



## Communique Committee of Experts

### **The Committee of Experts requests the State of Venezuela to make an official statement on femicides and maternal mortality in Venezuela**

Washington DC, February 19, 2020. The [Committee of Experts](#) of the Follow-up Mechanism of the [Belém do Pará Convention \(MESECVI\)](#), expresses its concern for the Gender-related Killings of Women (femicides) that have been occurring in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, as well as for the maternal mortality figures that have come to our knowledge, and requests the State to make an official pronouncement on the indicators in both subjects.

Given the absence of systematic government publications, women's movements have monitored the femicides reported in digital media, resulting in 167 female murders for the year 2019 in the South American country, most frequently registered in the states of Zulia, Miranda, the Capital District, Lara, Bolívar, Anzoátegui, Aragua, Carabobo and Monagas. According to this monitoring, the crimes had a greater incidence in the months of June and December, with the bulk of the victims being young women (between 21 and 35 years old). The follow-up studies indicate that these murders were committed with great cruelty.<sup>1</sup>

These 167 femicides, although being an unofficial record, are alarming as they exceed the last known official figure, which indicated 122 murders of women for hatred or disregard for their condition as women.<sup>2</sup> Although Venezuela is not the country with the highest number of cases in the region, the Committee of Experts is greatly concerned about this possible increase, which continues under monitoring in 2020, maintaining the trend. The only information from the State on the figures has been offered by the Ministry of Popular Power for Women and Gender Equality, indicating 19 femicides only in January 2020 and until the 23rd of that month (almost a daily femicide), which is highly striking.<sup>3</sup> Until now, there are no statistics systematized or expressed publicly by the bodies that receive complaints, criminal investigations or from the justice sector.

On the other hand, the maternal mortality figures presented by the Pan American Health Organization in June 2019 for Venezuela<sup>4</sup> is also worrying. Citing epidemiological records of the

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<sup>1</sup> <https://utopix.cc/pix/monitor-de-femicidios-2019-interactivo/> Investigation of the anthropologist Aimee Zambrano. Only available in Spanish.

<sup>2</sup> <https://oig.cepal.org/en/indicators/femicide-or-feminicide>

<sup>3</sup> State powers in permanent sesión to combat femicides in the country. MINMUJER press release, 23/01/2020.

<sup>4</sup> PAHO's Response to Maintaining an Effective Technical Cooperation Agenda in Venezuela and Neighboring Member States,

State, this agency reported 190 maternal deaths only until April 6, 2019, with an average of 12 per week, 98.6% of them occurred within the hospital premises. In the absence of other statistics, unofficially, this data allows to estimate about 624 maternal deaths for the year under consideration.

According to the latest publications of the State in this regard, in 2015 there were 456 maternal deaths, which drastically increased in 2016 to 756.<sup>5</sup> Based on the estimation carried out, a high figure would be maintained for 2019, but it cannot be determined with accuracy as long as official statistics are not reported on the number of live births registered for these years, data necessary to establish the maternal mortality ratio in the country, according to international standards. This would contribute to establishing stronger public policies to eradicate this scourge, the right to information on official figures being an aspect demanded by women's movements before the authorities. The Committee has also received information from civil society organizations<sup>6</sup> reporting that, in the absence of other contraceptive methods, a single method of irreversible consequences would be offered as a contraceptive method.

It should be noted that the situation of healthcare for Venezuelan pregnant women, could be boosting their migration to neighboring countries. Women could be seeking better conditions for the time of delivery, at risk of suffering negative consequences in recipient countries, including xenophobia, trafficking, and the vulnerability of their status as migrant and woman. Venezuela has also become the country in the region whose indicator of maternal mortality has increased more considerably.<sup>7</sup>

Therefore, and within the framework of the Venezuelan State's commitments to the Convention of Belém Do Pará, this Committee requests the authorities to: 1) make a statement including official statistics on femicide and maternal mortality; 2) publish regularly and systematically the figures related to women's rights, in order to design effective public policies; 3) prioritize actions that strengthen the competencies of the bodies that receive complaints; criminal investigations and justice, in order to adequately address cases of violence against women, in accordance with national legislation and the provisions of the Belem do Para Convention; 4) strengthen and prioritize, with sufficient resources and capacities, plans, programs and projects aimed at preventing, addressing, punishing and eradicating violence against women; 5) promote campaigns, training, raising-awareness and other actions for timely preventing and identifying cases in the communities; 6) guarantee the optimal conditions for pregnancy care, childbirth and postpartum in the health centers, eradicating any practice related to obstetric violence; 7) harmonize the emphasis that the State has placed on the humanization of childbirth and birth with the current reality of hospital care, in which the model of power exercise by health personnel continues to prevail, rather than respect to the rights of women; 8) Provide sufficient resources to the Health Sector, so that modern and safe contraceptive methods are provided to women.

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[https://www.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com\\_docman&view=download&alias=49139-ce164-inf-9-s-ops-cooperacion-venezuela&category\\_slug=164-comite-ejecutivo&Itemid=270&lang=en](https://www.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com_docman&view=download&alias=49139-ce164-inf-9-s-ops-cooperacion-venezuela&category_slug=164-comite-ejecutivo&Itemid=270&lang=en)

<sup>5</sup> <https://es.scribd.com/document/347856274/Boletin-Epidemiologico-el-Ministerio-del-Poder-Popular-para-la-Salud> Only available in Spanish

<sup>6</sup> Mujeres al Límite Magazine Caracas, 2019. Report elaborated by Coalición equivalencias en Acción (AVESA, Centro por la Justicia y la Paz. AC Mujeres en Línea y centro Hispanoamericano de la Mujer FREYA) Caracas, 2019. Available only in Spanish.

<sup>7</sup> <https://oig.cepal.org/en/indicadores/mortalidad-materna>

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The [Committee of Experts](#) is the technical body of the [MESECVI](#) responsible for the analysis and evaluation of the process of implementation of the Belém do Pará Convention. It is composed of independent experts, appointed by each of the States Parties among their nationals, who exercise their functions in their personal capacity.