

Domestic violence increases 431% in Brazil amid lockdown



Brasilia, April 22 (RHC)-- Domestic violence has soared in Brazil since the beginning of the lockdown imposed by state governors to fight the spread of the new coronavirus, the Brazilian Forum on Public Safety NGO (FBSP) revealed in a report.

Although cases of violence against women and girls in the country are being widely exposed on social media, complaints to the authorities declined due to the impossibility for the victims to go to the police during this quarantine time.

“Women who are confined may be finding it difficult to report the occurrences (of violence), since the main way to report these crimes are the police stations”, the Forum's executive director Samira Bueno said.

The FBSP analyzed more than 50,000 posts on Twitter, almost 6,000 of which indicated the occurrence of domestic violence against women and girls.

“Through traditional methods of research, it is sometimes difficult to obtain a correct estimate of the cases, because women are afraid to speak, even more when isolated with their potential aggressors. That's why we decided to listen to what neighbors and relatives are saying on social media,” according to the director of the organization Decode Pulse, which participated in the study.

Yet Brazil is not the only country where lockdowns turned to be nightmares for women and girls. The situation is similarly grim in Mexico, Chile and elsewhere in Latin America, where measures taken by the authorities are often not accompanied by adequate protection for the victims.

In Mexico, 200 women have been murdered since quarantine measures began, while in Argentina, 18 women have been killed by their partner or ex-partners during the first 20 days of the quarantine imposed on March 20th. Calls to helplines in the South American country rose by nearly 40 percent.

"Unfortunately, many women and girls are particularly exposed to violence precisely where they should be protected, in their own homes," said United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, who issued a call for a domestic violence "ceasefire" as lockdowns extended into the end April.

"Every day, a woman is abused, raped or beaten at home by her partner or her ex," said Ada Rico, from the Argentinian NGO "La Casa del Encuentro." "In normal times, we would help her to file a complaint. These days, the urgency is to get her out of the house as quickly as possible."

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