

ABUELITA:
VINE A GRITAR
LO QUE A TI TE
HICIERON CALLAR

★ *Thousands of women protest sexual violence in the streets of Tijuana. ("Grandmother: I Came to Shout What They Made You Keep Quiet")*

MEXICO'S WOMEN DEMAND CHANGE

Photo By Ailyn Dumas



Women Call For End of *Machismo* Mexican Violence

BY AILYN DUMAS AND NICOLETTE MONIQUE LUNA

PHOTOS BY AILYN DUMAS

TIJUANA — Mexico's beleaguered women have had enough. "Ya basta!" Thousands of women from Baja California Norte and their American allies filed through the bloody streets of Tijuana for the March for Women to protest Mexico's unchecked epidemic of femicide — murder and violence to women and girls. Hundreds of handheld signs demanded change.

"*Cansus de Oirlo? Nosotras de vivirlo!*" ("You are tired of hearing it? We are tired of living it!")

More than 5,000 Mexican women and girls were sexually assaulted and murdered in 2021, according to government counts. Activists insist the number is higher. Much higher. Perhaps 10 times higher.

"*Que ser mujer no nos cueste la vida!*" ("Being women should not cost us our lives!")

Murder is the leading cause of death for young Mexican females. Older women are also femicide victims at alarming rates. Remains of murder victims fill vast unmarked graves in shallow pits throughout Mexico — if the remains are found at all. Mass graves in Tijuana, Irapuato, Acapulco, Juarez and other femicide dumping sites often have uncountable numbers of dismembered bodies — all female.

"*Que llegar sanas y salvas a casa sea normal y no suerte!*" ("Arriving home safe and sound should be normal, not luck!")

"Killing women for sport is too easy in Mexico. Even little girls and grandmothers are not safe."

Maria
WOMEN'S MARCH
PROTESTER,
SOUTHWESTERN
COLLEGE STUDENT

Tijuana is one of the most dangerous cities in the world for femicides, according to United Nations data, and Mexico is one of the world's five worst countries for the sexist murder of women and girls.

Mexico's toxic culture of hyper-*machismo* has rendered women as weak and "less than," according to protesters. Most attacks on women are never prosecuted and some human rights activists insist that nearly 9 of 10 femicides go unpunished. Women who report rape and domestic violence are typically dismissed as hysterical liars by the male-dominated Mexican judicial system. *Justicia* is fleeting.

"*El machismo se aprende en casa.*" ("Sexism is learned at home.")

"Killing women for sport is too easy in Mexico," according to Maria (a pseudonym), a Mexican-American *fronteriza* and Southwestern College student who participated in the march. "Many thousands of men in Mexico treat women like disposable sex toys. Even little girls and grandmothers are not safe. It's horrible and it must change. We must change the toxic masculine culture."

Tijuana's March for Women was mostly peaceful, but at times frustration boiled over. At least one bus stop was destroyed and some women spray painted messages of protest on walls and monuments. Police hovered nearby, but did not interfere. Television and print journalists were there to document the protest and monitor *las policias*.

Unlike American women's marches populated with male supporters, the Tijuana event was almost exclusively female. That is what organizers wanted.

"Women need to fight for their agency," said Maria. "We must demand our rights and take them from the *asesinos*, the killers of women and girls."

"*Wey no! Ni una mas.*" ("Dude, no! Not one more.")

Protesters acknowledged that men need to be part of the solution. Maria said Mexican men need to rethink the way they treat Mexican women.

"Everyone has a mother," she said. "Everyone has an *abuelita*. Most men have sisters or female cousins. Would they rape and murder them? Hell no! Why then would any man think it is okay to rape and murder someone else's mother, grandmother, sister or cousin?"

Purple, the color of bruises and contusions, is the color of the Mexican Women's Movement. Protesters waved modified Mexican flags with a bar of *morado* replacing the red.

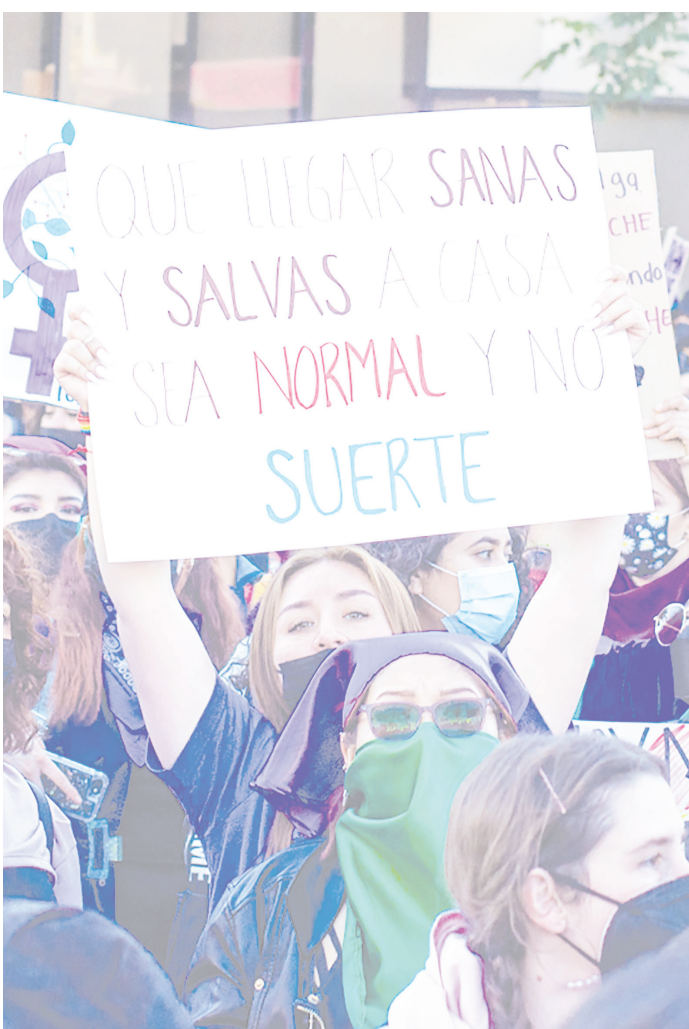
"Mexico's president (Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador) has done nothing to help his nation's women," said Maria. "He has not stood up to *machismo culture*. Unless he does, he is part of the problem."

Hope, *esperanza*, gives Mexico's women new strength, she said.

"We are finally uniting, we are finally starting to speak up. We have been silent for way too long, like hundreds of years too long. *No mas!* Change is coming."



‘CHANGE IS COMING’ – Thousands of women from Baja California Norte and Southern California swarmed the streets of Tijuana to protest Mexico’s epidemic rates of violence and murder against women. (previous page, from the top) A protester’s sign reads “I am the aunt of the girls you will never touch.” Demonstrators spray paint the messages “Dude, no! Not one more.” Protesters congregate at the statue of Aztec emperor Cuauhtémoc to express their anger at Mexican president Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador for not doing more to curtail machismo-driven femicide. (this page, from top) Painting pro-female messages on a wall. Women wave protest versions of the Mexican flag with a purple bar replacing the red and hold aloft photos of a murder victim. Tearing down a bus stop where women were assaulted. Protestors march toward the Cuauhtémoc statue.



DAY OF RAGE AND SORROW –Tijuana’s Women’s March was mostly peaceful, though protesters (top photo) damaged transit centers where women were raped or murdered. (above, l) A sign reads “You get tired of hearing it? We get tired of living it” and a sign honors murder victim Mayra Velazquez Lopez. (above) “Arm Yourself.” (far l) “Arriving home safe and sound should be normal, not luck.” (l) Upper poster reads “May privilege not cloud empathy. We want each other alive and free.” Foreground poster says “Sexism is learned at home.”