

Women worldwide march to demand end to violence and inequality



Demonstrations from Buenos Aires to Lagos demand justice for victims of femicide and urge reforms to protect women.

People attend a demonstration to call for gender equality and demand an end to violence against women to mark International Women's Day in Paris, France [Gonzalo Fuentes/Reuters]

Paris, March 9 (RHC)-- Demonstrators have taken to the streets across Asia, Africa, Europe and the Americas to mark International Women's Day, with many demanding an end to gender-based violence and inequality.

In cities like Buenos Aires, Argentina on Saturday, those warnings were particularly grave, as protesters railed against austerity plans put forth by President Javier Milei that they say will roll back services for women.

Milei's government has shut down the country's Ministry of Women, Genders and Diversity and plans to strike "femicide" – the term for the murder of women in the context of gender violence – from the country's penal code. His justice minister has called the term a "distortion of the concept of equality", claiming it indicates a higher value for women's lives.

Reporting from Buenos Aires, Al Jazeera's Teresa Bo said demonstrators say the move is particularly harmful given that one woman is killed every 30 hours in the country. A UN report released last year found that about 60 percent of women and girls killed in 2023 were murdered by their intimate partner or a close relative.

"Women here say that they've been fighting for too long, that they won't back down, that they won't be silent," Bo said. "They say that their fight is too important, and that's why they say that they will continue with their struggle on the streets."

Hundreds of women in Ecuador marched in the capital Quito holding signs that opposed violence and the "patriarchal system." "Justice for our daughters!" demonstrators yelled in support of women slain in recent years.

In Bolivia, thousands of women began marching late Friday, with some scrawling graffiti on the walls of courts, demanding that their rights be respected and denouncing impunity in femicides, with less than half of those cases reaching sentencing.

In many European countries, women also protested against violence, for better access to gender-specific healthcare, equal pay and other issues in which there are still disparities with men.

In Poland, activists opened a centre across from the parliament building in Warsaw where women can go to have medical abortions, also known as non-surgical abortions, either alone or with other women.

Opening the centre on International Women's Day across from the legislature was a symbolic challenge to authorities in the traditionally Roman Catholic nation, which has one of Europe's most restrictive abortion laws.

Protesters also took to the streets in Madrid, Spain. Some protesters held up hand-drawn pictures depicting Gisele Pelicot, a French woman who was drugged by her now ex-husband in France over the course of a decade so that she could be raped by dozens of men while unconscious.

Pelicot has become a symbol for women all over Europe in the fight against sexual violence.

In the Nigerian capital of Lagos, thousands of women gathered at the Mobolaji Johnson Stadium, dancing and singing and celebrating their womanhood. Many were dressed in purple – the traditional colour of the women’s liberation movement.

In Russia, the women’s day celebrations had more official overtones, with honour guard soldiers presenting yellow tulips to girls and women during a celebration in St Petersburg.

In Ukraine, a ceremony was held in the city of Kharkiv to commemorate female soldiers who had died fighting Russia’s invasion.

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