



## **‘We are not disposable!’ A *machismo* genocide against Mexican women**

More than 100,000 women, teens and girls are dead and missing, victims of a frightening femicide ignored by the government and law enforcement.



PHOTO BY AILYN DUMAS / STAFF

# MEXICO'S WOMEN BATTLE FEMICIDE

*Women gather in Tijuana to protest Mexico's unchecked femicide crisis that is killing about 4,000 women, teens and little girls every year.*

By AILYN DUMAS AND NICOLETTE MONIQUE LUNA

**M**exico's women are fighting mad and fighting back.

There is so much to fight against.

International human rights organizations and law enforcement estimate that between 80,000 and 100,000 Mexican women and girls are missing. Amnesty International investigators say at least 10 women and girls are killed every day in Mexico, about 3,650 every year. The Mexican

government, after years of denial, says the number may be as high as 4,000 a year.

Mexico's war on its own women has gone unabated for nearly a quarter of a century since mass graves were discovered on the outskirts of Ciudad Juarez. Tijuana is also an epicenter of femicide, according to Amnesty International. Victims include grandmothers, pregnant women, teenagers and even young children.

More than 1,000 vocal women and teens marched on the mayor's residence in Tijuana on International Women's Day to demand an end to Mexico's cancerous femicide epidemic. Men were not allowed. Male party crashers were chased away. ▶



### 'THIS IS HOW GIRLS FIGHT'

Women's March protesters have gotten younger every year, including elementary-aged girls.



PHOTOS BY AILYN DUMAS / STAFF



### ANGER OVER RELENTLESS ABUSE AND VIOLENCE

Some elected officials have criticized Women's March participants for defacing monuments – complaints most protesters have called pitiful and irrelevant in the face of mass murder. (above) "When my sisters return, I'll come clean your wall." (l) "It is not normal to have a history of abuse." (r) "I am not your hot momma, if I were I would abort you, fucking coward."

PHOTO BY AILYN DUMAS / STAFF

## Protesters blamed Mexico's hyper-machismo culture for the chronic abuse of its female population.

Women warriors gathered at a Tijuana monument called "Las Tijeras" (the scissors) to share their personal stories of violence. Nearly 70 percent of Mexican women 15 and older report they have been victims of violence by men.

Speakers streamed to the microphone to recount horrifying episodes of violence suffered by themselves or members of their families.

"Yo te creo! No estas sola!" (I believe you! You are not alone!) was the response from the crowd after each testimonial.

Emotion was palpable. The throng

was absolutely silent as the speakers shared their stories of abuse and pain.

"We are not your playthings! We are not disposable!" declared one of the speakers.

Protesters blamed Mexico's hyper-machismo culture for the chronic abuse of its female population. It begins at birth, said a marcher, when many baby boys are treated like entitled princes and little girls are treated as lesser-thans whose purpose in life is the please the males, even if that includes abuse, rape and murder. Stir in the hyper-violence of drug cartels, corrupt police and





**MONUMENTAL  
PROTEST STRATEGY**

Women attach posters to the iconic Cuauhtémoc monument in Tijuana. Protesters target statues and monuments to draw attention to a crisis they argue has been overlooked for decades.



dishonest elected officials, and Mexico is a recipe for disaster for its women and girls.

“The irony is that our own mothers are often part of the problem, teaching boys to devalue women,” said Maestra (a pseudonym). “Fathers, sons and uncles often treat women like servants and sex objects, even their own daughters and sisters. We need to break this cycle of dysfunction and violence. It’s only getting worse.”

A speaker underscored these words as she told the sordid tale of an uncle that forced her to have sex with him for years, starting when she was a little girl.

“The rest of my own family didn’t believe me,” she said. “They believed him and took his side every time.”

Tijuana’s protesters said they were the lucky ones — they are still alive. “*Las Tijeras*” was soon festooned with Day of the Dead-style altars to commemorate the dead and the missing. Posters with photographs of dead and missing women covered the area and a clothesline became a string of photographs, handmade art and posters that proclaimed “*No Olvidades!*” (You are not forgotten.)

At 4 p.m. the rally became a march as the women took to the crumbling streets of Tijuana. Then a surprise—police who in previous years had stood



### MORE IMPORTANT THAN MONUMENTS

(top) “Abandon your Eve and liberate your Lilith” and “I will not grow up in fear.” (l) “Just like your fucking monuments.” (far r) “For my mom, who worked for me and a policeman took her away from me. I was only eight months old.”



PHOTO BY AILYN DUMAS / STAFF

aside and watched the marchers took a more aggressive approach. They began to cordon off streets and roadways in an attempt to box in the crowd. One police officer even backed his car recklessly right into the crowd in an attempt to turn the women around.

It did not work.

Marchers refused to retreat and instead marched upon the Tijuana mayor’s residence for a spirited series of chants and some spray painted demands. Police behaved aggressively toward the

women, but none backed down. The crowd sealed off the “Palacio Municipal” for about two hours before returning to “*Las Tijeras*” for a final call to action.

“*Ni una mas! Ni una mas matanza!*” (“Not one more! Not one more murder!”) shouted the marchers as the throng snaked its way through the houses and buildings caked in primary colors on the bloody streets of Tijuana.

Mexico’s women are tired of being pushed around. Now they are pushing back. ■