

How an Evangelical Pastor Wants to Stop the Alarming Increase in Femicide

Four women have been killed every day so far this year in Brazil, a rate the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) called “alarming” on Monday.

The IACHR, the human rights arm of the 35-member Organization of American States, said more must be done to prevent and prosecute femicides in Brazil. Femicide is the killing of a woman by a man because of her gender.

“The Commission calls on the Brazilian State to implement comprehensive strategies to prevent these acts, fulfill its obligation to investigate, prosecute and punish those responsible, as well as to offer protection and comprehensive reparation to all victims,” the Washington-based IACHR said in a statement.

To stem femicide, Brazil passed a law in 2015 giving a legal definition of the crime, with tougher jail sentences of up to 30 years for convicted offenders.

Brazil, along with about 15 other countries in Latin America, has introduced laws against femicide in recent years.

The region has the world’s highest rates of femicide, according to the United Nations.

Commissioner Margarette May, IACHR president and rapporteur for women’s rights, said Brazil’s 2015 law on femicide was a crucial step in making murders of women more visible.

“However, it is now essential to strengthen prevention and protection measures,” May said in a statement.

“It is inadmissible that women with protection orders are murdered, that they do not have sufficient shelters or that their complaints are not properly taken into consideration.”

With a population of more than 200 million, Brazil has only 74 shelters for victims of domestic violence, according to Human Rights Watch.

In Brazil, those women killed are often shot dead in their own homes at the hands of current or former boyfriends who have a history of domestic abuse, the IACHR said.

“The Commission notes with concern that in most cases, the murdered women had previously denounced their aggressors, faced serious acts of domestic violence, or suffered previous attacks or attempted homicides,” the IACHR said.

Femicides are not an “isolated problem” but reflect “sexist values deeply rooted in Brazilian society,” the IACHR said.

Black women, those belonging to indigenous groups and the LGBT+ community, as well as women politicians and human rights activists are most at risk of being killed, the IACHR noted.

Last year, the murder of Marielle Franco, a rising political star and black councilwoman in Rio de Janeiro, sparked public outcry and protests. Her killing remains unsolved.

Brazil’s far-right President Jair Bolsonaro, who took office last month, renamed the existing Ministry of Human Rights to the Ministry of Women, Family and Human Rights, and lumped indigenous rights with women’s issues.

The new minister for the department, Damara Alves, a pro-life evangelical pastor, has pledged to tackle the country’s gender wage gap and support poor women. {eo}

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