

Security & Violence Against Women in Mexico

Background

On March 8, 2020, **International Women's Day**, tens of thousands of women across Mexico protested the high levels of violence against women in the country, where an average of 10 women were killed each day. The next day, Mexican women participated in another protest that became known as **"A Day Without Us"** where women stayed at home and did not participate in any activities in order to show what their absence would feel like. This demonstration **garnered private sector support, as numerous employers allowed their female employees to take part in the protest and stay home for the day.** Despite widespread support, tangible improvements towards women's economic and physical security have been minimal.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had particularly devastating effects on women in Mexico. **With lockdowns leaving many women trapped at home with their abusers, violence against women, in all forms, rose.** Calls to emergency responders related to **domestic violence increased by more than 30%** from 2019 to 2020. Official **reports of rape increased 56.2%**. Femicides, a type of homicide in which a woman is killed for reasons related to her gender, remained consistent with those reported in 2019. In 2019, 943 femicides were registered, while in 2020, 942 were registered. In just the first two months of 2021, 142 femicides were reported.

In terms of the economic impact of the pandemic, women in Mexico and across the region have faced disruptions to their employment status. **900,000 jobs were lost in January of this year, of which 90% belonged to women.** The pandemic has rolled back nearly fifteen years of job inclusion for women. According to the World Bank, **female workers in Latin America were 44% more likely than male workers to lose their jobs during the pandemic.** In Mexico, unemployment of women jumped from 3.48% to 4.71% from 2019 to 2020. Sectors such as domestic labor, in which women make up the majority, have experienced major contractions during the pandemic. During the second quarter of 2020, domestic sector employment fell by 33.2% in Mexico.

The COVID-19 pandemic has placed an added strain on households that has caused women additional economic and psychological burdens. **Nearly 100% of schools remain closed, placing a disproportionate additional burden on women,** who are frequently the main caregiver for their children.



Response of President Andrés Manuel López Obrador

President Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) has faced criticism nationally and internationally for his **dismissal of the security issues specifically targeting women.**

During a meeting held on March 15, 2021 with congressional staffers, Mexican policy experts Dr. Gema Kloppe-Santamaria and Alexandra Zapata presented on the **failures of the current administration to address women's concerns in the country, as well as areas of opportunity for future policy action.**

AMLO has disregarded and denied statistics of increased violence against women during the COVID-19 pandemic. More recently, AMLO openly supported **Félix Salgado Macedonio...**



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Response of AMLO (Cont.)

a gubernatorial candidate in his Morena party in the upcoming midterm elections, who faces multiple accusations of sexual assault, including rape. While AMLO states he is supportive of women, citing his nomination of numerous women to cabinet level positions, many activists view these actions as merely symbolic, emphasizing that he has done little to address the actual threats towards women's economic and physical security. AMLO has **eliminated federal funding for programs supporting women, such as the national daycare program, and funding for shelters for victims of domestic violence.**

This year, AMLO **ordered a wall to be built around the National Palace in Mexico City in anticipation of the women's mobilizations** that took place on March 8, presenting a stark contrast from the feelings of public support that many women had experienced the year prior.

Information courtesy of

**Alexandra Zapata Hojel &
Dr. Gema Kloppe-Santamaría**

Future Tense Now Fellow and México, ¿Cómo Vamos? Expert. More info on Ms. Hojel [here](#)

Assistant Professor of Latin American History at Loyola University Chicago. More info on Dr. Kloppe-Santamaría [here](#)



What Can Congress Do?

AMLO continues to hold high approval ratings, making it **unlikely that he will be held accountable for his lack of focus on women's issues.** The opposition parties in Mexico are incredibly fractured, presenting a very weak opposing force to AMLO's popularity. Certain women's groups in Mexico however, are beginning to identify women across the country who can lead new efforts of opposition during the 2021 midterm elections and beyond.

With this in mind, it is important that the U.S. Congress **re-evaluate the bilateral security relationship with Mexico.** Traditionally, U.S.-Mexico security cooperation has mostly centered on counter-narcotics efforts. Moving forward, the U.S. Congress should **focus on and attend to other forms of violence that are harmful, including gender-based and intimate partner violence.** Congress should work to shine a light on these issues and put pressure on the current Mexican government to address the persisting levels of violence against women, and work to ensure the economic and physical security of women across the country.

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[Microsite on Gender-Based Violence](#)



Wilson Center
[Closing the Gender Gap: Empowering Women's Economic Participation](#)



Spotlight: Justice for Women Podcast Series
[Protests In Mexico](#)



Wilson Center
[The Shadow Pandemic in Latin America: The Impact of COVID-19 on Gender-Based Violence](#)

