

## Mexico

# Women Protest Against Rape By Government Officials

*Some 20,000 women recently marched in Mexico City, calling for an end to violence against women. The central demand of the march was a call for the resignation of the attorney general in charge of Mexico's "war on drugs", Javier Coello Trejo. The women were protesting against his cover-up of nineteen reported gang rapes committed - according to victim identification - by members of his personal staff.*

Newly formed women's groups, including neighborhood, student, labor, teachers and peasant unions also demanded that charges be brought against government officials who committed acts of sexual violence against members of their organizations.

The first of the nineteen rapes was reported to the Mexico City Special Agency on Sex Crimes on March 11, 1989. By August, fourteen more cases had been reported. On September 6, four men were positively identified out of line-up of ninety-eight: all were personal bodyguards of Javier Trejo.

The head of the federal judicial police and second-in-command to Javier Trejo, Antonio Valverde, refused to turn the men over to the prosecutor's office in

Mexico City. The four men returned to work. By December, six more rapes had been reported.

An ensuing public outcry forced the federal judicial police to organize another line-up on January 4, 1990, at which three men were identified by eleven of the victims, and the fourth by three. They were finally arrested on January 15.

**The National Network Against Violence Against Women**, a coalition of some fifteen women's organizations, has been working with the victims since February. They are pressing for at least three more of the men involved in the rapes to be presented in a line-up.

The newly formed **Mexican Commission on Human Rights** has taken this case as its first campaign - pointing out that as in the cases of the politically "disappeared", the agencies responsible for the investigation and prosecution are the very ones involved in the crimes.

According to Neli Marquez of the **Independent Coalition of Peasant Organizations**, rape by army and police agents is general practice whenever a village is invaded, as was the case in three villages in Chiapas the day before the march.

Women on the march also protested against sexual harassment within the school system. Women from the "**Union de Colonias Populares**" of Irapuato, testified against the kidnapping, beating and detention of twenty-one of their women members this year. And Lucia Martinez - of the **Nationally Coordinated Urban Poor People's Movement** - denounced the kidnap, rape and torture of neighborhood activist, Cristina Rivera Vargas by Mexico City judicial police one month before the march.

*SOURCE: "Spare Rib" July 1990. (First printed in the North American Guardian.)*