



Guatemala Human Rights Commission / USA

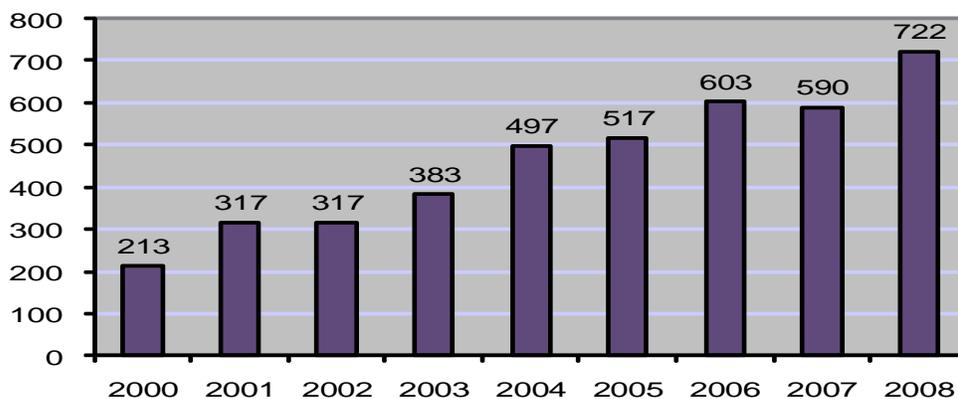
Guatemala's Endangered Species: WOMEN SUPPORT I-VAWA

THE PROBLEM: Violence and abuse devastates the lives of millions of women, knows no national or cultural barriers, and most importantly, it must be stopped.¹ Six out of every ten women in the world experience physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime. Violence against women and girls has far-reaching consequences, harming families and communities. For women 16–44 years old, violence is a major cause of death and disability. Gender-based violence violates human rights, reduces human capital and undermines economic growth.²

Guatemala ranks among the most dangerous places in Latin America, especially for women. While crime and violence are prevalent throughout Guatemala, violence against women and girls has escalated markedly in the past ten years, with an impunity rate of 98%.³

Number of Femicides in Guatemala Total = 4,159

Between 2000 & 2008 the numbers indicate a 339 % increase



- Femicide is officially defined as the murder of a woman because of her gender.
- With a population fewer than 14 million, Guatemala registered over 4,700 violent murders of women from 2000 to August 2009 and shockingly 98% of the cases remain unsolved.
- On April 9, 2008 the Guatemalan Congress passed the Law Against Femicide and Other Forms of Violence Against Women. However, to date, only three perpetrators have been sentenced under the law.

I-VAWA

The International Violence Against Women Act will soon be re-introduced in the 111th Congress. I-VAWA is a piece of legislation that represents an unprecedented commitment by the U.S. government to address and ultimately end violence against women and girls globally. It would *for the first time* create a comprehensive approach by the United States to fight violence against women and girls internationally and commit serious financial resources to this effort.

¹ For more information see Amnesty International <http://www.amnestyusa.org/violence-against-women/international-violence-against-women-act/i-vawa-background-and-resources/page.do?id=1051154>

² For more information see UNIFEM, 2009, http://www.unifem.org/gender_issues/violence_against_women/

³ For more information see "En dos décadas han sido asesinados 332 periodistas, según recuento de la SIP." *Prensa Libre*. 14 March 2009. <http://www.prensalibre.com/pl/2009/marzo/14/301779.html>

How will women in Guatemala be helped if this legislation is passed?

- Local women's organizations who have been working for years to assist women and girls affected by violence in Guatemala will finally receive much needed support.
- Funding, programmatic support and capacity building will focus on both prevention, such as economic opportunity programs and public education campaigns to change attitudes, and intervention services such as health care for women who have been raped and are at risk for deadly infections.
- Funding will support new legislative initiatives, and public campaigns addressing gender equality
- I-VAWA includes training for military and police forces to better respond to crime scenes, investigations, and protection of victims of violence
- Women and girls will benefit from increased U.S. diplomatic attention, moving the problem from an invisible private suffering to a public issue that governments must take action to solve.

How Might I-VAWA impact Guatemala?⁴:

- By requiring the implementation of a national public information system (a database of femicides and crimes against women), as mandated in the 2008 Guatemalan Anti-Femicide law (supported by Hilda Solis).⁵
- Incorporate best practices on addressing violence against women into programs that provide health care, encourage legal reform, change in public attitudes, promote access to economic opportunities, and create safer school environments for girls.
- By including Guatemala as one of the selected ten countries for focused implementation of I-VAWA.
- Build the effectiveness of local Guatemalan organizations to provide services (legal, housing, psychosocial, economic, and professional) for women who are victims of violence.
- Require the US government to respond to violence against women in conflict and crisis situations.

Recommendations:

Support the passage of the I-VAWA: by creating a comprehensive, holistic approach focused on a select group of countries, including Guatemala, I-VAWA will promote concentrated and sustainable change and increase the efficacy of already existing U.S. programs.

The United States should **apply significant diplomatic and economic pressure** to encourage the Guatemalan government to promote women's equality, to end impunity for femicide and violence against women, and provide services for women who are victims of violence.⁶

The U.S. has allocated funds to Guatemala specifically for the purpose of strengthening the rule of law, but little or no progress has been made. The U.S. should **require Guatemala to provide specific statistics to the Department of State** regarding the cause of death of victims of violence against women, as well as data about the investigation, prosecution, conviction, and sentencing of those responsible. Only by demanding the fulfillment of such conditions should the U.S. continue its aid package to Guatemala.

For more information on femicide and the issues of violence against women in Guatemala visit: Guatemala Human Rights Commission/USA (GHRC) website at www.ghrc-usa.org

⁴ http://www.amnestyusa.org/pdf/IVAWA%20one-pager_Revisions708.pdf

⁵ <http://www.amnestyusa.org/guatemala/successes/page.do?id=YCS0912065000E>

⁶ <http://www.ghrc-usa.org/Programs/ForWomensRighttoLive/FAQs.htm#How>