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Peruvian Women Say NO to Violence Against Women
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On Feb. 14, St. Valentine's Day, thousands of Peruvians, including many couples, celebrated the day of love and friendship by participating in a dance in 20 districts of the capital Lima and in numerous other cities to say "enough is enough" to violence against women.

Peru thus joined the international One Billion Rising campaign to stop feminicide, which the Ministerio Público says claimed 97 victims in 2012, 93.8% of whom were killed by their partner, ex-partner, or a relative (intimate femicide), while 6.2% were killed by an acquaintance or by a stranger (non-intimate femicide).

A report from the Observatorio de Criminalidad of the Ministerio Público says that 66% of femicide victims were between the ages of 18 and 34; 17.5% were between 35 and 44; and 6.2% were between 45 and 54. Nationally, Lima is the department with the largest number of victims (24), followed by Junín (9), Tacna (6), and Lambayeque (5).

"Sixty percent of femicide victims lost their lives in their homes, ostensibly considered the safest place," said Juan Huambachano Carbajal, head of the Observatorio de Criminalidad.

"We are occupying public spaces and expressing ourselves through dance to reject and demand the eradication of violence against women of all ages throughout the world," said actress Mónica Sánchez, one of the principal figures in the campaign to stop feminicide.

The One Billion Rising campaign, which took a year to organize and develop, brought together participating artists, writers, activists, social collectives, nonprofit organizations, politicians, and civil society groups around the world.

In Lima, one of the gathering places was the Alameda de la Integración at the exit of the Estadio Nacional in central Lima, which was inaugurated that day by Lima Mayor Susana Villarán at an outdoor event. The site has booths selling typical Limeño food and flowers. During the ceremony, Villarán called for an end to violence against women.

In late January, at the kickoff of her campaign to improve public spaces, Villarán, her index finger raised, said, "I am rising so that no girl or woman will continue to suffer violence in silence, and as mayor of Lima I am improving public spaces so that they have a place to congregate and speak and not be ashamed and where they can be protected."

Mayor faces recall

Villarán is facing a recall referendum on March 17 (NotiSur, Nov. 30, 2012). In statements to the Associated Press on Feb. 19, the mayor said that the negative characterization of her administration by the sectors calling for her recall is part of the violence against women. Many posters put up around the city by supporters of a Yes vote on the recall say, "Lima is at a standstill," but most read "because she is incompetent."
"There is political sadism in many things that they say about me, and it is part of the political violence against women," Villarán told the US news agency. "I am a woman, I am a mother, a grandmother, I see society and feel it as a woman, and I act like a woman. I have not taken up the male way of doing politics, thank God."

On Valentine's Day, Minister of Women and Vulnerable Populations Ana Jara Velásquez called on teenagers and young women to love without violence, as part of the campaign to prevent violence against women, "Love without violence, make a difference," promoted by the ministry's Programa Nacional Contra la Violencia Familiar y Sexual.

Jara Velásquez said that, as of January, 175 emergency centers for women (Centros de Emergencia Mujer, CEMs) were functioning throughout the country. They treated 42,537 women during 2012—21,124 for psychological violence, 16,191 for physical violence, and 5,222 for sexual violence. Eighty-three cases were for femicide or attempted femicide, 3,000 were for sexual violence, 721 for abandonment, and 35 for sexual exploitation.

Specifically, the minister said that, in 2012, information had been disseminated on prevention and awareness to more than 1 million persons. In 2013, the ministry plans to create another 25 CEMs, and, by the end of the president's term in 2016, it hopes to cover 100% of the 194 provinces in the country.

In addition, the municipality of Lima has what are known as Warmi Wasis (women's shelters), which provide counseling and support to women who have suffered physical or psychological abuse.

Legal framework

To provide an adequate legal framework and promote more severe sentences for abusers, which can be up to life imprisonment, in November 2012, the congressional Comisión de la Mujer y Familia voted to amend and broaden the Ley del Feminicidio, in force since December 2011.

The feminicide law included femicide, the death of a woman at the hands of her partner, as a crime under the penal code and established sentences of 15 to 25 years for offenders.

The bill approved by the commission last year, which must still be approved by the full Congress, goes beyond the earlier law because it defines an act as femicide even when the victim is not the wife, partner, or girlfriend of the perpetrator. It also stipulates that the commission considers it sufficient that the person has suffered harassment at work or another place. If the victim is a minor, the bill proposes a life sentence for the perpetrator. It also increases the penalty if the victim is pregnant or under the care or responsibility of the aggressor, when the crime involves rape, or when the victim has disabilities or is in a situation of vulnerability.

Violence against women, whether physical, sexual, or psychological, is a reality that demands a firm response from the state, society, and those involved in bringing justice, said lawyer Ivonne Macassi, a representative of the Centro de la Mujer Peruana Flora Tristán, in a conversation on the issue.

Macassi said that four of every 10 women were the targets of violence in 2012, an indication that Peru is facing a serious social pandemic. "However, what is worse is that only 25% of victims file a complaint with the authorities," she said.