

Start date: 25/11/06

Web Publisher Category: (eg SVAW)

Paraguay

Urgent need for state shelters

Violence against women and girls in the family is one of the most serious problems facing Paraguay. A 2002 report by the UN Development Programme estimated that it accounts for some 25 per cent of violent crime in the country with girls being particularly affected: 50 per cent of the cases of violence against girls also include sexual violence. In more than a third of cases the abuser is known to the victim.

Despite the scale of the problem, there are no state institutions providing shelter for women who experience violence. This makes it virtually impossible for women to escape violent relationships and puts many women and their families at ongoing risk.

In 2005 the Women's State Secretary of Paraguay signed an agreement to refer women at risk of violence to a church-based organization called the Hogar gratuito los entusiastas (The Enthusiasts Free Shelter). The shelter was set up to provide a safe place, food and accommodation for women fleeing violence. However, it is woefully under-funded.

Teodora Cabrera, the director of Hogar gratuito los entusiastas, told Amnesty International that the shelter gets no financial support from the Paraguayan authorities. The hostel is wholly dependent on donations from individuals and the people running it. She acknowledges that the hostel does not have the resources to provide the kind of comprehensive support the women need. The hostel lacks basic facilities as well as the kind of services needed to put fractured lives back together, such as psychologists, medical staff and medicines, and social workers.

The authorities urgently need to set up refuges so women and children in Paraguay facing violence can find safety. They also need to develop their work with women's rights organizations to increase the number of refuges and improve those that already exist. Paraguay must meet the obligations it has agreed to under CEDAW and Belem do Para.

[Call to action]

Write to the President of the Republic of Paraguay asking for state refuges to be set up and for increased resources and support to be given to existing refuges like Hogar gratuito los entusiastas.

[Sample letter]

Dear President Duarte Frutos,

I am writing to express concern that no state-funded refuge has been set up in Paraguay to provide shelter for women facing violence in their families. The lack of refuges forces many women to stay in violent situations.

I urge you to set up state refuges with proper sustainable budgets and appropriate staffing and to increase your support for those refuges, such as the Hogar gratuito los entusiastas, which have been carrying out this vital work with very limited resources.

This appeal is part of Amnesty International's worldwide campaign to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, 25 November, focusing on shelters for women who suffer domestic violence.

Yours sincerely,

[Target contact details]

Presidente de la República del Paraguay
Excelentísimo Señor Presidente de la República
Nicanor Duarte Frutos
Dirección: Paraguay Independiente e/ Ayolas y O'Leary
Tel.: 00595 21 414 0200
Fax: 00595 21 414 0204
Correo Electrónico: presidente@presidencia.gov.py

[Image caption and copyright]