

TAKE ACTION!

Support Efforts to End the Cycle of Impunity In the Killings of Women in Guatemala

Since 2001, thousands of young women and girls have been killed in Guatemala in an epidemic of unsolved murders. **The number of women slain has risen steadily from 383 in 2003, to 531 in 2004, to 665 in 2005. In the first seven months of this year, nearly 400 women were killed.** The majority of the victims were young, poor women under the age of 40. Many were students, housewives, factory workers, domestic employees, or workers in the informal sector; some of the victims were professionals.

Although the number of murders is alarming, the killing of women is not just a question of statistics. A key characteristic in a large number of cases is the brutality with which the murders were committed. In many cases, the victims were raped, strangled, decapitated or otherwise mutilated.

In the face of this growing wave of femicides, the Guatemalan government has failed to bring those responsible to justice. Progress in the investigation of the murders of women has been fraught with numerous shortcomings, including a lack of technical capacity to preserve crime scenes, interrogate witnesses, and collect and preserve evidence, as well as a lack of political will to resolve the murders.

U.S. Members of Congress can play a vital role in supporting efforts to resolve these brutal killings. On November 14th, Representative Dan Burton (R-IN) with the support of Representatives Eliot Engel (D-NY), Hilda Solis (D-CA), Barbara Lee (D-CA), and Tom Lantos (D-CA), introduced **House Resolution 1081** to condemn the murders. The resolution:

- condemns the ongoing abductions and murders of women and girls in Guatemala;
- expresses condolences and deepest sympathy to the families of victims;
- recognizes the courageous struggle of the victim's families in seeking justice for the victims, and
- recommends specific actions on the part of the U.S. President, Secretary of State, and United States Ambassador to Guatemala, to encourage Guatemala to properly investigate, resolve, and prevent these crimes.

H.Res.1081 is an important step Representatives can take to stop the cycle of violence against women in Guatemala and seek justice for the families of the victims.

Contact your congressional representative to request that he/she co-sponsor the Resolution! Call the Capitol Switchboard at 202-224-3121 to be put through to your representative's office. Once connected, ask to speak with the foreign policy aide. Let him/her know that as a constituent you would like to see your representative co-sponsor H.Res.1081 to support efforts to bring an end to the killings of women in Guatemala. Remind your representative if he/she signed-on to the May 2006 Congressional Letter to the State Department requesting their support in resolving the murders (click here to see a list of co-signers).

The resolution will be open for co-sponsors at least until Thursday, November 30, but the sooner you can make your call the better.



If you have any questions, please visit the Washington Office on Latin America's website at www.wola.org or contact WOLA Associate on Violence Against Women, Adriana Beltrán, at (202) 797-2171.