Chihuahua and on the federal level. The Parliamentary Assembly particularly welcomes the election – by the Congress of the State of Chihuahua – of a new prosecutor general and a new director of the State Women's Institute, both of them women, and approves of the way they have reoriented the policies and priorities of the institutions they head so far. The Assembly also welcomes the creation of the post of deputy-prosecutor general for human rights of the State of Chihuahua.

5. The Assembly further salutes the efforts of the special commissions set up by both the Mexican Senate and the Chamber of Deputies to propose constitutional and legislative reform to tackle both the immediate problem and its root causes. The constitutional reform bill tabled by the President of Mexico was made available to the Assembly and the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission)

1. Assembly debate on 21 June 2005 (19th Sitting) (see [Doc. 10551](#), report of the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, rapporteur: Mrs Vermot-Mangold). Text adopted by the Assembly on 21 June 2005 (19th Sitting).



delivered an opinion on some of its aspects. The Assembly supports the work of the Special Federal Commissioner and the Special Federal Prosecutor (also women) and would wish to see their respective competences enlarged and more funds put at their disposal.

6. However, despite a clearly discernible political will, a general commitment and the efforts by the state and federal authorities, too many cases remain unsolved and too many victims unidentified. What is worse, such crimes continue to be committed: 17 women and girls have been murdered this year so far in Ciudad Juárez alone. The reaction of the authorities can only be considered insufficient and leads to the impression that the authorities are still not fully in control of the situation. The Assembly calls on President Fox to reiterate his 2004 statement that the fight against feminicides is the state's top priority. It is urgent to move from audit to action in order to end the climate of impunity for gender-based violence still prevalent in the region. Each branch of power has to face up to its responsibilities and tackle urgent tasks in order to produce rapid results and thus regain the trust of victims' families and of civil society as a whole.

7. The Parliamentary Assembly supports the Mexican authorities, in particular the Mexican Congress and the Congress of the State of Chihuahua, in their endeavours and expresses its readiness to offer its assistance.

8. At the same time, the Assembly calls upon:

8.1. the Mexican Congress:

8.1.1. to complete the envisaged constitutional and legislative reforms to fight past or future impunity for such grave human rights violations and to ensure that prosecutors efficiently, rapidly and transparently investigate every case of femicide, if necessary at the federal level, making possible the punishment of both the authors of the crimes and of officials who have perverted the course of justice, in accordance with the opinion of the Venice Commission;

8.1.2. to give positive consideration to the proposal of the Chamber of Deputies' "special commission to study and review the investigations of murders perpetrated against women in Mexico and promote justice for the victims of femicide" to put the crime of femicide onto the Mexican federal statute books and prepare a nationwide diagnostic study on the prevalence of gender-based violence and femicide;

8.1.3. to ensure that reparation is made available in accordance with transparent and non-discriminatory criteria to all the families of victims of femicide in Ciudad Juárez and Chihuahua from the reparation fund, which has been set up with a generous contribution from the Mexican Congress, and oversee the payouts;

8.1.4. d. to consider judicial and prosecutorial reforms to promote equality of treatment (prosecution/accused) and the rapid, impartial and transparent investigation of torture allegations;

8.1.5. to support programmes and campaigns aimed at preventing and fighting gender-based violence, including in schools;

8.2. the Congress of the State of Chihuahua:

8.2.1. a. to rapidly move to the adoption of the law on transparency and access to information;

8.2.2. to consider adding the crime of femicide onto the state statute book;

8.2.3. to support the Chihuahua State Women's Institute, especially its programmes aimed at preventing and fighting gender-based violence.

9. The Assembly offers to associate the Mexican Congress and the Congress of the State of Chihuahua with the pan-European parliamentary campaign against domestic violence to be launched in 2006.

10. The Assembly resolves to study the concept of "femicide" and, in co-operation with the Mexican Congress, to explore how this concept may usefully be applied in the European context, including its possible introduction into European criminal law.