

Dear President Calderón:

As Members of the U.S. House of Representatives who are concerned with the brutal murders of young women and girls in Ciudad Juárez and throughout the State of Chihuahua, Mexico, we are writing to commend you for the progress that you have made in combating femicide and making the elimination of violence against women a top priority of your administration.

We thank you for the commitment that you have made in the first months of your presidency and respectfully request that you reinforce that commitment by increasing funding and updating penal codes associated with recent laws to prevent violence against women. We also request that law enforcement in Ciudad Juárez and the State of Chihuahua make a renewed commitment to solve older cases of murders of women in Ciudad Juárez before the 14-year statute of limitations expires.

Since 1993, over 400 young women have been murdered in Ciudad Juárez and the State of Chihuahua, Mexico. Over 150 of these victims were sexually assaulted before they were murdered. More than half of the victims have been women and girls between the ages of 13 and 22, and many of the victims have yet to be positively identified. In May 2006, the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate both passed House Concurrent Resolution 90. The resolution expressed the sympathy of Congress to the families of the young women murdered in the State of Chihuahua, Mexico, and encouraged increased United States involvement in bringing an end to these crimes. We are very pleased that the Mexican Federal Government has made good-faith efforts in recent years to combat violence against women in Ciudad Juárez and throughout Mexico. Nevertheless, the brutal assaults and murders continue to occur.

The federal law prohibiting violence against women that you signed into law in February 2007 is a critical step to reduce such violence in Mexico. We respectfully request that you include adequate funding to implement this law in the budget for the next fiscal year, particularly for the portion of the law creating a National System to Prevent, Attend to, Sanction and Eradicate Violence Against Women. As you know, this important system will provide coordination between various federal offices needed to implement the law.

In addition to ensuring funding for the violence against women law, a number of key changes to penal codes can be implemented to achieve the important goals of the law. On the federal level, we respectfully request that penal codes be modified to increase penalties for violence against women. Likewise, it would be useful for similar violence against women laws to be passed at the state level and for the state-level penal codes to be modified to ensure full implementation of the new federal law. We respectfully request that you encourage Mexican states to pass the laws needed to implement the broad guidelines of the federal violence against women law. In Chihuahua, a state violence against women law was enacted earlier this year. With your support for state-level laws throughout your country, more states can make important progress to end violence against women.

We applaud your efforts to update laws to eradicate violence against women. With this progress, we ask that you also fight against impunity for past murders of women in Ciudad Juárez. As you know, some of the earliest documented and unsolved murders of women in Ciudad Juárez occurred in 1993, and the statute of limitations for murder in Mexico is only 14 years. Families have fought for 14 years for answers about the murders of their daughters, wives and sisters, and many have been ignored or dismissed by local law enforcement. Now, for an increasing number, the statute of limitations has expired in their quest for justice.

While there has been some progress in investigating the more recent crimes, the murders of women killed 14 years ago cannot be forgotten. We respectfully urge you to encourage state and local law enforcement to renew their efforts to solve these older cases of murders of women in Ciudad Juárez, before the statute of limitations expires on more cases.

We appreciate your early leadership in combating violence against women and very much hope to work closely with you on this issue in the coming years. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Rep. Hilda L. Solis
Rep. Joe Baca
Rep. Tammy Baldwin
Rep. Xavier Becerra
Rep. Howard Berman
Rep. Judy Biggert
Rep. Madeleine Bordallo
Rep. Dan Burton
Rep. Lois Capps
Rep. Julia Carson
Rep. Donna Christensen
Rep. Yvette Clarke
Rep. Stephen Cohen
Rep. John Conyers
Rep. Joseph Crowley
Rep. Danny Davis
Rep. Rosa DeLauro
Rep. Peter DeFazio
Rep. Bill Delahunt
Rep. Diana DeGette
Rep. Mike Doyle
Rep. Eliot Engel
Rep. Chaka Fattah
Rep. Luis Fortuño
Rep. Barney Frank
Rep. Charlie Gonzalez
Rep. Al Green
Rep. Raúl Grijalva
Rep. Luis Guterres
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Rep. David Hobson
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Rep. Marcy Kaptur
Rep. Patrick Kennedy
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Rep. Jim Langevin
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Rep. Stephen Lynch
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Rep. Michael Michaud
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Rep. Patrick Murphy
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Rep. Eleanor Holmes Norton

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Rep. Tom Udall
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Rep. Lynn Woolsey
Rep. Albert Wynn