



CAWN

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## EDITORIAL

Much has happened for women in Central America since our last edition. They've celebrated the liberation of Sonia Tabora in El Salvador after seven years in prison for a miscarriage; you'll find her story in our [Summer Newsletter](#).

Central American women have also celebrated the Day for the Decriminalisation of Abortion on 28th September, originally a Latin American Day of Action now gone global, and they called for corporations and states to stay off their bodies and territories in a pan-regional meeting in Guatemala.

Sadly, harassment of women human rights

defenders has carried on unabated, particularly in Honduras, where seven WHRD's have been killed between 2010 and 2011.

CAWN continues to fight next to these women, spreading the word in the [British media](#) about their struggles, [lobbying](#) to stop the impunity of crimes against them, publishing reports, and training young women in the UK to become advocates themselves for the rights of women in Central America and elsewhere. Keep reading to find out more about past and upcoming events.

Readers are still very welcome to share their views in [our blog](#).



Women demand that Sonia Tabora is freed in El Salvador, August 2012



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## OUR ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Updates, shout-outs, past and upcoming activities and more**

### Recent events and publications

**Training:** Using video for advocacy and campaigning // 15-16 September

CAWN ran a two days training for young activists interested in using video for advocacy and campaigning as part of UK Feminista Summer School: a weekend of training, skill sharing and planning for feminist activism in the University of Bristol. CAWN helped feminists to learn how to produce a video from the filming process to the final edit, and including how to publish it on the web. What do you think of [their first collective video](#)?

**Discussion Forum:** Trafficking of Women in Central America // 27th September

Following a presentation of our new paper we viewed 'The Lost Girls', a 20 minutes documentary about trafficking of women in Honduras, and brainstormed ways for CAWN to support the struggle of those women's organisations fighting trafficking of women in Central America.

**New briefing paper:** ['Trafficking of women in Central America and Mexico'](#)

Poverty and the demand for cheap and unprotected labour in the global economy are major and structural forces leading to massive migration from poorer to wealthier regions. Poverty and lack of opportunities lead people to seek to improve their livelihoods and to use risky means to migrate, and restrictive migration policies lead to many immigrants coming under the control of smugglers and traffickers. Furthermore, insecure immigration status increases their vulnerability to different forms of exploitation, like trafficking.

In this paper, CAWN denounces the links between corporatocracy, militarisation, inequality and State connivance as factors at the root of the trafficking of women and girls within the region and out of it.

**Briefing paper:** ['Maternal Health, Reproductive Rights and the Criminalisation of Abortion in Central America'](#)

Published on 28th September to coincide with the Global Day of Action to for the Decriminalisation of



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Abortion this briefing paper denounces that abortion is criminalised throughout Central America.

El Salvador and Nicaragua have the most stringent bans on abortion, which allow for no exception for cases of rape, incest, threat to the mother's health or severe foetus abnormality – not even to save a woman's life in immediate risk. Honduras and

Guatemala share similar legislations although emergency abortion - to save the mother's life - is permitted.

The effects of this criminalisation are causing widespread human rights violations and reflect systemic discrimination against women in the region.

### Upcoming events

**Speaker tour:** Women resist austerity and exploitation: lessons from the global South // 26 November - 5 December

Reyna Quintanilla, campaigner at Honduran Collective of Women ([CODEMUH](#)), is an ex-maquila worker and currently CODEMUH's organiser & member of staff, Reyna campaigns on behalf of women's workers in Honduran EPZ (Export Processing Zones) where more than 75% of workers are women.

Patricia Dyata, Secretary General at [Sikhula Sonke](#), is a former farm worker and dweller Patricia now acts as the Secretary General of a women-led trade union for farmers in South Africa and campaigns for their labour and housing rights, including a living wage, decent healthcare provision and maternity and paternity leaves.

### Urgent Action List

We'd like to remind you about our network of 'clicktivists'. We have set up an Urgent Action list, an alert list for activists to take action on issues related to our work by signing urgent petitions, sending letters and distributing our partners' calls for action online. Periodically, CAWN receives calls for support to women in Central America, from

You are invited to join the tour's events. We have listed some of them below (but there are more!) Please, email us to [campaigns@cawn.org](mailto:campaigns@cawn.org) to book your place and find out about the tour's schedule.

#### **University seminars:**

American Studies Institute: [Tuesday 27 November: 12 to 2 pm](#)

London Southbank University: Tuesday 27 November; 5.30 - 8 pm

[Glasgow University: Friday 30 November: 2 - 5 pm](#)

#### **Public meetings:**

[Wednesday 28 November at 6.30 pm](#)

human rights defenders who are threatened to petitions to counteract a ban on contraceptive pills. Please, let us know if you'd like to subscribe by emailing 'Urgent Action list' to [campaigns@cawn.org](mailto:campaigns@cawn.org). We are looking forward to working with you!



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## **CALLS FOR SOLIDARITY AND ACTION**

### **Calls for international feminist solidarity from Honduran and Salvadoran feminists translated by CAWN**

#### **Honduras Human Rights Primary Elections Accompaniment Delegation**

LIBRE, the party of the National Front for Popular Resistance (FNRP), is holding primary elections for President and National Assembly on Sunday, Nov. 18, 2012. The FNRP is the organization uniting labor, teachers, students, campesino, Afro-Honduran, and indigenous groups, LGBT, artists, and former Liberal party members in opposition to the June 28, 2009 coup and the illegitimate government of Porfirio Lobo spawned by the coup. The FNRP created LIBRE to attempt to return democracy through the ballot box in national elections to be held in November 2013. Two LIBRE pre-candidates have already been assassinated. The FNRP has asked for international human rights accompaniment on its primary voting day of November 18, 2012 to help achieve a peaceful voting day and to document human rights abuses if they occur.

The Honduras Solidarity Network is offering two options for human rights accompaniment delegates for the LIBRE primary elections.

[More](#)

#### **Honduras - Persistent threats against human rights defender Ms Gladys Lanza Ochoa**

The Honduran Government has yet to comply with the Inter-American Court of Human Rights order to take measures to safeguard the life of human rights defender Ms Gladys Lanza Ochoa despite continuous threats against her, as well as against her family members. Gladys Lanza Ochoa is Coordinator of the Honduran Women's Committee for Peace "Visitación Padilla", a collective of women human rights defenders from across Honduras who work on issues such as gender violence and women's participation in public life, in addition to advocating for democracy and human rights in Honduras.

On 22 August 2012, the last threat act took place when Gladys Lanza Ochoa was approached and followed by a motorbike rider and a black van with tinted windows, both without licence plates.

[More](#)

#### **Stop The Use Of Force Against The Social Protest To Defend Land Rights In Honduras**

Since the coup d'état in June 2009, the critical context of serious and systematic violations of human rights in Honduras has been widely documented by national and international organisations. Peasant and indigenous communities are confronted daily with the arbitrary use of the State security forces; they face impunity in evictions, threats, defamation and assassinations of those who openly protect their land and territory, and who oppose megaprojects and charter cities.



Within this context, there is an increase in violence against women and women human rights defenders (WHRDs). Numerous cases of sexual violence have been documented during forced evictions,



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which are rarely reported for fear of retaliation and because of the rampant impunity in situations of violence against women throughout the country.

[More](#)

### **Nicaragua - Girl sexually abused by security officers of Daniel Ortega**

A girl living with disabilities survived the rape of six

men. Act now!

We are concerned not only for her mental health (physical and emotional situation), but also by the lack of response to the request for punishment for all who abused the girl on 9 August 2012, just 30 meters from the presidential palace!.

Justice for girls, punishment for rapists!

[More](#)

## NEWS AND ANALYSIS

### News from external sources and analysis by CAWN supporters and members

#### Trafficking of women

##### **Police increase efforts to combat human trafficking in Nicaragua**

Police Commissioner Esther Garcia said at a special forum held on Sept. 20 that the Department of Human Trafficking under the Women and Children's Police Stations will intensify its efforts to combat human trafficking. More training of police officers will be a vital component of this effort because the criminals make extensive use of new technologies and particularly social networks in order to find young people. On Sept. 23, Nicaragua joined the International Day Against Human Trafficking in coordination with other countries worldwide. Save the Children supports these efforts of Nicaragua and in 2011 documented the rescue of 178 victims of trafficking, ranging in age from six to 44 years old. So far this year, Garcia reported, the Trafficking Department has registered 24 cases involving 48 victims, most of whom are women and children.

Speaking at the same forum, Medardo Solis, head of the Office of Legal Support of Casa Alianza, said that "There have been great advances in [human trafficking] laws, and in overall care and prevention... but there still are pending issues, such as attitudes of authorities who re-victimise the survivor with their treatment and questioning of trafficking survivors, i.e. 'What were you doing there?' or 'Wasn't it your fault?'" Solis noted that trafficking is most common on the borders at Peñas Blancas, Rio San Juan, El Espino and El Guasaule.

A report released recently by the International Organisation for Migration stated that Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Honduras were countries from which women were trafficked to Mexico, Guatemala, and Costa Rica.

[More](#)

#### Prostitution in Spain



*Beatriz Campos Mansilla*  
*Sociologist, specialist in women's rights and gender equality*  
[@beatrzcm](#)

It is very difficult to set the number of prostituted women in Spain, including those trafficked. However, different reports by organisations which assist these women and Spanish authorities said that around [300,000 women](#) are being prostituted in Spain. This is an 18,000 million € per year business which is stimulated by the 6% of the



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Spanish-male population, although some reports raise these percentage up to 39% of the Spanish men who admitted having paid for a prostituted woman. There are also lots of men who come from other countries with tourism packages including sexual exploitation or with the only purpose of going to brothels.

Despite the fact that there has been a small increase of the number of Spanish women who are returning or entering prostitution because of the economic downturn in the country, the majority are from other countries. It is estimated that 90% of the prostituted women in Spain are foreigners and they are also victims of trafficking. The 1,641 victims of trafficking identified by the Spanish police in 2010 were predominantly from Romania, Paraguay, Brazil and the Dominican Republic. But trafficked women are also from other Latin American countries, Eastern European countries, African countries and more recently from China, Japan and Korea.

Prostitution hasn't got a legal status in Spain. There is not a legal framework or public policy that can be applied in the whole country. There is only one chapter in the Criminal Code referred to offences related to prostitution and corruption of minors. Those who cause or facilitate sexual exploitation or pornography of minors or those who force adults to sexual exploitation can be charged with prison.

On the other hand, advertisements of prostitution in newspapers (even in the most reputable and mainstream ones) are allowed and it is almost impossible for Governments to stop it because this is one of the most important sources of income for newspapers in Spain.

Public policies regarding prostitution remain uneven. As there is not a legal frame about prostitution and central, regional and local authorities have different responsibilities and ideologies about this problem, there is not a single approach. However, there are two main ways of action. One of them focuses on trafficking but does not act firmly on other kinds of prostitution. The other one focuses on trafficking and considers some punishment within the morality of the prohibitionist framework. The paradigm of these measures can be found in Catalonia, where prostitutes and prostituted women are being fined if they are found on the roads, with the excuse of the 'distractions' that can be lead to traffic accidents. There is not a political commitment with a deep understanding, implementation and evaluation of complex frameworks such as the abolitionist or the regulationist ones.

Spain is one of the main countries of transit and destination for women trafficked for sexual exploitation purposes in Europe. Most of women end or stay for a while in brothels, where they are exploited and threatened to pay large amounts of money they can only get by undergoing sexual exploitation.

Trafficking of persons has a special paragraph in the Criminal Code following a reform passed in 2010. People who facilitate trafficking of persons face from eight to ten years of prison. Also since this reform, women who are identified as victims have thirty days to decide about their collaboration with police. According to data, 90% of these identified women rejected the protection of police during 2011. They are terrified by threats from mafias, they fear deportation to their countries, they are not explained about their rights or they find themselves not as much as protected as they need. If they do not cooperate and they are not identified as victims of violence against women, they usually fall into the Immigration Law.

There should be a deeper debate in Spain about what kind of policy framework should be used to tackle prostitution, so that the design and implementation of policies in the whole country and by different authorities (central, regional and local) is coherent. There is also a need for more prosecution of trafficking for sexual exploitation purposes and to identify trafficked women within the problem of violence against women rather than the immigration phenomenon.



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## Armed conflict and violence against women

### Is the US lending financial support to a police force and army linked to a campaign of extra-judicial killings?

Honduras has become the newest front in the US war on drugs in Latin America. The US has provided financial support for both the police and the military there in spite of its deep corruption issues. Members of both institutions have been linked to a range of killings. Political dissidents, human rights workers and members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community have all been killed at alarming rates.

In May, a mission in the Moskitia region left four innocent civilians killed and four others wounded. Local communities have demanded a thorough investigation but so far nothing has been done.

See [Al Jazeera's documentary](#)

### Honduras - Threats against women rights defenders are denounced.

Members of the Women for Life Forum demonstrated to condemn the increase on the threats that human rights defenders have received, as well as the death of 28 young women, victims of hate. They condemned the lack of interest by the government in solving these cases.

The protestors took the street that leads to the Public Ministry, carrying coloured candles and banners with messages demanding to stop the killing of women. They also demanded the cases to be resolved and the end of impunity, the identity and capture of those responsible for this violence. In addition, they remarked that the situation of violence against women in Honduras has increased alarmingly in recent years.



In a statement, they reported that in the last three months five threats against Women Human Rights Defenders have been documented, ranging from phone messages, intimidation and surveillance of their homes or workplaces, to even threats of kidnapping.

The protestors gave one month to the Public Ministry to deliver a report on the state of femicide cases in the northwest area of the country, which should reflect the progress, obstacles and proposals in this issue, in accordance with the government national and international commitments. They called for the Honduran State to show concrete progress and public commitments in the fight against impunity in cases of violence against women, whose actions must be socialized and agreed with the families and organisations representing the victims.

The Women's Movement 'Visitation Padilla' issued a [statement](#) protesting against the serial femicide that took place on the last week of August, rejecting the policies of terror and fear to impose a neoliberal and patriarchal system, leaving women unable to defend their rights.

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## The Legacy of Genocide; Violence Against Women in Guatemala



*Maisie Davies has recently graduated from Leeds University with a degree in Politics and Social Policy and has a particular interest in Latin American political and social issues. She has travelled extensively in Central and South America and has lived and worked in Guatemala and Argentina. She currently works at Mencap researching issues around sexual abuse and exploitation.*

The Guatemalan genocide in the late 70s and early 80s saw 200,000 people killed and at least 100,000 women raped (Global voices, 2012). The vast majority of victims were indigenous Mayan. Peace accords were signed in 1996, officially ending the 36 year civil war between the Guatemalan state and left wing insurgents. Yet for women in Guatemala today, the reality is far from peaceful.

Since 2000, over 5,000 young women have been violently murdered. The violence continues with 708 and 630 women killed in 2009 and 2010 respectively (GHRC, 2012). There are undeniable links between the violence against women perpetrated during the genocide, and the growing problem of femicide, i.e. the killing of women because of their gender, and feminicide, i.e. the role that the state plays in allowing this to happen.

During the genocide, violence against women was widely used as a weapon of war. Government backed troops were trained to rape, terrorise and mutilate. Such tactics were used to divide and destroy Mayan communities and indeed 90% of victims of sexual violence were indigenous Mayan (Leiby, 2009). 626 indigenous villages were razed to the ground and their inhabitants massacred. Women were indiscriminately raped, tortured and killed. Foetuses were cut out of the bodies of pregnant women and left as a warning to others. Some women were kept as domestic slaves by military troops and routinely raped. Women who survived rape and torture were then often rejected from their own communities.

The state was found to be responsible for 93% of violent acts in general and 99% of rapes. 85% of crimes were committed by the army (CEH, 1999). Yet, the perpetrators of these crimes continue to live with impunity. As a consequence, women live alongside the perpetrators of the crimes committed against them. Such impunity has contributed to the deterioration of the Guatemalan state and the disintegration of society in which there is currently a 'climate of violence and terror' (Mejia, 2010). The state has failed to investigate, prosecute and punish perpetrators of crimes both those committed during the genocide, and those committed against women in the last decade. This absence of the rule of law has facilitated a continuum of violence against women.

Much of the violence committed against women today appears to be alarmingly similar to that committed during the genocide. This has led many to conclude that the legacy of the genocide is an essential factor in the high rates of brutal violence committed against women today. The cruelty and brutality of the acts, the incompetence and indifference in handling the cases and the subsequent impunity all resonate with Guatemala's genocidal past. Like they were during the genocide, women's bodies are left in public places, no effort made by perpetrators to hide their crimes. Violence against women has been normalised.

Some have commented that the extreme and public nature of the violence committed against women today serves as a warning to women to stay in their 'rightful' place, i.e. the home, thus acting as a form of social control. Police investigations are hampered by officials who fail to investigate cases where, based on the characteristics of a female victim, they believe the victim 'had it coming'. This has been the case for example where women wear short skirts, have bellybutton rings or tattoos. Yet, women are also exceedingly vulnerable within the home, facing high levels of extreme domestic violence at the hands of



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their partners or family members. Last year, almost of the 646 women murdered died inside their own homes (Thompson, 2012).

Furthermore, the women of Guatemala tell us that the military, the police, and private security personnel hired by multinational corporations are today raping women during land grabbing campaigns and forced evictions (Wolfe, 2012), thereby rendering institutions and individuals associated with the state directly responsible.

Human rights and women's groups have fought tirelessly to bring justice for both the victims of the genocide, and the many victims of femicide and feminicide since, yet they face a constant battle. They are threatened, intimidated and violently attacked because of the work they do. Violence against women's groups has continued to increase since 2000 (Samayoa, 2006).

Nobel Women's Initiative notes that women's human rights defenders habitually suffer from illegal arrests, persecution, cruel and inhumane mistreatment, rape, defamation campaigns, criminalisation, robbery, intimidations, murder, threats, and home invasion. Furthermore, a recent survey suggested that government security forces were those responsible in 55% of cases. Human rights defenders are therefore facing an almost impossible task.

Nevertheless, there have been some positive developments in combating impunity of the genocidaires. Investigations into the crimes committed during the 36 year civil war continue and exhumations give hope to family members of victims that they may finally find out the truth (Rights Action, 2012). Three decades after his reign during the most brutal years of the genocide, ex-President Efraín Ríos Montt is finally being brought to trial this year. It will be the first time a former president has been charged with genocide in a Latin American court. In addition, the Guatemalan congress passed the Law Against Femicide and Other Forms of Violence Against Women on April 9, 2008. Although this is an important step, the implementation of such a law and the actual prosecution of perpetrators is still an ongoing struggle.

The bravery and persistence of victims of violence in Guatemala has been an essential factor in these developments. Activities, festivals and meetings organised by women's and human rights groups have encouraged survivors of these atrocities to speak out. Activities focus on empowering women who in many cases have internalised the unequal treatment shown to them. The Regional Festival for Remembrance in 2008 and 2011 saw workshops on healing, empowerment, presenting testimonies, open discussion and spaces for reflection (Global Voices, 2012). These activities aim in the beginning to encourage women victims to see themselves as equals, as human beings and to teach them that the violence they have suffered is not normal.

### Abortion Rights

#### **Dominican pregnant teen dies after abortion ban delays her chemo treatment for leukemia**

A 16-year-old girl's plight attracted worldwide attention after she had to wait for chemotherapy because of the abortion ban in the Dominican Republic.

Doctors were hesitant to give her chemotherapy because such treatment could terminate the

pregnancy -- a violation of the Dominican Constitution, which bans abortion. As a result of the delay on the treatment, the girl's health was severely affected; she suffered a miscarriage followed by cardiac arrest, and doctors were unable to revive her.

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### **Pregnant Nicaraguan Girls Forced To Become Mothers**

In Nicaragua, girls and teenagers account for 27 percent of all births in public health institutions. A 2007 study by the Latin American and Caribbean Demographic Centre reported that Nicaragua was the country with the highest adolescent birth rate in Latin America.

This forms part of the cycle of poverty in which most young mothers have lived; 47 percent of pregnant girls and teenagers do not complete primary school, effectively losing their right to an education.



[More](#)

### **Precautionary measures for Mery: the devastating persecution of women in El Salvador**

The persecution of women by the security forces and the judiciary of El Salvador is devastating. In the struggle for the rights of women, the Centre for Reproductive Rights and the Citizen Group for the Decriminalisation of Therapeutic, Eugenic

and Ethical Abortion, presented on 14 October a precautionary measure for "Mery" at the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

On March 12 this year, Mery, aged 27, arrived at *Primero de Mayo* Hospital in San Salvador after self-inducing an abortion. She was denounced by health workers to the National Police, who handcuffed her to her bed the day after she had been hospitalised, while still receiving emergency medical care. Mery had a nervous breakdown and had to be taken to the crisis intervention service at the *Arce* Polyclinic Hospital of San Salvador, where she was diagnosed with personality disorder.

On August 28 this year, Mery was condemned to two years in prison for committing abortion. In jail, Mery's mental health worsened and she attempted suicide. The UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, its Causes and Consequences, expressed last year her concern about the deplorable conditions of the Ilopango Women's Prison, where Mery was paying her sentence.

Mery is now in a psychiatric hospital, although she is permanently guarded by armed men and women, who mistreat and harass her constantly. Despite her mental state, Mery faces the risk of returning to prison, with the potential danger that this has for her integrity and her life.

In 2000 the Centre for Reproductive Rights published a research called "Persecuted", denouncing how the actions of the health services, the police and the judicial apparatus threaten the lives and safety of women who have had self-induced or spontaneous abortions, or who have suffered obstetric complications.

[More](#)



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### **The criminalisation of abortion is killing women**

*Vickie Knox is a freelance online communications consultant and human rights advocate, and is currently working with CAWN*

Imprisoned for 30 years for having a stillbirth.  
Denied life-saving cancer treatment when 6 weeks pregnant.  
Forced to carry a rapist's baby at the age of 12.

This is reality for women and girls who live under Central America's abortion

laws.

#### **Not even to save a woman's life.**

Abortion is criminalised throughout Central America. El Salvador and Nicaragua have the most stringent bans on abortion, which allow for no exception for cases of rape, incest, threat to the mother's health or severe foetus abnormality – not even to save a woman's life in immediate risk. Honduras and Guatemala share similar legislations although emergency abortion - to save the mother's life - is permitted.

The effects of this criminalisation are causing widespread human rights violations and reflect systemic discrimination against women in the region.

Women and girls are forced to continue with pregnancies which endanger them and can be left to die from an ectopic pregnancy or obstetric emergency, denied life-saving treatment whilst pregnant if it could provoke a miscarriage and reluctant to seek medical help after a miscarriage in case they are accused of procuring an abortion.

#### **30 years in prison for having a stillbirth**

In El Salvador, this law has led to the arbitrary imprisonment of women who have suffered a miscarriage or stillbirth. Abortion is punishable with up to eight years in prison, but if the foetus is deemed to have been viable the charge is habitually converted to murder, which carries a sentence of 30 to 50. There are at least 24 women currently serving sentences of 30 years or more for murder after having a stillbirth, and hundreds more who have been imprisoned for abortion. Young, poor women are disproportionately affected, and come under immediate suspicion when they lose a baby.

In 2005 20-year-old Sonia Táborá was sentenced to 30 years in prison for murder after went into premature labour at seven months, and was accused by a doctor of having an abortion. She was transferred from hospital to remand as though she were a dangerous criminal and convicted in a trial which did not meet international standards: no autopsy was carried out and the prosecution relied solely on the word of the doctor and did not present any direct or scientific evidence. Táborá had a mental breakdown and spent over 7 years in prison before being released on 14 August 2012, following a review of her sentence. Although she was released, she was not exonerated of the crime for which she had been prosecuted.

#### **The criminalisation of abortion is killing women**

It is accepted that the criminalisation of abortion does not stop abortions from taking place – it only stops safe and legal abortions; it leads to unsafe, illegal abortions, which may take place in unsanitary conditions, often result in complications and death and are one of the main causes of maternal mortality in countries when abortion is banned.

In the Central America region 95 per cent of all abortions are unsafe, including self-induced abortion and surgery conducted by non-professionals. Unsafe abortion is a leading cause of maternal death, with high mortality rates of between 100 to 120 deaths per 100,000 live births.



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Pro-abortion demonstration in Nicaragua on 28 September. Women chant: "Illegal abortion is state violence"

## Women and the Media

### Video Girls for Change

Participatory Video is a set of techniques to involve a group or community in shaping and creating their own film. The idea behind this is that making a video is easy and accessible, and is a great way of bringing people together to explore issues, voice concerns or simply to be creative and tell stories.

This process can be very empowering, enabling a group or community to take action to solve their

own problems and also to communicate their needs and ideas to decision-makers and/or other groups and communities. As such, Participatory Video can be a highly effective tool to engage and mobilise marginalised people and to help them implement their own forms of sustainable development based on local needs.

You can see more of this work, and the work they are doing with young Ugandan women, [here](#).

[More](#)

## Gender and alternative media in Central America to give voice to young women

*By Amanda Hernández.*

For hundreds of Central American women living in rural or urban low income areas, access to information is limited. Disconnected from the information gateway due to poverty, low literacy, restricted electricity connections and access to communication technologies such as computers and internet, radio is often the only medium available. In the last decades, community radio stations have been enabling isolated communities across Central America to voice their own concerns. This type of radio has created a non-commercial platform, where women produce the content they hear on the radio. While the impact of community radio stations varies, they often give isolated villages a means of education, self-expression and communication, while also promoting the community's history and traditions.

The women's movement in Central America has long recognised the power and the role that community radio has played. As early as four decades ago, women's groups actively engaged this medium to address issues such as human rights and sexual education. As a result, community radio has played a



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pivotal role for women's movement in Central America. On air, women have discussed issues such as gender discrimination, sexual matters as HIV/AIDS prevention and abortion. They have shared income generation ideas and explored ways to improve education. Local organizations such as Puntos de Encuentro in Nicaragua and Movimiento Manuela Ramos in Peru have provided critical public forums for discussions on effective ways to end violence against women and access to justice and legal support through radio programming.

The idea of using both older media such as radio and newer information and communication technologies has gained momentum in Central America over the recent years. Women agree that Internet, telecommunications and broadcasting services can help to promote women issues. However, they argue that media and technology remain largely state controlled or with purely commercial motivations. In a region with high rates of gender based-violence, illiteracy, restrict access to technology, massive female immigration in irregular circumstances, unemployment, sexual and labor exploitation and trafficking, and a increasing population of young women in vulnerable conditions, the challenge of women's movement is colossal.

Radio Internacional Feminista based on Costa Rica (<http://www.radiofeminista.net/>) is one of the first communitarian responses to this enormous challenge. This radio (which is broadcast in English and Spanish) integrates new technologies to provide women with an international communications venue – internet radio- to disseminate women's voices and concerns. RIF also hopes to inspire young women because their problems and concerns still remain silenced in the official and commercial media. Young women are challenged to work for alternative media strategies that generate a space to talk about the social and economic phenomena that are affecting their lives (transnational immigration and familiar disintegration, youth unemployment, dating abuse, gender/ethnic/sexual discrimination, and so no), generating a culture in favor of gender equality, democracy and equal opportunities.

## WOMEN'S STRUGGLES

### Campaign "We All Are" (Todas Somos) for the annulment of arrest warrants against defenders in Guatemala



Organisers of the Festival "We are all Barillas", for the life, body and territory of women in Guatemala, have created a [blog](#) and a campaign for the annulations of the arrest warrants against defenders who have expressed their disagreement with the Hidro Santa Cruz hydroelectric project,

entitled We all are: "I am Hermelinda" "I'm Lolita".

In Santa Cruz de Barillas, conflicts have been taking place since the government decided to declare the town under siege in May, in order to ease the construction of the hydroelectric project.

Many protesters were detained while the siege lasted. Campaigners denounce the use of intimidation and coercion by the authorities and by Hidro Santa-Cruz Company in order to get approval for the project, and demand the liberation of the detainees, who are regarded as political prisoners.

To take part in this initiative, you just have to send a photo and your name to the following address: [mujeresixchel@gmail.com](mailto:mujeresixchel@gmail.com)

[More](#)

### Guatemalan Civil Society Condemns Massacre In Totonicapán

On the afternoon of Thursday, October 4, the Committee of the 48 Cantons of Totonicapán, a traditional structure considered the legitimate representative of the people, suffered a violent attack by Guatemalan army forces at kilometer 170 of the Inter-American Highway. The army was



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responding to a demonstration the people were carrying out to show their rejection of constitutional reform, the reform of teachers' educational career trajectory, and the high cost of electricity. As a result of the attack, seven people have died, at least thirty have been reported wounded, and a number of others are suffering the effects of teargas.

The use of combined forces (police and army)

with firearms at a citizens' demonstration in which they were exercising universally recognised and nationally guaranteed rights is a show of violence by the state, which is showing itself incapable of acting in a way that corresponds to a democratic culture, within the framework of a lawful state.

[More](#)

## WHO DOES CAWN WORK WITH?

This section features partners and other organizations we work closely with

### War on Want

[War on Want](#) is a movement of people committed to global justice fighting against the root causes of poverty and human rights violations by working in partnership with grassroots social movements, trade unions and workers' organisations in the global South and by running hard-hitting popular campaigns.

War on Want and the Central American Women's Network joined forces in June 2011 to step up their fight against poverty and injustice facing millions of women across the world as the global economic crisis hits women hardest. This partnership brings together CAWN's experienced support for women and our campaigns against poverty and injustice. As the global economic crisis hits women in Britain and around the world the hardest, sharing influence and resources can help win freedom and fairness for many here and overseas

In a first step under this new partnership, CAWN and War on Want joined hundreds of feminists from across Britain at the UK Feminista summer school in Bristol, in September. We are now preparing for a speaker tour: 'Women resisting austerity and exploitation: lessons from the Global South' for which CAWN and War on Want have invited leaders of feminist and female-led Honduran and South African organisations that

defend and promote the rights of women and women workers to tour Europe.



### CODEMUH

The Collective of Honduran Women, [CODEMUH](#), is a feminist organisation based in Honduras focusing on women's health, labor rights and violence against women, particularly in EPZ's (Export Processing Zones) where more than 75% of workers are women. CODEMUH helps them to raise their voice against these abuses and lobbies for a reform of Honduras' outdated labour codes, which would significantly improve sweatshop working conditions. CODEMUH is well-known for its commitment to opening opportunities for training and attention to building a political proposal to transform the lives of women.



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### **Sikhula Sonke**

[Sikhula Sonke](#) is a women-led trade union for farm workers and farm dwellers which includes permanent, casual and seasonal workers as well as farm dwellers in rural and peri/urban areas in and around the Western cape in South Africa. They campaign for their labour and housing rights, including a living wage, decent healthcare provision and maternity and paternity leaves. Sikhula Sonke also supports unionised workers who face harassment from their employers and police.



Women gathered in prayer and meditation around a fire to thank for the body, life and land in a sacred place near the community of Yalambojoch, September 2012

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