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**Protecting Democracy in an Age of Severe Political Polarization and
Extremism by promoting constructive discourse**

Humanitarian Committee

*Fighting against wide-spread gender
based violence in South America*

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RESEARCH REPORT



Forum: Humanitarian

Issue: Fighting against wide-spread gender based violence in South America

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Introduction

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a massive issue which affects the safety, dignity, and the fundamental human rights of millions of individuals in South America, particularly women and girls. This issue manifests in many forms including but not limited to domestic abuse, femicide, sexual violence, forced marriage, and human trafficking. These acts are often caused or increased by systematic inequalities, cultural norms, and institutional failings to protect vulnerable populations. The implication of GBV extends far beyond individual suffering. As for the humanitarian committee, GBV undermines the principles of human dignity and equality which are at the center of this committee's mission. GBV also influences social instability, economic development, and the cycle of poverty and injustice in a negative way. For example, long-term psychological and physical harm caused due to GBV not only affects the survivors but also their families and communities, creating a generational cycle of trauma. Furthermore there is a stigma around the topic of GBV which discourages many victims from seeking help, therefore making it harder to address the issue at hand. In South America, the level of GBV is high due to contributing factors such as poverty, weak legal enforcement, patriarchal structures, and limited access to education and health care. Addressing this issue is essential to achieving the United Nations humanitarian goals, including safeguarding vulnerable populations and gender equality. This committee will explore the challenges of combating GBV in South America, emphasizing the responsibility to protect victims, prevent further violence, and support communities to address the underlying causes.

Definition of Key Terms

Gender-Based Violence(GBV): Violence directed at an individual based on their gender. This includes physical, psychological, sexual and economic abuse.(About Gender-based Violence:UNHCR GBV Toolkit. www.unhcr.org/gbv-toolkit/_test/.)

Psychological Abuse: Behavior aimed at causing emotional or mental harm, such as manipulation, threats, or intimidation.("Psychological Abuse." *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 10 Jan. 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychological_abuse.)

South America: This continent includes 12 sovereign states such as Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay, and Venezuela; two dependent territories: the Falkland Islands and South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands and one internal territory French Guiana. ("South America." *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 10 Jan. 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_America.)

Femicide: The intentional killing of women and girls because they are female.(United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women). *Gender-Related Killings of Women and Girls (Femicide/Feminicide): Global Estimates 2022*. UNODC and UN Women, 2023.)

Domestic Violence: Abuse occurring within a household, often between partners or family members. This can include physical harm, emotional manipulation, or economic control.("Domestic Violence." *Cambridge Dictionary*, Cambridge University Press.)

<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/domestic-violence>)

Human Trafficking:The illegal trade of humans for purposes such as forced labor, sexual exploitation, or slavery. Women and girls are particularly vulnerable to this form of exploitation ("Human Trafficking." *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime*, <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/human-trafficking/>.)

Sustainable Development Goals: A collection of 17 global goals established by the United Nations to address urgent social, economic, and environmental challenges. ("Sustainable Development Goals." *United Nations*, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>.)

Covid-19: A viral disease caused by SARS-CoV-2, first identified in 2019, that spreads through respiratory droplets and can cause symptoms ranging from mild (fever, cough) to severe (pneumonia, organ failure).(World Health Organization. "Coronavirus." *WHO*, https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#tab=tab_1. Accessed 10 Jan. 2025.)

General Overview

In South America gender-based violence (GBV) is an ongoing problem with a long history and strong societal implications.The problem is tied to long-standing patriarchal structures that have strengthened gender inequality by restricting women's rights and upholding detrimental conventions. These structures have upheld conventions which marginalize women, which upheld the discriminatory parties to persist across generations. Existing inequalities were made worse by colonialism and its aftermath, which

established violence as the norm and produced power dynamics that disadvantaged women and girls. Nowadays GBV manifests in various forms in South America such as human trafficking, femicide, sexual violence, and domestic abuse. High rates of femicide are reported in nations like Brazil, Mexico, and Argentina; these crimes are frequently connected to systematic failures to implement protective legislation including weak enforcement of protective laws, insufficient judicial responses and impunity for predators. Socioeconomics play an important factor in GBV as well. Vulnerabilities are increased by socioeconomic circumstances like unemployment and poverty. Economic dependency often traps victims in abusive relationships since they lack the finances to seek safety and pursue legal action. Also victims are frequently discouraged from seeking assistance due to cultural stigmas. These challenges are compounded in rural areas, where access to legal, medical, and psychological support is often limited. Domestic violence instances increased as a result of lockdowns and economic distress brought on by the COVID-19 epidemic, worsening the situation. Lockdowns and financial troubles not only restricted access to resources that provided help, but also kept victims in their homes with their abusers. The area saw a rise in reports of domestic violence, highlighting the vital necessity for strong safety nets and crisis intervention programs during times of social and economic unrest. Since GBV is a humanitarian problem and a barrier to sustainable development, international organizations like the UN and NGOs have made tackling it a top priority in South America.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

National Governments in South America: Governments have implemented legislation to address GBV, such as Argentina's Law on Comprehensive Protection of Women (2009) and Brazil's Maria da Penha Law (2006). However, enforcement remains inconsistent, and political will varies between administrations.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs): NGOs like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch advocate for victims rights, provide shelter and legal aid, and work to change societal attitudes toward gender equality.

United Nation Entities: UN Women and the UN Development Programme (UNDP) provide funding, awareness campaigns, and technical support to countries addressing GBV.

Grassroot Movements: Movements like "Ni Una Menos" (Not One Less) in Argentina highlight the role of civil society in raising awareness and demanding justice for victims.

The World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF): They often support programs which empower women economically, indirectly addressing GBV by reducing financial dependency.

Regional Organizations: like the Organization of American States (OAS) and the African Union (AU) may have frameworks or charters promoting gender equality and addressing GBV.

Religious and Faith Based Organizations: These groups often have grassroots access and influence, which can be used to challenge harmful cultural practices and promote gender equality within communities.

Timeline of Events

Date of Event	
1994	Convention of Belém do Pará is adopted, marking a significant regional commitment to combating GBV.
2006	Argentina enacts the Comprehensive Protection of Women law.
2009	The Ni Una Menos movement begins in Argentina, spreading across Latin America.
2010	
2015	The Argentine Supreme Court declares femicide a distinct crime, leading to legal reforms to better address gender-motivated killings.
2020	COVID-19 pandemic leads to a surge in domestic violence cases.
2023	UN Women launches a regional campaign to address femicide in South America.

Treaties and Events

Convention of Belém do Pará (1994): A regional treaty by the Organization of American States (OAS) to prevent and punish violence against women. While it is groundbreaking its enforcement has been inconsistent.

UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (1993):

Provides an international framework for addressing GBV which urges member states to adopt policies to protect victims and punish offenders.

Brasilia Regulations Regarding Access to Justice for Vulnerable People (2008): A regional framework adopted by the Ibero-American Judicial Summit to improve access to justice, including for women affected by GBV.

Lima Agreement on Gender Equality (2019): it emphasizes collaboration on eradicating violence against women and promoting gender equality in policies and laws.

Montevideo Strategy for Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda (2016): Adopted by ECLAC (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean), it provides a roadmap for eradicating violence against women

CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women):

Enforced by most South American countries, this treaty creates obligations to promote gender equality and combat GBV.

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

Legislations: Many South American countries have enacted progressive laws to combat GBV, enforcement remains a challenge due to corruption, lack of funding, and societal norms.

Awareness Campaigns: Initiatives like “Ni Una Menos” have raised awareness but face resistance in conservative areas.

International support: UN and NGO programs provide resources but often lack the localized understanding needed for long-term success.

Possible Solutions

Strengthening legal reforms: Advocate for laws against GBV and make sure they are being enforced.

Community based interventions: creating programs which engage community leaders, educators, and families to address the root cause of GBV.

Victim support services: Expand shelters, counseling, and legal aid for survivors of GBV, with a focus on accessibility in rural areas.

Additional Resources

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women>

<https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/>

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/gender>

<https://evaw-global-database.unwomen.org/>

<https://www.unhcr.org/what-we-do/protect-human-rights/protection/gender-based-violence>

<https://www.hrw.org/topic/womens-rights>

<https://www.unibocconi.it/en/news/economic-independence-beat-gender-based-violence>