



The Greens | European Free Alliance
in the European Parliament



Second Conference on Femicide ; NO MORE KILLING OF WOMEN !

European Parliament

November 19th, 2009

Strategy Meeting - Results

Introduction

Many diverse and valuable ideas were introduced at the strategic meeting on November 19th 2009, following the conference: No more Killing of Women! State of Play and Perspectives. The objectives, criteria and needs laid out on a short, medium, and long-term basis, help to outline a strategy to guarantee and promote women's right to a life free of violence, thus eradicating Femicide.

We present the following report as a summary and synthesis of the ideas developed at the Strategy Meeting. Please also see the entire version of the speeches given during the conference and its summary .

I The Ideal Society

Women have all the rights and liberties that have been established as human rights by the international community, and the right to a life free of violence and discrimination as stipulated by the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women.

II The Current Unsatisfactory Situation

a) The unsatisfactory situation from the European standpoint, Gaby Koppers

Two years ago, the European Parliament(EP) adopted a resolution —which since then has been frequently referenced— on the murder of women (Femicide) in Mexico and Central America, and the role of the European Union in fighting that phenomenon (2007/2025(INI)). The resolution, as part of a more extensive report, offers a series of specific recommendations directed at European institutions, principally the Council and the Commission. It explores topics such as: methods of prevention, protection of victims and their relatives, investigation of crimes, punishment of killers, the role of the EU delegations, and coordination of efforts by EU embassies in places where Femicide occurs, etc.

The resolution was adopted by a wide majority and with unanimous support by the members of the European Parliament –there were only 4 members who abstained, members who on principle always abstain from voting. Still, the influence of that vote is limited, since the report was the result of an internal initiative; it was not based on a legislative proposal from the European Commission, and therefore does not lead to the compulsory creation and ratification of a legislative act. That means we are not working with a law, but rather with an opinion – an opinion shared by the entire parliament. In that sense, we may say that the resolution represents a widely-shared, public and European opinion.

During the last two years some of us have traveled to the region and contacted EU delegations and embassies in the various countries to confirm that the recommendations were being implemented. The results were not very reassuring. Quite the opposite. While a few European embassies confirmed that they did in fact know about the resolution and the report, no one seemed particularly interested in carrying out the recommendations. According to them, it would be very difficult given that in the countries in question problems of violence were not exclusive to violence against women, and that in the context of widespread violence they could not focus “only” on women. The representatives of the EU also told us that the embassies of member states did not want to be run by ruling bodies in Europe, but rather to develop their own programs. After such communications, with little or no optimism, we have returned to Europe with the sense that nothing has changed in terms of the attitude or commitment from European officials concerning the fight against Femicide in the aforementioned countries.

In the conference this morning, the feeling was slightly different. The representatives from the European Commission and Council talked about directives against gender-based violence, particularly the international aspects of those directives. They confirmed the presence of many programs that combat violence against women, and referred to “gender focal points”, or people who have been designated to address women’s rights in each one of the institutions representing the EU in Central America and Mexico. There are obvious contradictions between what we heard this morning and what we saw and heard over there.

Such contradiction may be our starting point. We are certainly not in an ideal situation. Obviously, from Europe we do not have any kind of legal instrument to support the fight against Femicide. Yet, there are some elements already mentioned that we can build on now by promoting a dialogue that will lead to greater theoretical clarity, concrete programs and legislative consequences, as well as institutional mechanisms. Nothing more, and nothing less!

b) The unsatisfactory situation from a Latin American standpoint. Andrea Medina Rosas

The fragile and highly complex situation involving the guarantee of women's right to a life free of violence in Latin America.

All possible means of making women's rights a priority for States are useful and important in the task of ensuring those rights. However, for such efforts to truly be effective it is crucial to implement mechanisms with the due authority to require compliance and hold States accountable for their actions. When the European Parliament passed the resolution on Femicide in Mexico and Central America, it was spread throughout Latin American society as a point of reference; yet, it did not generate the same reaction in the States or embassies because there was no attempt to reinforce the recommendations. This is a good reminder to couple our efforts with the mechanisms that will require States to comply and hold them accountable when they fail to do so.

Concerning the weak institutional structures and the complexities of those processes aimed at fulfilling human rights obligations – through which we detect the State's acts of simulation—I would emphasize the following points:

The structural reasons for violence against women, simply because they are women, arise from unequal power structures between men and women, which in turn arise from social inequalities in other areas. In that sense, the eradication of violence against women is not just a matter of formal action from the State, but also relates to substantive changes and cultural initiatives promoted by the State.

In Latin America, *de facto* forces are gaining power and greatly weakening the stability of State institutions. Such forces are feeding off of women's inequality and acts of violence against women. For that reason we are seeing that legislative and institutional steps to prevent and punish violence against women are not effective in the region. Still, to clarify that fact is not to say that we are against those laws and institutions; rather, it is the understanding that in spite of all those efforts, there are very real limitations that go beyond legislation or institutional definitions. Those limitations stem from political interests as well as cultural and institutional conditions in each country, which perpetuate power relations based on misogyny.

In that sense, the dialogue must include a reexamination of politics in a new regional context, and will require a reevaluation of practical strategies.

In light of this situation -and considering the momentum generated up to now with the extra work of civil organizations- we must prioritize the development of civil organizations and social movements, strengthening their technical capacity and enabling them to work with greater detail and depth in the monitoring of State's actions. Such development is key given the need to document and denounce the simulation and loss of women's rights in the region and make those issues known to the international community.

We must achieve the critical mass that will sustain the monitoring processes once begun, so as to guarantee that the consequences and goals we hope for will not exist only in speeches, leading to no real change. To accomplish that, we must take into consideration particular aspects and conditions of different women in different countries, as well as a broader vision

of the region. Then, the collaboration among regions –Europe and America- could truly have an impact on all women.

III Positive Critique of the Current Situation:

Starting with the work done by the defenders of women's rights, the concept of Femicide began to emerge, making the problem visible and contributing to greater awareness in certain sectors of society. Proof of that newfound awareness is the fact that in certain countries the term is now used officially, and we have seen the creation of specific laws and resolutions supported by conventions to protect women's right. Due to those advances, cases of Femicide have reached the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. Such progress is considered positive.

Dialogue and information exchange are enriching processes for the women's movement and for those who defend women's rights, who have gained experience in networking and lobbying.

Moreover, the cause has gained support from institutions like the European Parliament, and other authorities are beginning to commit. New training processes have begun for police in the area of human rights and women's rights.

IV Long Term:

a) Long-Term Objectives

- Rates of Femicide have lowered at a global level.
- Impunity as well as societal and state corruption, which generate and are accomplice to the killing of women, have been eradicated; so judicial systems assume greater responsibility in the task to prevent violence against women, punish the perpetrators' crimes and offer justice to the victims.
- Democracy and the Secular State have been secured at a regional level and the systems that ensure human safety have been renewed.
- Cultural changes were achieved that put an end to Femicide and impunity; this leads to changes in the social structures, as well as judicial and political institutions, allowing for:
 - Full Investigations that reveal and categorize cases of Femicide/Femicide at a regional level and consolidate indicators.
 - Useful and precise statistics;
 - A legal/judicial system that punishes perpetrators and provides justice for victims.
- States comply with commitments made through international conventions, thus reforming their constitutions and laws to protect women; specific programs of legal assistance for poor women are created, improved, and financed; and discriminatory

practices are eliminated. Definitively, laws and public policies are created that uphold women's rights, even in the areas of sexual and reproductive health, and sexual and reproductive rights; and abortion is decriminalized.

- Education on how to combat gender-based violence has improved; and there is a change of mentality and cultural mindset, which enables the eradication of such violence and puts an end to impunity.
- Women's organizations are strengthened through national and regional development, and those organizations are united in a cooperative effort.

b) Measurable Criteria for Long-Term Goals

- Reduction of the Femicide rate; Increase in reported cases that are resolved and punished.
- Specialized statistics for the region, and categorization of quantitative and qualitative indicators according to location, which will enable a regional comparison.
- Qualitative change in the Media's treatment of the issue, and a lesser degree of social stigma toward victims of gender-based violence.
- The number of television and radio programs and newspaper articles that inform about women's rights.
- A greater percentage of the public funds are used to address the problem, leading to an increase of specialized public policies, such as:
 - Programs for information and training throughout the region, designed to educate on how to combat violence against women, and implemented at all levels of formal schooling, from preschool up to professional training.
 - Higher percentage of specific laws created.
 - Increase and improvements in those programs of human security, democracy and human rights that work from a gender perspective.
 - Standardized and institutionalized compensation for victims' families.
- Within the EU, new budget lines and financial instruments for bilateral cooperation between the EU and Latin America, with the aim of eradicating Femicide.
- Number of noncompliance cases punished for failure to exercise due diligence.
- The unification of women's organizations in an effort to coordinate local and regional programs.

c) Long-Term Needs

- Strong and stable judicial systems with functional and effective legislation, which ensure that the victims have access to justice, provide means of protection and aid for potential victims, and generates a system of compensation.
- System of accountability, (public reports and supervision of police practices), monitoring of laws and compliance with those laws.

- Awareness and education on all fronts: professionals (in services and in the judicial system) as well as political parties, in order to create a culture of peace and respect.
- Strengthen democratic processes in all the countries in the region, strengthening civil society organizations, especially women's organizations.
- Institutionalize the role of civil society in the creation and implementation of policies regarding the cooperation between the EU, Latin America and the Caribbean (EU-LAC).
- Expand the reach of the International Commission against Impunity in Central America to the whole region.
- Make Femicide one of the priorities in the EU's External Relations policies, creating specific budget lines, and exercising enough pressure on Latin American governments that they will commit to ensuring women's rights and security.
- Revisit the current model for development, adding a new emphasis of human security, and centering on the campaign to end violence against women, placing it as an ethical focal point in the fight for global security.

V Medium Term:

a) Medium-Term Objectives: by the end of 2011

- Strengthen the civil society and women's organizations, to enhance their capacity for investigation, data collection and advocacy.
- The European Union has agreed on criteria and outlined a clear strategy and directive to combat the problem of violence against women and Femicide/Femicide, which include:
 - A specific line of funding
 - Ratifying a compulsory political agreement.
 - Sanctions for countries in which the governments fail to combat impunity in cases of Femicide; for example, the creation of a European Directive in which the Member States would not support bilateral agreements with countries that have high Femicide rates and the government does not act diligently.
- Changes to educational policies, and development of institutional protocols for reporting and monitoring.
- Abolish the criminalization of those who defend human rights and social activists; create an international law for protection, endorsed by the United Nations.
- Ensure that Femicide/Femicide is explicitly defined as a crime in legal terms, so that it will be applied as such; Carry-out representative litigation to set a standard protocol for the proceedings.

- Make sure that any legal instruments created or reformed are binding, and that they offer protection to those who report or testify in cases of Femicide.
- Train police in the area of human rights: in the ways those rights are violated and how it may be prevented.
- Create a category of regional Femicide, consolidating the indicators and types of records kept, to establish mutual objectives and conduct thorough investigations at a regional level, in order to understand the full extent of the problem in Latin America, and the different contexts in which it takes place.
- Create tripartite forums, with an agenda established by civil society, with government participation and International cooperation.

b) Measurable Medium-Term Criteria

- International law to protect those who defend human rights.
- Laws that are binding, with sufficient funding and women's groups who participate in the monitoring process.
- The type and number of investigations conducted by non-governmental organizations.
- The number of Round Tables and the quality of the consultations and other kinds of dialogue and monitoring carried out by a cooperative effort from civil organizations, as well as local, national, regional and international authorities.
- The number of regional conferences to determine the particular and contextualized conditions conducive to carrying out the laws.
- The sum total allotted to this cause by each Latin American country and the EU.

C) Medium-Term Needs

- Develop channels of communication and consultation between organizations that defend women's rights, the European Parliament, the UN and other authorities, in order to create the legislation needed to protect those organizations.
- Acknowledgement and official, political protection for those who defend human rights.
- Resources.
- Organize women from different educational backgrounds, and increase efforts to work with institutions, including parliamentary institutions.

IV Short Term:

a) Short-Term Objectives: May 2010 (European Union, Latin America and Caribbean Summit)

- Develop a declaration to request that the problem of violence against women is included in the agenda and declaration of the EU-LAC summit of May 2010, emphasizing a) the link between economic conditions and Feminicide, b) violence against women as an obstacle for development, and c) the need to characterize Feminicide as a crime and treat it as such.
- Create a forum before that of the civil society and the Summit, to share what we have gained from the second conference “No more Killing of Women!” and demand sanctions for those countries in gender alert. No later than March 2010.
- Through the Summit, the EU should promote the creation of a forum for dialogue between the Latin American governments and civil society, including women’s rights organizations, where they can discuss EU directives and implementation.
- Stress the importance of Feminicide through Latin American embassies in Europe, which should help to get the problem included in the Summit agenda.
- Draw support from the EU to strengthen civil societies and create regional networks, supplying resources that will allow them to fully develop creative means of investigation and monitoring, and to apply the relevant laws.
- Create a gender alert and sanction those countries with high indexes of violence against women.
- Coordinate protests in Spain and in the embassies during the Summit, to compel the parties involved to adopt the resolution on Feminicide.
- Develop security programs aimed at human security.
- Demand commitment and transformative actions to ensure democracy in Latin American countries and uphold the secular state.

b) Measurable Short-term Criteria

- A ratified declaration and resolution.
- The number of meetings and agreements to carry-out a cooperative process. The quality of collaboration with civil societies aimed at implementing public policies.
- Tools and resources available to organize the pre-Summit Forum.
- Number of security programs developed and implemented.
- Spokespeople for the State, such as ambassadors, who are committed to the cause.
- Liaisons and contacts between women’s organizations in Spain and students from Latin America and the Caribbean who are in Spain, particularly those involved in women and gender studies.

c) **Short Term Needs**

- Constant dialogue, as well as material and logistical resources.
- Support in the decision-making bodies that set the agenda for the Summit.
- Support for the idea that violence against women is an obstacle for a central component of development, that is, for women, who are key agents of development.
- Communication of the proposals that will be addressed – the possibility of an alternative summit.
- Seize the opportunity to work with the Spanish Presidency, which has expressed the desire to prioritize the gender perspective.

Conclusions, Raül Romeva i Rueda

Through this conference we are establishing not only the agenda, but also the methods will use. One of the goals was to draw greater media attention and therefore spread awareness of the problem. We have accomplished that by doing interviews with different agents from Guatemala and Mexico.

We have learned from these processes and summits that if there is no societal or media pressure, then certain topics that we consider important do not appear on the agendas nor in the official conclusions, given that there are other agendas in play.

The meeting of the European Union - Latin American and Caribbean Parliamentary Assembly (EuroLat) is an important opportunity to push the issue, draw media attention and spark the interest of ministerial authorities as well as mid-level officials –who always end up writing the agendas and directives—, thus creating the need to talk about these issues. But let's not forget that it will be a long and difficult road, since we know from experience that certain authorities are hesitant to integrate Human Rights issues in the general framework of the Assembly, as it could shake up the “good relations” that normally abound. If that's the way it is, then we will have to wage war, politically and socially as well as with the media. We must understand that if it is already difficult to introduce this issue in the Parliamentary Assembly, it will be even harder to get it on agenda for the Summit. I say all this so that we understand the challenges ahead.

Still, I don't want to discourage you, quite the opposite. We need a strategic plan aimed at spreading awareness of violence against women, for which we must find existing structures in which we can incorporate the issue and the corresponding agenda. It is not the time to work independently, but to rally together. We have contacts with Enlazando Alternativas and other resources that might be important.

One of the positive things about this morning's conference is that Davide Zaru, the European Commission representative that was here, showed a lot of support and interest in taking this issue to the Commission. It is very important to find the key players who can catalyze a discussion in each of the institutions. While I have it on good authority that this is an important issue for the Spanish Presidency, we still don't know how it will be incorporated in the bioregional agenda with Latin America. We must take advantage of these windows of opportunity.

We will write a small report with today's conclusions, with the basic ideas, and I promise to send them to all the different institutions, that is, to the President of the Council and the European Commission, so that they might see that these ideas have been discussed and distributed among the institutions.

We will also distribute the ideas through the parliamentary "Questions for written answer", since the content is public –the answer as well as the question—, both may be used as a means of support or to create pressure as needed.

Lastly, I'd like to say that this is not by any means the end, but rather it is part of a process that will involve many more stages.