



The Greens | European Free Alliance
in the European Parliament

HEINRICH BÖLL STIFTUNG
EUROPEAN UNION

NO MORE KILLING OF WOMEN! TIME TO PUT WORDS INTO ACTION

**Declaration of the IV Conference on Femicide
European Parliament, 3 March 2011**

On 3 March 2011 the fourth Conference on Femicide took place in the European Parliament (EP) following the EP resolution on the murder of women (femicide) in Mexico and Central America and the role of the European Union (EU) in fighting the phenomenon (2007/2025(INI)) adopted in October 2007. The conference was organized by MEP Raül Romeva, the Greens/EFA in the EP and the Heinrich Böll Foundation's EU Office in cooperation with Amnesty International, the Central America Women's Network (CAWN), the Copenhagen Initiative for Central America and Mexico (CIFCA), Grupo Sur and the Latin American Association of Development Organizations (ALOP).

Femicide, the most extreme form of violence against women, is generally linked to discrimination, poverty and patriarchal cultures. It takes place within a context of total impunity and particularly affects many Latin American states. The aftermath of International Women's Day and the run-up to the European Union and Latin America and Caribbean (EU-LAC) Summit 2012 in Chile is the right moment to raise awareness of this distressing crime. The conference took the opportunity to assess the current situation in Latin America and the implications of EU policies in this regard, and to formulate demands for concrete measures to be taken by EU institutions that are required to tackle femicide in an effective and coherent manner.

The central outcome of the conference is the identification of a growing gap between commitments and implementation at the level of EU institutions. Thus, on the one hand an increase of declarations to eradicate femicide and gender-based violence can be observed: the EU adopted guidelines on violence against women in December 2008, the VI EU-LAC Summit Declaration (Madrid, May 2010) recognised the need to take every necessary measure to prevent and eradicate all kinds of gender-based violence and shortly after, in June 2010, the High Representative Catherine Ashton issued a declaration on behalf of the EU expressing her concern about femicide in Latin America. However, on the other hand such declarations of intent are only rarely and inconsistently translated into concrete actions.

Femicide and other forms of gender-based violence continue to be widespread in Latin America, where the numbers of femicides in many countries still increase. Yet some achievements on the legal front can be observed: at the end of 2009 the Inter-American Court of Human Rights issued a judgment in the so-called Cotton Field case which condemned the Mexican state for violating human rights in cases of femicide in Ciudad Juárez. This judgment advanced the legal interpretation of the context of impunity in relation to femicide. In addition to this, in several states of the region targeted legislations have already been introduced, such as the Guatemalan law against femicide, which was adopted in April 2008. These developments might, in the mid or long term, contribute to a significant decrease of violence against women and femicide in Latin America, provided that such laws and sentences are fully implemented.

The EU can and – in the light of its clearly stated political will to treat the subject of gender-based violence as a priority in its internal and external actions – *should* play a crucial role in this respect. In fact, the following actions are demanded from the EU and in particular from the European External Action Service (EEAS) in order to enhance and materialize its contribution to fight femicide in Latin America:

- Provide for a transparent and effective implementation of the EU Guidelines on violence against women on a regional and national level and facilitate the participation of civil society;
- Treat crimes of femicide as individual cases of exceptional gravity under the EU Guidelines and, correspondingly, define specific measures that are to be taken;
- Establish clear responsibilities within the EEAS and convert the Declaration of the High Representative Catherine Ashton on femicide into concrete policies allocated with sufficient resources;
- Regularly raise the topic within political dialogues, and in particular the existing human rights dialogues, and offer cooperation in the search of remedies to eliminate violence against women and femicide in the context of the bi-regional partnership;
- Support the Latin American states to fulfill their obligation of due diligence in the prevention, attention, investigation, legal prosecution, sanction and reparation of femicide;
- Support and protect family members of victims and women's rights defenders and institutionalise their role in the definition and implementation of bi-regional policies;
- Enhance data collection, statistics and research in order to advance with the conceptualisation of femicide;
- Coordinate relevant actions of EU delegations with those of Member States' embassies in the countries at stake;
- Support the work of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in the issue and contribute to the implementation of its sentences;
- Strengthen mechanisms for tackling gender-based violence within EU bilateral development cooperation and trade agreements with Latin American countries in accordance with EU Development Policy Coherence criteria.

We are strongly committed to assess the implementation of the clearly stated political will of the EU to fight femicide and gender-based violence in Latin America. For this purpose, another hearing in the European Parliament will take place in the short run. This hearing will be organised by the Subcommittee on Human Rights and the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality and is scheduled for October 2011.



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