

Thousands take to streets in Argentina to protest violence against women

Kamilia Lahrichi, Special for USA TODAY 8:44 p.m. EDT June 3, 2015



(Photo: Kamilia Lahrichi, for USA TODAY)

BUENOS AIRES — Tens of thousands of people took to the streets across Argentina on Wednesday to protest recent violence against women in a region where the abuse has been endemic.

The demonstrations were prompted in large measure by a May case of a pregnant 14-year-old allegedly beaten to death by her boyfriend. Police found her body buried in the suspect's courtyard. In April, the country was shocked after the estranged husband of a kindergarten teacher slit her throat in front of her class, AFP reported.

Men, women and children in the main square of the presidential palace held banners with the names and pictures of women who have been killed.



Men joined women to protest against the alarming rate of violence against women in Argentina. (Photo: Kamilia Lahrichi, for USA TODAY)

"I am your mom. I am your sister. I am your wife. I am your daughter. Respect me," one handwritten sign read.

Violence against women has been a major problem in Argentina. Nationwide, there was a femicide — the killing of women because of their gender — every 35 hours from 2007 to 2012, according to La Casa del Encuentro in [Buenos Aires](#). In 2014, there were 277 murders of women in Argentina, the group estimated.

Luis Echeveria, 21, a student at Salvador University in Buenos Aires, said he joined Wednesday's protest to support women.

"I was born privileged in this society because I am a man and we have the right to decide over women," he said.

Including the Caribbean, Latin America is home to more than half of the world's 25 countries with the highest femicide rates, according to the Small Arms Survey, a research organization in Geneva that tracks armed violence.

Despite laws criminalizing gender-based violence, [El Salvador](#) has the highest rate of women murdered in the world, the organization said in 2012. Guatemala ranked third and [Honduras](#) sixth.

Latin American countries have taken few steps to curb abuses against women.

In Bolivia, only 96 out of 442,000 complaints of gender-based violence from 2007 to 2011 were acted on by authorities, according to the Center of Information and Development of Women in [La Paz](#).



A boy stands on his mother's shoulders as thousands march Wednesday for women's rights in Buenos Aires. (Photo: Kamilia Lahrichi, for USA TODAY)

Bolivia and Ecuador have defined femicide as a special crime. Guatemala has created special prosecutor units and tribunals to tackle gender violence.

Although numbers are hard to come by, violence against women keeps rising, local and international organizations say.

"We need official statistics to develop effective policies and an adequate budget to implement these policies," said Mabel Bianco, president of the Foundation for the Study and Research on Women in Buenos Aires.

Roberto Castro with the Regional Center for Multidisciplinary Research of the National Autonomous University of Mexico said: "The main problem with the current policies in many countries of Latin America is that there are sometimes very good laws, but its implementation is difficult."

Part of the problem is the pervasive culture that encourages abuse toward women.

"Charges [against criminals] are minimal because justice, too, is patriarchal, which feeds the cycle of violence," Marcela D'Angelo of the Abolitionist Campaign, a feminist organization in Buenos Aires, told USA TODAY.

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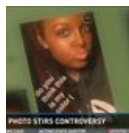
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