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Mexico: two years on: the law to protect women has had no impact at state level

On the second anniversary of the passing of the General Law on Women's Access to a Life Free From Violence, Amnesty International said the law has had no impact in the majority of Mexico's 32 states.

The organisation assessed the level of fulfilment of some of the most important points of the law and found that:

- Although the law came into effect two years ago, two states have still not approved it: Guanajuato and Oaxaca.

Of the 30 states that have passed the law, few have implemented some of its main requirements:

- Only five have complied with the obligation to establish implementation mechanisms – essential for the law to be put into practice.
- Only 20 have an agency coordination mechanism for preventing violence against women, as stipulated by the law. Those mechanisms that are in existence have not published their concrete achievements with regard to eradicating violence against women, nor their strategies for achieving this. Only two new shelters for domestic violence victims are being built by state authorities – one in Durango and one in Sonora – despite the law's clear stipulation that states must "promote the creation of shelters for victims".

According to information received by Amnesty International, there are a total of 60 shelters for women victims of violence in Mexico – those run by the authorities and those run by voluntary organisations included. This number is still completely inadequate in relation to the demand.

"There is a clear and deplorable lack of state-level commitment to implement the General Law on Women's Access to a Life Free From Violence," said Kerrie Howard, Amnesty International's Deputy Director for the Americas Programme. "In practice, this lack of commitment means that the safety and lives of thousands of women are put in jeopardy."

Women's organisations in states such as Chihuahua, Chiapas, Oaxaca, Morelos and Sonora have emphasised the high level of violence against women and the administration's lack of effectiveness in preventing and punishing it.

Amnesty International believes it is essential to create and implement criminal investigation protocols for use by staff of the public prosecutor's office, the police and experts when dealing with women filing complaints of abuse. These protocols must include an obligation to provide sufficient protection to guarantee the safety of the woman and her family.

“The federal government has, through INMUJERES, prioritised a harmonisation of state legislation with national and international regulations. We do not deny that this is a necessary step but it is clear that progress in implementing measures to improve access to the justice and security of the General Law has, for the vast majority of state governments, been limited or even non-existent,” stated Kerrie Howard.

“If the basic requirements of the federal law are not fulfilled at state level, the law will remain a dead letter. Women in Mexico deserve much more than this, and each and every authority has the duty to take all measures necessary to ensure that violence against women is tackled effectively.”

General Information

The General Law on Women’s Access to a Life Free From Violence was published in the Official Journal of the Mexican Federation on 1 February 2007.

According to Article 8 of the Federal Law, “Within a framework of coordination, the state legislatures will promote the necessary reforms of local legislation (...) within a period of six months as from the entry into force of this Law.”

A table outlining the implementation of the General Law on Women’s Access to a Life Free From Violence in each state will be available from 29 February 2009 06:00hs GMT at:

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR41/005/2009/es>

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