

# *Veracruz, Mexico Fails to Tackle Femicide as Eight Women Killed Each Month*

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Mexico City, May 25 (RHC)-- Mexican federal authorities have ordered the governor of the violence-ridden state of Veracruz, Javier Duarte, to recognize the serious crisis of fatal gender violence plaguing the gulf state that sees an average of eight women killed as victims of femicide every month.

The Mexican newspaper La Reforma reported that rights advocates from the Veracruz Institute of Women have called on state authorities to issue a so-called "gender alert" for the state in the face of the crisis, ultimately forcing the hand of federal authorities to also put pressure on the state government.

According to the Mexican newspaper El Siglo de Torreon, Veracruz has seen some 500 femicides since Duarte took office as governor in 2010. Nadia Vera, an activist who was killed in Mexico City alongside three other femicide victims and male photojournalist Ruben Espinosa, had warned ahead of her murder that Duarte would be to blame if she was killed. Vera and Espinosa had fled Veracruz in the face of threats before they were killed.

But despite the extent of the crisis, women's rights advocates have faced resistance to their calls to acknowledge the problem. The Veracruz Institute of Women warned earlier this year that the state

prosecutor's office had not fulfilled its obligation to hand over statistics on femicide to the human rights body, Veracruz' El Heraldo reported.

Demands for a gender alert aim to push Veracruz to follow in the footsteps of the western state of Jalisco, which declared such an emergency in February over the problem of rampant femicides and forced disappearances of women and girls.

Jalisco also launched a new plan last month aimed at speeding up searches for missing women and girls, mimicking similar measures taken in the northwestern state of Chihuahua, home to a rare precedent of justice for femicide. The state reached a historic verdict last year that saw five men sentenced to a landmark 697 years in jail for 11 femicides.

But despite being a landmark case, the Chihuahua verdict was an outlier amid systemic impunity for femicide. Despite more than 44,000 women murdered in the past three decades, according to official statistics, few perpetrators have been brought to justice.

According to rights advocates, an impunity rate of more than 95 percent in femicide cases across Mexico fuels violence against women.

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