

Latin American women protest on International Women's Day



Buenos Aires, March 8 (RHC)-- Millions of women are hitting the streets across Latin America on Sunday to mark International Women's Day, against a backdrop of wider social unrest in the region. In the main capitals of the region, the streets are being painted green and purple, with the shouts of "Latin America will be all feminist!"

The demonstrations are marked this year by growing discontent and the demand to the Latin American governments to improve the living conditions of women, who represent half of the population.

International Women's Day activities coincide with attempts to pass laws to penalize femicide, legalize abortion, and give women an equal voice in drafting a new constitution.

On Monday, March 9th, women around the region are planning to stay home from work, schools and universities to illustrate what public life would look like without them.

In Chile, some have called for men to be blocked from the planned marches. The demonstrations are expected to be bolstered nonetheless by participants in broader protests against social inequality that began in October and at their peak included more than one million people.

A particular focus this year will be justice for women injured during those protests. According to Chile's Institute for Human Rights, 439 women have been injured. It has laid six complaints against police for

sexual assault. This past week, Chilean senators approved a bill aimed at giving women equal representation in drawing up a potential new constitution and Chile's centre-right President Sebastian Pinera signed a law strengthening punishment for femicide.

Javiera Arce, a political scientist at the University of Valparaiso, estimated there could be double the number of participants from last year's march in Santiago, which she put at 500,000. "I don't know a single woman not going," she said.

Colombian women are expected to mark the day with events hosted around Bogota by the office of new - and first female - mayor Claudia Lopez. Protests are likely to focus on a recent Constitutional Court ruling, which upheld limits on abortion to cases of sexual assault, fetal deformity or maternal health risks.

In Mexico, there are plans for multiple marches and strikes in protest over what many perceive to be the authorities' inadequate response to a doubling of femicide cases compared to five years ago. In recent weeks, these include the kidnapping and murder of a seven-year-old girl and the gruesome murder of a 25-year-old woman.

Argentinian women will hold a general strike on Monday. The new progressive government of President Alberto Fernandez has announced plans to create a Ministry for Women and support a fresh effort to legalize abortion after previous attempts were defeated in Congress.

Feminist manifestations in Latin America have grown a lot. They have multiplied and expanded across all countries in the region. The mobilizations have had greater assistance and have been marked by their diversity, plurality and creativity.

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