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Mexico fails to tackle increased levels of violence against women

The Mexican authorities have failed to protect women from increasing levels of violence and discrimination or to ensure those responsible face justice, said Amnesty International in a report handed to a UN body due to examine the state of women's rights in Mexico.

On 17 July, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women will evaluate Mexico's compliance with the Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. The UN body will publish their conclusions and recommendations after the session finishes on 27 July.

"The state of women's rights in Mexico is alarming," said Rupert Knox, Researcher on Mexico at Amnesty International. "In recent years we have witnessed not only an increase in killings of women but a continuing routine lack of effective investigations and justice."

"In the past years, Mexico has approved a number of laws and institutions designed to protect women from discrimination and violence. Much of the problem, however, lies in the lack of effective implementation of these laws and the weakness of the institutions," said Rupert Knox.

Amnesty International's submission details some of the areas in which the Mexican state is failing women's rights, including: gender discrimination, threats and attacks against women activists, violence suffered by women migrants, failure to fully comply with Inter American Court of Human Rights judgments on the rape of two indigenous women in Guerrero state and the Cotton Field abduction and killing of young women in Ciudad Juarez as well as identifying obstacles to effective access to sexual and reproductive health.

According to a report published by UNIFEM and local human rights organizations, at least 34,000 women were murdered in Mexico between 1985 and 2009 -- 2,418 in 2010 alone.

In the state of Chihuahua, where there was a sharp increase of murders, in 2010 one of every 11 victims was a woman -- up from one in every 14 in 2008. In Ciudad Juarez, 320 women were murdered in 2010. The number of killings fell back slightly in 2011. In the first six months of 2012 there were more than 130 killings of women in the state of Chihuahua.

In 2009 alone, public prosecutor's office round the country received 14,829 reports of rape -- an alarming number considering that most women do not report these crimes. Only 2,795 convictions were achieved in the courts.

Most cases are not effectively investigated and insufficient measures are taken to protect the survivors.

The case of San Salvador Atenco is emblematic. More than 26 women were sexually assaulted by police when detained during demonstrations in 2006. The denial of access to justice by both state and federal authorities in spite of enquiries and recommendations by the National Human Rights Commission and the National Supreme Court has forced 9 of the women to take their case to the Inter American Commission

of Human Rights.

Amnesty International's submission also details the increased level of threats and attacks against women human rights activists who worked to ensure justice for their murdered relatives.

"The Mexican authorities, led by both the actual and new government to take office in December, must move to implement commitments to protect women's rights to end abuses and impunity," said Rupert Knox.