



SPOTLIGHT ON PUBLICATIONS: ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOR WOMEN VICTIMS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE



This Spotlight presents key publications documenting sexual violence perpetrated against women in the context of armed conflicts in Latin America. As well as providing an overview of gender-based violence in the region, these publications draw on specific case studies in order to identify the various underlying causes and institutional weaknesses responsible for perpetuating these human rights abuses. Finally, many of the publications provide recommendations for measures aimed at preventing gender-based violence while also improving access to justice and adequate reparation for victims.

► [Access to Justice for Women Victims of Sexual Violence](#)

Colombia has implemented some of the most effective jurisprudence to improve access to justice for women victims of sexual violence during the country's long history of armed conflict. This document, produced by a working group of the Colombian Constitutional Court, analyses government compliance with and the limitations of 'Auto 092', a paradigmatic ruling which recognises the specific risks of sexual violence faced by women in Colombia in a context of armed violence. The report details the ways in which impunity for crimes of sexual violence has persisted and highlights the structural barriers that limit access to justice for victims. Divided into four main sections, the report first describes national and international legal standards and frameworks designed to tackle sexual violence against women. The second section focuses on the obstacles that continue to prevent women from accessing justice and support services - such as the widespread underreporting of cases and ineffective investigation processes from the Constitutional Court itself. The third and fourth parts of the report offer key recommendations and requests to the Constitutional Court.

Full citation: Working Group to Monitor Compliance with Auto 092 of 2008 of the Colombian Constitutional Court. 2011. *Access to Justice for Women Victims of Sexual Violence. Fourth Follow-up Report to Auto 092 of the Colombian Constitutional Court*. Colombian Commission of Jurists, Bogota.



▶ [Access to Justice for Women Victims of Sexual Violence in Mesoamerica](#)

This report from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights provides an analysis of the factors that improve and limit access to justice by women victims of sexual violence in Mesoamerica. It highlights progress and best practices from the region, specifically in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. The report also sets out key challenges in accessing justice faced by women victims such as discriminatory socio-cultural view and gender stereotypes, a lack of real commitment on the part of governments to implement effective mechanisms to eradicate such forms of discrimination, and the multiple ways in which acts of sexual violence are rendered invisible. Lastly, the report provides key recommendations for combating impunity, for tackling diverse forms of discrimination against women, for producing reliable statistical evidence to better comprehend sexual violence, and for providing comprehensive services to women victims as part of integral redress.

Full citation: Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR). 2011. *Access to Justice for Women Victims of Sexual Violence in Mesoamerica*. IACHR, Washington, DC.

▶ [Hidden in Plain Sight: Violence Against Women in Mexico and Guatemala](#)

This report analyses some of the most extreme forms of violence against women, with a particular focus on cases of sexual violence and violent killings that occurred in Guatemala and in the northern border city of Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, between 2001 and 2007. The report evaluates policy and programme responses of the judicial systems and public security institutions in both countries to violence against women, specifically acts of femicide. In doing so, the report identifies key institutional weaknesses that actually perpetuate these human rights violations, such as widespread corruption and the heavy infiltration of organised crime in state institutions. In terms of femicide, the report highlights severe shortcomings and irregularities in the investigation, prosecution and sanctioning of these crimes both in Mexico and in Guatemala. Finally, the report provides a series of recommendations for developing effective prevention and response strategies with a multi-sectorial approach.

Full citation: Beltrán, A. Freeman, L. 2007. *Hidden in Plain Sight: Violence Against Women in Mexico and Guatemala*. Washington Office on Latin America, Washington, DC.

▶ [Latin American Consultation on the CEDAW Committee's General Recommendation on Women Human Rights in Situations of Conflict and Post-conflict](#)

This report from UN Women sets out a series of general recommendations for Latin American states to meet their obligations to respect, protect and fulfil women's human rights during times of armed conflict and in all peace-building, including processes of transitional justice. The recommendations emerged from a series of consultations, which took place in Guatemala and centred on the cases of Colombia, Guatemala and Haiti. The report focuses on a proposal presented to the CEDAW Committee aimed at strengthening a gender-based human rights approach in peace processes, transitional justice initiatives, as well as humanitarian assistance.

Full citation: United Nations Women. 2012. *Latin American Consultation on the CEDAW Committee's General Recommendation on Women Human Rights in Situations of Conflict and Post-conflict*. UN Women, Geneva.



▶ [Sexual Violence in Latin America and the Caribbean: A Desk Review](#)

Through a detailed review of more than two hundred documents, this report details the dimensions, patterns and multi-level risks associated with acts of sexual violence in the Latin America and Caribbean region, with a strong focus on Brazil and Mexico. In total, the report highlights six case studies of armed conflict during which women's human rights were violated, particularly through acts of sexual violence. The review illustrates the ways in which patterns of sexual violence are linked to discriminatory socio-cultural norms that are perpetuated at individual, community and macro-social levels. It then provides a detailed account of regional legal frameworks and national justice sector responses, including multi-sector policy initiatives and state responses that improve access to services for victims of sexual violence. The report also sheds light on recent initiatives designed to establish effective preventative measures through education and capacity building. Lastly, the report issues recommendations for governments to fulfil their responsibilities regarding women's rights.

Full citation: Contreras, J. M., Bott, S., Guedes, A., Dartnall, E. 2010. *Sexual Violence in Latin America and the Caribbean: A Desk Review*. Sexual Violence Research Initiative, Pretoria.

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