

Uruguayan women say NO to gender violence

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By María Josefina Arce

In December 2017, under the mandate of the leftist Frente Amplio, Law 19.580 was passed in Uruguay to guarantee the right of women, regardless of age, race, socioeconomic status, belief or sexual orientation, to a life free of violence.

This comprehensive legal tool, described as a major step forward, establishes mechanisms, measures and comprehensive policies for prevention, care, protection, punishment and reparation.

However, its full implementation has not been achieved, stereotypes and other obstacles persist. The reality is that in the South American nation, according to experts, there is unfortunately evidence of a

setback in several aspects.

In fact, violent acts against women continue to occur, and they claim that they are in a national emergency and at imminent risk.

The most recent event shocked society and sent thousands of women into the streets of Montevideo, the capital, and the rest of the country last week in defense of their rights and against gender violence.

The gang rape of a 30-year-old woman is not an isolated incident, said the demonstrators, who denounced the macho stereotypes and patriarchal culture prevailing in the country.

The Uruguayan Network against domestic and sexual violence, which brings together various civil society organizations, called for a "cultural change" to avoid events such as the one that occurred in recent days, which in many cases are not made visible.

The arrival of Covid-19 and the necessary confinement made the problem worse. According to official data, more than 8 out of 10 women in the Metropolitan Area reported being victims of gender violence in some area. In towns with less than 5,000 inhabitants, the proportion is six out of ten, according to official sources.

The public agency INMUJERES, pointed out that in the context of the Covid-19 health emergency, every 13 minutes there was a report of domestic violence and two out of ten were afraid to go out in the street.

Uruguayan women citizens denounce that this situation shows that the state has not known how to give a timely, appropriate and effective response to this problem, so, they point out, it is a legal, ethical and political imperative the full implementation of Law 19.580.

And this requires adequate training of the judicial system and greater knowledge of the law by public institutions, since they do not comply with the obligations that the legislation places on them.

But in addition, the educational system, at all levels, must be capable of instilling values and a new mentality to achieve a life free of gender violence.

Uruguayan women are tired of being ignored, despite the existence of laws, and are demanding an adequate government response to the prevailing gender violence, which calls into question the way the country acts in the 21st century in the face of crimes of this nature.

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