



In Juarez, a pedestrian walks by a mural of Luz Angelica Mena Flores, who was last seen in 2008. Image provided by Seattle Times.

Case Study: Indigenous Women and Femicide in Mexico

In Mexico, femicide is a pervasive problem that is on the rise. Most of these murders are never solved and attackers often go unpunished. The number of women and girls who are murdered in Mexico has doubled in the past five years. Women have engaged in massive protests and strikes to urge the government to stop the culture of violence against women. Femicide or *femicidio* is murder for gender-based reasons.

Gathering data surrounding gender-based violence presents challenges and limitations. [Mexico's federal statistics agency](#) acknowledged that what is collected does not truly reflect the characteristics of femicide at the national level, but also for certain population subgroups of interest like the various Indigenous groups in Mexico.

The national average of femicides is 1.25 per 100,000 women. Out of the several causal factors that academics examine including police corruption and neoliberalism, scholars universally argue that being Indigenous heightens the risk of exploitation which often leads to femicide.

“Why prey on Indigenous women? Oftentimes, in terms of what brought so many women to the maquilas by the border, is this need for labor,” Guillermina Gina Núñez-Mchiri, director of women and gender studies at the University of Texas at El Paso, said. “In rural Mexico and southern Mexico, they don’t have jobs. They don’t have industries.”

In the academic journal [Gender & Development](#), researchers assert that Mexican authorities do not acknowledge the systemic gender discrimination. Beyond that, the fact that the poor, Indigenous, and migrant women are most vulnerable to femicides due to the multilayered discrimination at the intersection of privilege, class and gender.

María Guadalupe Campanur Tapia

[María Guadalupe Campanur Tapia](#) was an Indigenous woman who lived in the rural community of Cherán, Michoacán. María Guadalupe, or “Lupe” as her friends called her, was the only female member on the founding team of the Forest Rangers of Cherán, a group who held community patrols to defend their forests against illegal logging. In Cherán, the local community started self-governance to claim their rights as Indigenous Peoples and as a reaction to the corrupt politicians and organized crime groups who were mercilessly extracting the natural resources for economic gain.

Lupe was pivotal in contributing to one of the best functioning examples of self-government in Mexico, which also successfully reduced the violence in the area. The last murder occurred in 2012 before Campanur Tapia went missing in January 2018. Her body was found later that month, evidencing torture and rape before being strangled to death by two unidentified killers.

A coalition of [37 environmental and community groups](#), including representatives from [UN Women](#) are demanding justice for Lupe and imploring the Mexican authorities to ensure a thorough investigation into the assassination.

An environmental activist, female rights advocate, and Indigenous Peoples leader, femicides took the life of the talented and passionate Indigenous Mexican woman. Lupe was an icon in her community because of her service to their land, elderly, children, and workforce.

Restoring Dignity

[La Mujer Obera](#) is a social enterprise that was founded by Chicana activists in 1981 to uplift disenfranchised Native Mexican heritage women through a variety of programs and services. This past October, La Mujer Obera hosted a femicide awareness discussion titled “Femicidio Político Territorial,” or Territorial Political Femicide in English. During the event, the life and femicide of Lupe was tributed.

Carolina Irene Márquez Méndez, a professor of Public Action and Social Development at El Colegio de la Frontera Norte in Ciudad Juarez, [recited an eulogy](#) in commemoration of her lifelong friend.

“Femicide to me was an issue I already had a political commitment to and (her death) just reinforced that for me,” Méndez told the crowd in Spanish.

Méndez emphasized the pivotal role that anti-femicide activists like herself play in keeping the memories alive of the women who fall victim to femicide. Anti-femicide activists fight to change

society's norms by bringing the public's attention to who these women are and keeping their legacies alive.

"Violence against women is a global issue; it's a global phenomenon, and women have been suffering this for many years," Imelda Marrufo Nava told the [Seattle Times](#). Marrufo is the general coordinator of Red Mesa de Mujeres, a network of civil society organizations for women and families who have been victims of trafficking or femicide. "We have learned many sexist cultural traits that haven't been fully eradicated, either in the US or Mexico...It doesn't only happen in Mexico."