

Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) & Migration Fact Sheet

Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) forces many women, girls, and LGBTI persons to flee El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. Family members, gangs, and drug traffickers most frequently perpetrate SGBV, but violence by police and other authorities is also widespread. Despite pervasive SGBV in the three countries staggering impunity levels persist, with an average of less than 10 percent of cases resulting in conviction. Many individuals and families fleeing SGBV are potentially eligible for protection under U.S. as well as Mexican refugee law, as the governments of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras fail to protect their citizens from SGBV.

Women and girls endure high rates of domestic and sexual violence in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras

- In the first 10 months of 2017 the Guatemalan Public Ministry received 51,742 reports of violence against women and 10,963 reports of sexual violence against women and girls.¹ The total number of incidents is likely much higher, however, as many continue to go unreported.²
- According to a 2017 study 67.4 percent of women and girls in El Salvador report having experienced gender-based violence at some point in their lifetimes, and 40 percent report having experienced sexual violence.³ Actual numbers are probably significantly higher because fear and shame prevent many women and girls from disclosing violence.
- The National Emergency System in Honduras receives approximately 4,000 calls reporting domestic violence each month.⁴ This represents a very small portion of the actual incidence of domestic violence, due to widespread underreporting.⁵

Gangs use sexual violence as a strategy to maintain fear and control

- Gangs in Northern Triangle countries employ sexual violence as a strategy to maintain control over territories and populations. Rape is widespread and is employed by gang members to discipline girls, women, and their family members for failure to comply with the gang's demands and to demonstrate the gang's dominance over the community.⁶

¹ Ramos, Saira, Más de 51 mil Mujeres Viven una Situación de Violencia en el País, Publinews, November 22, 2017, <https://www.publinews.gt/gt/noticias/2017/11/22/cifra-violencia-la-mujer-embarazos-menores-2017.html>

² Palma, Claudia, Cada 46 Minutos se Comete una Violación, Prensa Libre, May 16, 2016, <http://www.prensalibre.com/guatemala/justicia/cada-46-minutos-se-comete-una-violacion>

³ Ministry of the Economy and General Office of Statistics and Census, Government of El Salvador, National Survey on Violence Against Women, El Salvador, 2017, http://www.bcr.gob.sv/esp/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=1153:redibacen-resultados-de-la-encuesta-nacional-de-violencia-contra-la-mujer-2017&Itemid=168.

⁴ 4,000 Llamadas de Violencia Domestica Recibe en 911 al Mes, La Prensa, Honduras, March 18, 2018, http://www.derechosdelamujer.org/tl_files/documentos/violencia/Cuaderno%20Obstaculo%20web.pdf

⁵ National Institute of Statistics and Secretary of Health, Honduras, Encuesta Nacional de Demografía y Salud, 2011-2012, 2013, p283, <http://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR274/FR274.pdf>

⁶ Thomas Boerman and Jennifer Knapp, "Gang Culture and Violence Against Women in El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala," Immigration Briefings Issue 17-03, March 2017, p. 8; Roxana Delgado and Jorge Vargas Méndez, El Salvador: La violencia de maras y su impacto en la vida, la seguridad y las libertades de las mujeres, ORMUSA, El Salvador 2016, p35.



- Girls, many aged 15 or younger, are forced to become “girlfriends” of gang members, and those who resist are subject to sexual violence, and in some cases killed.⁷ Forced recruitment of girls and women, and rape and sexual violence by gangs, constitutes a contemporary form of slavery.⁸
- Women and girls are frequently kidnapped and subject to repeated rape by multiple gang members, with girls as young as nine years old having been victims of gang rape.⁹
- In many cases, victims of sexual violence are tortured, killed, and dismembered, and their bodies left in clandestine graves, or in public areas to provoke fear in other women and girls.¹⁰
- Girls and young women threatened by gangs and subjected to forced recruitment or rape often go into hiding and stop attending school due to fear of leaving their homes.¹¹

Rates of gender-motivated killings have increased dramatically over the past several years

- Honduras has the highest femicide rate per capita in the world; a woman is murdered every 16 hours.¹²
- On average, two women are murdered each day in Guatemala, and the number of women murdered increased 13 percent between 2016 and 2017.¹³
- In El Salvador, 155 murders of women were registered in the first four months of 2018—a 20% increase from the same period in 2018.¹⁴

⁷ Immigration and Refugee Board Canada, El Salvador: Information Gathering Mission Report, Part Two: The Situation of Women Victims of Violence and Sexual Minorities in El Salvador, September, 2016, <http://www.refworld.org/topic,50ffbce40,50ffbce454,57f7ac384,0,,,html>

⁸ The Advocates for Human Rights, El Salvador: Submission to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, July 2016, http://www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org/el_salvador_-_committee_on_the_elimination_of_all_forms_of_discrimination_against_women_-_violence_against_women_-_july_2016, p7

⁹ Women’s Refugee Commission, Forced From Home: The Lost Boys and Girls of Central America. Rep. Women’s Refugee Commission, October 2012, p7, <https://www.womensrefugeecommission.org/uncategorized/2057-forced-from-home-the-lost-boys-and-girls-of-central-america-background-and-report>

¹⁰ Violación de Mujeres: Otro Sello de las Pandillas, Diario Libre, Dominican Republic, November 8, 2014, <http://www.diariolibre.com/noticias/violacin-de-mujeres-otro-sello-de-las-pandillas-1-de-2-AHDL870761>

¹¹ McEvers, Kelly and Jasmine Garsd, National Public Radio. #15GIRLS. Goats and Soda: Stories of Life in a Changing World. The Surreal Reasons Girls are Disappearing in El Salvador, October 5, 2015, <http://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2015/10/05/445985671/never-leave-your-house-survival-strategies-for-el-salvador-s-15girls>

¹² Chang, Jujut et al. Men Can do Anything they Want to Women in Honduras: Inside One of the Most Dangerous Places on Earth to be a Woman, ABC News, May 3, 2017, <http://abcnews.go.com/International/men-women-honduras-inside-dangerous-places-earth-woman/story?id=47135328>

¹³ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, “Annual Report of the United Nations High Commission on Human Rights on the Activities of its Office in Guatemala, 2017” p16, <http://www.oacnudh.org.gt/images/CONTENIDOS/ARTICULOS/INFORMESANTERIORES/2017.pdf>, At Least 62 Women Killed every Month in Guatemala: Report, Telesur, November 3, 2017, <https://www.telesurtv.net/english/news/At-Least-62-Women-Killed-Every-Month-in-Guatemala-Report-20171103-0028.html>

¹⁴ Organization of Salvadoran Women for Peace (ORMUSA), Violence Observatory: Femicide, <http://observatoriodeviolencia.ormusa.org/index.php>

Members of the LGBTI community are targets of gender-based violence by families, gangs, and authorities

- Civil society organizations in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras report that LGBTI people are at high risk for violence and extortion by gangs and organized criminal groups, hate crimes, and abuse by authorities, leading many LGBTI individuals to migrate in search of safety.¹⁵
- At least 145 LGBTI persons in El Salvador have been murdered since 2015, and many of those victims were subject to torture and mutilation.¹⁶ The number of transgender women murdered annually in El Salvador has increased 400 percent since 2003.¹⁷
- In Honduras, at least 170 LGBTI individuals were murdered between 2011 and 2016.¹⁸ LGBTI activists have been targets of violence and assassination.¹⁹
- In Guatemala, LGBTI individuals experience discrimination in access to health care, education, and employment. While reliable statistics are not available, hate crimes against LGBTI individuals are widespread, as is discrimination and violence committed by state authorities.²⁰

The vast majority of sexual and gender-based crimes go unreported and unpunished

- In Guatemala, intimate partner violence goes unreported in an estimated 90 percent of cases.²¹ Causes of underreporting include social stigma toward survivors, fear of reprisal by the abuser, as well as unresponsiveness and ineffectiveness of the judicial system.²²
- In El Salvador, of the 662 violent deaths of women registered by the Public Prosecutor between 2013 and 2016 only 5 percent resulted in a conviction.²³
- In Honduras, less than 10 percent of murders of women result in a conviction.²⁴
- In El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, LGBTI victims do not report violent crimes because they fear discrimination and abuse by authorities, and the vast majority of reported crimes against LGBTI people are not investigated.²⁵

¹⁵ Inter-American Commission for Human Rights, Informe sobre el 154 Período de Sesiones de la CIDH, 2015, p9-10, <https://www.oas.org/es/cidh/prensa/docs/Informe-154.pdf>

¹⁶ Cuando no se Existen en Vida ni en Muerte en El Salvador, El Tiempo, El Salvador, January 22, 2018, <http://www.eltiempo.com/datos/homicidios-en-el-salvador-contra-la-comunidad-lgbt-157060>

¹⁷ COMCAVIS Trans et. al., Violaciones de los Derechos Humanos de las Personas Transgenero en El Salvador, February 2015, p18, http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CCPR/Shared%20Documents/SLV/INT_CCPR_ICS_SLV_19856_S.pdf

¹⁸ Denuncian en Honduras más que 170 Asesinatos de Integrantes de la Comunidad LGBTI, Prensa Libre, Guatemala, May 17, 2016, <http://www.prensalibre.com/internacional/denuncian-en-honduras-mas-de-170-asesinatos-de-integrantes-de-la-comunidad-lgbti>

¹⁹ Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Situation of Human Rights in Honduras, December 31, 2015, p59, <http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/reports/pdfs/Honduras-en-2015.pdf>

²⁰ OTRANS et al., Human Rights Violations of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) People in Guatemala: A Shadow Report. March 2012,

<https://www.outrightinternational.org/sites/default/files/IGLHRC%20Shadow%20Report%20Guatemala%202012.pdf>

²¹ Siu, Vivian, Olga's story: Violence against Women and Children in Guatemala Continues to Devastate Lives, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), November 28 2011, http://www.unicef.org/protection/guatemala_60748.html

²² United States Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, Guatemala 2015 Human Rights Report, p.14, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/253229.pdf>

²³ Aguirre, Laura, 300 Femicidios al Año "No son Nada" en el País Más Violento del Continente, Univisión, March 7, 2017, <https://www.univision.com/noticias/america-latina/300-femicidios-al-ano-no-son-nada-en-el-pais-mas-violento-del-continente>

²⁴ Incontrolable Ola de Femicidios en Honduras, Proceso Digital, Honduras, January 30, 2018, <http://www.proceso.hn/portadas/10-portada/incontrolable-ola-de-femicidios-en-honduras.html>

²⁵ International Human Rights Law Clinic, University of California Berkeley, School of Law, Sexual Diversity in El Salvador: A Report on the Human Rights Situation of the LGBT Community, July 2012, p17, https://www.law.berkeley.edu/files/IHRLC/LGBT_Report_English_Final_120705.pdf



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ACTION AT HOME FOR JUST POLICIES ABROAD



For questions please contact:

Rachel Dotson, Director of Gender and Migration Initiatives, Kids in Need of Defense (KIND),
rdotson@supportkind.org

Leah Chavla, Program Officer, Migrant Rights and Justice, Women's Refugee Commission (WRC),
leahc@wrcommission.org, (202)750-9598

Daniella Burgi-Palomino, Senior Associate, Mexico, Migrant Rights, Border Issues, Latin America Working Group (LAWG), dburgipalomino@lawg.org, (202)546-7010