

Ecuador's LGBT+ community seen suffering deadliest year in a decade

By Oscar Lopez

Thomson Reuters Foundation (21.01.2020) – <https://reut.rs/2RREWwC> – Last year was the deadliest in at least a decade for gay and transgender people in Ecuador, campaigners have said, citing a possible backlash against new laws enshrining LGBT+ rights.

There were 16 murders or violent deaths involving LGBT+ people in the South American country in 2019, according to a report released by the Ecuadorian LGBT+ rights group Silueta X Association.

The group said it was the highest number since it began keeping track in 2010 and most of the victims were transgender women. In 2018 it registered two LGBT+ murders.

“As the year went on, we were realizing that the statistics of murders were terrible,” said Diane Rodriguez, director of Silueta X and president of the Ecuadorian Federation of LGBTI Organizations.

“It’s tough seeing images of someone looking happy on social media, and then all of a sudden they’re gone,” she told the

Thomson Reuters Foundation on Monday.

Rodriguez, who was the first trans woman elected to Ecuador's National Assembly, said the legalization last year of same-sex marriage in the conservative, mainly Catholic country may have had "a negative impact".

That followed a move by Ecuador's top court in 2018 to legally acknowledge a lesbian couple as parents for the first time, while a law passed in 2016 allowed trans people to change their gender identity legally without having surgery.

Murders of LGBT+ people also rose in 1998 after homosexuality was decriminalized, Rodriguez said.

For the study, researchers monitored media reports of LGBT+ deaths, as well as complaints lodged with Silueta X directly.

LGBT+ rights expert Javier Corrales said the rise in killings may signal a backlash.

"When there is a major change in public policy toward LGBT communities ... homophobic and transphobic arguments increase in frequency and maybe even intensity," said Corrales, professor of political science at Amherst College in the United States.

"We have reason to think that an expansion of hate speech can

lead to increases in hate crimes,” he said via email.

Attacks against LGBT+ people are common across Latin America, where conservative religious values and widespread violence can be a deadly mix.

In 2019 almost 40% of trans killings worldwide took place in Brazil, according to the Trans Murder Monitoring research project, from advocacy group Transgender Europe.

Meanwhile, Mexico’s National Observatory for Hate Crimes Against LGBT People recorded 57 murders of gay or transgender people last year.

WORLD: Human Rights Defenders in Latin America

“The capitalist world has de-humanized us.”

By Andrea Curcio for Human Rights Without Frontiers

HRWF (21.09.2017) – These are the words of Alejandro Solalinde Guerra, a Mexican Catholic priest and human rights champion. Father Solalinde has dedicated his life striving to provide safe places for migrants, away from the abuses undertaken by criminal gangs. Deeply concerned with the overwhelming numbers of disappeared migrants and the continuous influx of migrants coming from the south of Mexico, heading to the northern

areas, Father Solalinde is dedicated to redressing the discrimination and continuous abuses suffered by these migrants in Mexico.

Meanwhile, after the murder of the Honduran environmental activist Berta Cáceres in March 2016, her daughter Laura Zúñiga Cáceres continues her mother's fight to stop the incessant abuses taking place against the environment and human rights in Honduras. Laura tries to follow her mother's legacy, strongly supporting the work of COPINH (Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras), an organization co-founded by her mother. Gathering 200 Indigenous Lenca communities, COPINH advocates for the respect of the rights of Lenca people, not only trying to defend their human rights but to protect their territory and natural resources from the exploitation of dangerous extractive industries.

Father Solalinde and Laura are two of the many brave human rights defenders (HRDs) across Latin America who put their life on risk every day to defend the environment and human rights. HRDs in Latin America suffer constant struggles that are not properly addressed by national governments. The incapacity of governments to address such abuses in these countries are due to many factors, including the complicity of the State itself, big multinationals, corruption, and the actions of criminal gangs.

As integral allies in promoting human rights and democracy, HRDs in many countries across the world are in urgent need of protection. Providing support for HRDs is actually a central part of the EU's external policy. In 2004, and later revised in 2008, the EU Council adopted the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders. In practice, there are several mechanisms undertaken and funded by the EU to address the struggles suffered by HRDs. The EU provides political, economic and moral support through political dialogues conducted between the EU and relevant States, by undertaking regular visits by

EU officials to HRDs, and by providing financial assistance. Yet, as confessed by Amador Sanchez Rico, currently the Deputy Head of Division of Human Rights at the European External Action Service, "more can be done".

It is important to acknowledge the work of HRDs and to keep trying to provide them with moral and financial help, as well as with concrete protection. Most importantly, **their voice must be heard.**

The problem is that we live in a world, Father Solalinde claims, where economic profit is being prioritized over Mother Nature and the basic protection of human kind

So, has the capitalist world de-humanized us?

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