

URGENT ACTION

WOMEN'S RIGHTS LAW WEAKENED IN NICARAGUA

On 25 September, a law which criminalizes acts of violence against women in Nicaragua was reformed, weakening the protection it now offers women.

On 25 September a reform to the Comprehensive Law number 779 against Violence against Women (*la Ley Integral Contra la Violencia hacia las Mujeres 779*) was passed by the National Assembly. Eighty-four members of the Assembly voted in favour of the reform, with only four members voting against it.

One of the key elements established in the law under Article 46 was that mediation was prohibited as a way of responding to any cases of violence. This provision has now been amended so that those accused of crimes with sentences of less than five years (this includes crimes such as actual bodily harm, the abduction of children, and threats) can be dealt with through mediation, instead of the criminal justice system. Under the new provisions women may find themselves having to face their attackers in a mediation process, and those accused of committing abuses may avoid being held to account for their crimes.

Law 779 came into force on 22 June 2012. It was an important step forward and an essential tool for combating violence against women in Nicaragua. Law 779 recognized the right of women to live life free from violence and intimidation and established that acts of physical and psychological violence against women are punishable crimes. It also outlined the state's obligations in relation to the implementation of the law, as well as the human rights of women seeking protection under the law.

Despite being adopted by a unanimous vote in the National Assembly in January 2012, Law 779 has been under sustained attack from those who see it as breaking up the family unit, since the law provides women and their children with a clearer route to leaving violent partners and bringing perpetrators of abuses to justice.

Amnesty International is currently analysing the reforms to the law in full.

Many thanks for having taken action on this situation. No further action is required at the moment.

This is the first update of UA 249/13. Further information: <http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR43/002/2013/en>

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