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PRESS RELEASE

Ecuador: Another state following the regional trend of discrimination and lack of protection for Venezuelan survivors of gender-based violence

Ecuador joins countries such as Colombia and Peru in failing on two levels to protect Venezuelan refugees who survive gender-based violence, indicating an alarming regional trend that must be urgently reversed, Amnesty International said today upon publishing a new report. [**Unprotected in Ecuador: Venezuelan refugee women survivors of gender-based violence**](#) reveals how in Ecuador these women also face ever-present violence and a state incapable of guaranteeing, protecting and respecting their right to a life free from violence.

“It is worrying to see that Ecuador, as a state, is joining Colombia and Peru in its unacceptable treatment of Venezuelan women who survive gender-based violence. As the country taking in the third largest number of people fleeing the massive human rights violations in Venezuela, the Ecuadorian state must urgently address and reverse the lack of protection for Venezuelan women,” said Erika Guevara-Rosas, Americas director at Amnesty International.

With [502,214 people](#) in the country as of August 2022, Ecuador is third only to Colombia and Peru in the number of Venezuelan refugees it receives, with those countries having received 2.5 and 1.5 million Venezuelans respectively. The global total is increasing steadily and now exceeds 7.1 million people, while the number of countries restricting their entry and protection continues to rise, as in [the case of the United States](#).

In Ecuador, women and children make up approximately half of these half a million people and most of them are in an irregular migratory situation. Amnesty International believes that Venezuelan people who have fled their country due to massive human rights violations need international protection and should be recognized as refugees. Regardless of their current migratory situation in the country, the organization refers to them as refugee women.

The research confirmed that the Ecuadorian state is not guaranteeing the rights of Venezuelan women to seek protection as refugees and to a life free from violence. With regard to protection as refugees, the Ecuadorian authorities are not guaranteeing the right of Venezuelan women to apply for refugee status. Despite meeting the conditions of the 1984 Cartagena Declaration's definition of a refugee in Article 98 of its Organic Law on Human Mobility, the Ecuadorian authorities rarely apply this definition. Between 2018 and 2022, only 555 women were formally recognized as refugees and some women reported that the authorities discouraged them from seeking international protection. With serious obstacles to accessing existing alternative migration regularization mechanisms, Venezuelan women are left in situations where they are at greater risk of violence and discrimination because of their irregular migration status.

In terms of failing to guarantee the right of Venezuelan women to a life free from violence, the report highlights how gender-based violence is a systematic and prevalent problem in Ecuador: [two out of every three women](#) suffer from some form of gender-based violence during their life. In this context, Venezuelan refugee women face an even greater risk of physical, psychological, sexual, patrimonial, gynaecological-obstetric and cyber violence in public and private spaces, along their migratory route and in their place of destination. This vulnerability to violence is exacerbated for women in an irregular migratory situation, as is the case for the majority of Venezuelan women in Ecuador, many of whom are afraid to report gender-based violence for fear of being expelled from the country or fined.

Amnesty International identified structural problems in the front-line institutions that identify and respond to cases of gender-based violence, as well as the system of administration of justice in Ecuador. Stereotypes and discrimination based on gender and xenophobia against Venezuelan women, the lack of resources and the lack of institutionalization of good practices contribute to the lack of access to protection mechanisms and the justice system. All of these factors mean that access to justice and reparation for Venezuelan women is a fantasy in practice, violating their right to a life free of violence.

“More than [7.1 million](#) people have fled an unprecedented crisis in Venezuela in recent years. Ecuador, Colombia, Peru and other countries receiving Venezuelans in search of international protection owe them a coordinated, urgent and human rights-based response. Women and girls, particularly survivors of gender-based violence, must always be a priority for protection for all states and we will continue to demand this,” said Erika Guevara-Rosas.

The findings of the report are based on research carried out between June and September 2022, including fieldwork in the cities of Huaquillas, Machala and Quito between August and September. A total of 99 people were interviewed for this research, including 63 women survivors of gender-based violence, 19 representatives from civil society organizations, seven from international organizations and 10 from government bodies. In addition, Amnesty International submitted 10 requests for access to public information and extensively reviewed current legislation, public policies, existing literature and media reports on the subject.

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Read more:

Unprotected in Ecuador: Venezuelan refugee women survivors of gender-based violence (Research, 17 November 2022) <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr28/6137/2022/en/>

Unprotected: Gender-based violence against Venezuelan refugee women in Colombia and Peru (Research, 12 July 2022) <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr01/5675/2022/en/>

Between invisibility and discrimination: Venezuelan LGBTIQ+ refugees in Colombia and Peru (Research, 20 June 2022) <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/06/venezuelan-lgbtq-refugees-colombia-peru/>

Peru: Peru is failing in its care of Venezuelan women who survive gender-based violence (Research, 25 November 2021) <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/11/peru-failing-care-venezuelan-women-survive-gender-based-violence/>

In search of safety: Peru turns its back on people fleeing Venezuela (Research, 4 February 2020) <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr46/1675/2020/en/>

Hunger for justice: Crimes against humanity in Venezuela (Research, 14 May 2019) <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr53/0222/2019/en/>