

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

AI Index: AMR/29/007/2005 (Public)
News Service No: 304
25 November 2005

EI Salvador: Women living between danger and impunity

Published

The government of El Salvador has an outstanding debt to the women of this country, a debt that can only be repaid with justice, said Amnesty International today – International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women – on publication of a letter to President Saca.

In the letter, Amnesty International highlights its concern at the lack of willingness on the part of the authorities to thoroughly investigate the cases of murders of women and the treatment the victims' families receive when they report these crimes.

Between the end of 2002 and the middle of 2004, at least 20 women and girls were sexually abused and brutally murdered in El Salvador.

In 12 of the 20 cases, the bodies were disfigured, dismembered or decapitated. Some showed signs of having been burnt and two of the bodies presented no more than charred remains.

Only in three of the 20 cases have those responsible been brought to justice and sentenced. In the others, investigations were either incompetent or non-existent.

“The methods used in these murders are very similar to those used by the death squads in the 1970s to terrorize the population. This, added to the lack of investigation, is producing a climate of fear and general mistrust in the justice system,” said Amnesty International.

An investigation conducted by the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women confirmed that the number of complaints of violence against women received by the government was very low in relation to the incidents reported in the press and by human rights organizations. Its recommendations, along with calls from local institutions and organizations, have been ignored by the authorities.

“The lack of justice in El Salvador not only threatens the functioning of the rule of law but leaves women in the country in a situation of constant danger.”

Amnesty International has called upon the Salvadorean authorities to urgently investigate the murders of women and girls and bring those responsible to justice. The organization has also stressed the importance of taking concrete measures to prevent these crimes from being committed in the future.

**To read Amnesty International's letter to President Saca, please go to:
<http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/ENGAMR29022005>**

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