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## Sexual and Gender-based Violence (SGBV) & Migration Fact Sheet

Updated December 2018

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 Guatemala, more than 100 cases of violence against women are reported each day, and 51,391 cases were reported in 2017, according to the Public Prosecutor's Office.<sup>1</sup> The actual number of incidents is likely much higher, however, as many continue to go unreported.<sup>2</sup>
- In the first nine months of 2018 in Guatemala, 7,689 reports of sexual violence were recorded by the Public Prosecutor's Office, including 4,576 instances of sexual assault of children under 18 years old. Of those reported assaults, 90 percent were committed against women and girls.<sup>3</sup>
- In Guatemala from January to July of 2018, 2,102 pregnancies in girls aged 10-14 were registered by the Ministry of Health.<sup>4</sup>
- 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.<sup>5</sup> Actual numbers are probably significantly higher because women and girls are prevented from reporting by fear and shame, threats of retribution, and lack of confidence that they would be believed by authorities.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Reports were made to the Guatemalan Public Ministry. Gordillo, Ivan, "Más de 100 Denuncias por Violencia Contra la Mujer se Reciben en Promedio Cada Día," Publinews, July 24, 2017, <https://www.publinews.gt/gt/noticias/2018/07/24/denuncias-por-violencia-contra-la-mujer-en-aumento.html>

<sup>2</sup> 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>

<sup>3</sup> Official statistics from the Public Prosecutor's Office and Guatemalan National Institute of Forensic Sciences (Inacif) available here: <http://svet.gob.gt/estadistica>, See also: Ramos, Jerson, "Niños y Niñas de 10 a 14 Años, los Más Vulnerables ante la Violencia Sexual," Publinews, October 5, 2018, <https://www.publinews.gt/gt/noticias/2018/10/05/guatemala-violencia-sexual-inacif.html>, and: Procurador de los Derechos Humanos de Guatemala, Informe Anual Circunstanciado de Actividades y Situación de Derechos Humanos 2017, <https://www.pdh.org.gt/biblioteca-digital-informes-informes-anales/>

<sup>4</sup> Orozco, Andrea, "Más de 10 Mil Embarazos en Niñas y Adolescentes se Registraron durante Julio," *Prensa Libre*, August 21, 2018,

<https://www.prensalibre.com/guatemala/comunitario/en-un-mes-se-registraron-10-mil-embarazos-en-nias-y-adolescentes>

<sup>5</sup> 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](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)

<sup>6</sup> Laguan, Jonathan, "La Principal Causa para no Denunciar la Violencia contra la Mujer es la Dificultad para Acceder a los Servicios Públicos," *La Prensa Grafica*, May 3, 2018, <https://www.laprensagrafica.com/elsalvador/La-principal-causa-para-no-denunciar-la-violencia-contra-la-mujer-es-la-dificultad-para-acceder-a-los-servicios-publicos-Vanda-Pignato-20180503->

- The National Emergency System in Honduras receives approximately 4,000 calls reporting domestic violence each month.<sup>7</sup> This represents a very small portion of the actual incidence of domestic violence, due to widespread underreporting.<sup>8</sup>

### **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 used by gang members to punish 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.<sup>9</sup>
- 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.<sup>10</sup> Reports have found that recruitment of girls and women, and rape and sexual violence by gangs, is widespread and constitutes a contemporary form of slavery, and that girls involved with gangs are "generally victims of gender and sexually-based violence."<sup>11</sup>
- Women and girls are frequently kidnapped and subject to repeated rape by multiple gang members. Girls as young as nine years old have been victims of gang rape.<sup>12</sup>
- In some cases, victims of sexual violence by gangs are tortured, killed, and dismembered, and their bodies left in clandestine graves, or in public areas to provoke fear in other women and girls.<sup>13</sup>
- 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.<sup>14</sup>

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[0032.html](#), Marinero, Jaime Ulises, "La Horrenda Cifra de Femicidio en El Salvador," <https://elmundo.sv/la-horrenda-cifra-de-femicidios-en-el-salvador>, November 20, 2018. Jo Griffin, "El Salvador's devastating epidemic of femicide," <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2018/jun/06/el-salvador-devastating-epidemic-femicide>, June 6, 2018.

<sup>7</sup> "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](http://www.derechosdelamujer.org/tl_files/documentos/violencia/Cuaderno%20Obstaculo%20web.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> 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>

<sup>9</sup> 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.

<sup>10</sup> 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,50ffbce40,50ffbce454,5717ac384,0,,,html>

<sup>11</sup> "Las Víctimas de Persecución por Maras y el Derecho de Asilo," Comisión Española de Ayuda al Refugiado, June 20, 2018, <https://www.cear.es/maras-y-derecho-de-asilo/>. "Atrapados," Save the Children, May 17, 2018,

<https://www.savethechildren.es/publicaciones/atrapados>. Molly O'Toole, "El Salvador's Gangs are Targeting Young Girls," The Atlantic, March 4, 2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/03/el-salvador-women-gangs-ms-13-trump-violence/554804/>

<sup>12</sup> 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>

<sup>13</sup> 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>

<sup>14</sup> 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>

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

- In Honduras, 388 murders of women were registered in 2017. In the majority of cases the aggressor was an intimate partner.<sup>15</sup>
- In Guatemala, 772 murders of women were registered in 2017, and 314 murders of women were registered in just the first five months of 2018.<sup>16</sup>
- In El Salvador, 155 murders of women were registered in the first four months of 2018—a 20% increase from the same period in 2017.<sup>17</sup> In 2017, a woman was murdered every 18.7 hours.<sup>18</sup>
- El Salvador has recently been found to have the highest rate of femicide in Latin America, with a rate of 10.2 women killed for every 100,000 women.<sup>19</sup>

### **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.<sup>20</sup>
- According to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, in Guatemala “LGBTI people are stigmatized, dehumanized even, by Guatemalan society and media, leaving them particularly vulnerable to violence and ill-treatment. They face discrimination at all levels,” including in access to health care, education, and employment.<sup>21</sup> While reliable statistics are not available, hate crimes against LGBTI individuals are widespread, as is discrimination and violence committed by state authorities.<sup>22</sup>
- In Honduras from 2009 to 2018, more than 300 people were violently killed on account of their sexual orientation or gender identity, including 24 people so far in 2018.<sup>23</sup> LGBTI activists have also been targets of violence and assassination.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>15</sup> “Alarmanes Cifras de Violencia y Abusos Contra la Mujer,” La Tribuna, Honduras, February 26, 2018, <http://www.latribuna.hn/2018/02/26/alarmanes-cifras-violencia-abusos-la-mujer/>

<sup>16</sup> “Feministas e Indígenas Guatemaltecas Denuncian Miedo a Denunciar Femicidios,” El Nuevo Diario, Nicaragua, July 4, 2018, <https://www.elnuevodiario.com.ni/internacionales/centroamerica/468774-guatemala-miedo-denunciar-femicidios/>

<sup>17</sup> Organization of Salvadoran Women for Peace (ORMUSA), Violence Observatory: Femicide, <http://observatoriodeviolencia.ormusa.org/index.php>

<sup>18</sup> Jonathan Laguan, “La Principal Causa para no Denunciar la Violencia Contra la Mujer es la Dificultad para Acceder a los Servicios Públicos,” La Prensa Grafica, El Salvador, May 3, 2018, <https://www.laprensagrafica.com/elsalvador/La-principal-causa-para-no-denunciar-la-violencia-contra-la-mujer-es-la-dificultad-para-acceder-a-los-servicios-publicos-Vanda-Pignato-20180503-0032.html>

<sup>19</sup> “At Least 2,795 Women Were Victims of Femicide in 23 Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean in 2017,” Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, November 15, 2018, <https://www.cepal.org/en/pressreleases/eclac-least-2795-women-were-victims-femicide-23-countries-latin-america-and-caribbean>

<sup>20</sup> 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>

<sup>21</sup> 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>

<sup>22</sup> 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>

<sup>23</sup> “Muertas Violentas de LGTTBI Por Año,” Las Cattrachas, Honduras, <http://www.cattrachas.org/images/photoslide//slide4.JPG>, <http://www.cattrachas.org>

<sup>24</sup> 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>

- At least 145 LGBTI persons in El Salvador have been murdered since 2015, and many of those victims were subject to torture and mutilation.<sup>25</sup> The number of transgender women murdered annually in El Salvador has increased 400 percent since 2003.<sup>26</sup>

### **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.<sup>27</sup> Causes of underreporting include social stigma toward survivors, fear of reprisal by the abuser, and the unresponsiveness and ineffectiveness of the judicial system.<sup>28</sup>
- 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.<sup>29</sup>
- In Honduras, there is a 92 percent impunity rate for femicide and a 94 percent impunity rate for sexual violence.<sup>30</sup>
- 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.<sup>31</sup>
- In Guatemala, of the 4,973 cases of sexual violence against children registered in 2016, fewer than 5 percent had resulted in sentences by October of 2017.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> "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-contr-la-comunidad-lgbt-157060>

<sup>26</sup> 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\\_IC\\_SLV\\_19856\\_S.pdf](http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CCPR/Shared%20Documents/SLV/INT_CCPR_IC_SLV_19856_S.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> Vivian Siu, "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](http://www.unicef.org/protection/guatemala_60748.html)

<sup>28</sup> 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>

<sup>29</sup> Laura Aguirre, "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>

<sup>30</sup> "La Impunidad Arropa los Femicidios en Honduras," El Heraldo, Honduras, May 6, 2018, <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1184692-466/la-impunidad-arropa-los-femicidios-en-honduras>; "Por Enésima Vez Mujeres de Honduras Exigen Justicia por Femicidios," Criterio, Honduras, September 17, 2018, <https://criterio.hn/2018/09/17/por-enesima-vez-mujeres-de-honduras-exigen-justicia-por-femicidios/>

<sup>31</sup> 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](https://www.law.berkeley.edu/files/IHRLC/LGBT_Report_English_Final_120705.pdf)

<sup>32</sup> "Informe Anual Circunstanciado de Actividades y Situación de Derechos Humanos 2017," Procurador de los Derechos Humanos de Guatemala – IAC 2017, January 2018, pg. 118-119, <https://www.pdh.org.gt/biblioteca-digital-informes-informes-anuales/>