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Focus On Violence Against Women In Nicaragua, El Salvador & Guatemala

by Deborah Tyroler

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On Nov. 25, over 100 women marched through the streets of Managua and rallied in front of President Violeta Chamorro's home in observance of an international day protesting violence against women. The demonstrators delivered a letter to the president signed by 30,000 men and women calling on Chamorro to take action to halt violence against women. In addition, the letter expressed concern over "increased prostitution and drug and alcohol consumption," as well as deterioration of health and education services. In San Salvador, the Salvadoran Women's Association (ADEMUSA), the National Coordinator for Salvadoran Women (CONAMUS), and several independent women's groups organized street demonstrations and a public forum focused on diverse forms of violence against women. CONAMUS receives an average 34 complaints per month of violence suffered by women. According to statistics cited by Agence France-Presse, nearly 80% of Salvadoran women suffer some form of sexual abuse at some point in their lives. In Guatemala City, the Guatemalan Health Ministry's women, health and development program submitted a report at a forum organized by the Union of Central American and Panamanian Women Journalists. According to the report, 25% of Guatemalan women are victims of domestic violence. In 74% of domestic abuse cases, women suffer physical injuries, including fractures and loss of hearing. The report said, "These women are often beaten during pregnancy, resulting in spontaneous abortion, miscarriage or damage to the fetus." The report noted that figures on domestic abuse and violence against women were underestimated because women were reluctant to report such incidents. Incentives to remain silent are compelling since women who speak out "suffer rape, humiliation, danger, solitude, and fear of insanity." Many victims seek "escape...[in] alcohol, drugs and suicide." (Basic data from Agence France-Presse, ACAN-EFE, 11/25/91)

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