

MATERIALS OF PEACE AND HUMAN RIGHTS, 18



DOCUMENTARIES ON FEMICIDE IN CIUDAD JUAREZ

Sonia Herrera

Laia Farrera

Marta Muixí

Dolors Sierra

Xavier Giró (director)

OBSERVATORI DE LA COBERTURA DE CONFLICTES - UAB



Generalitat de Catalunya
Departament d'Interior,
Relacions Institucionals i Participació
**Oficina de Promoció de la Pau
i dels Drets Humans**

BIBLIOTECA DE CATALUNYA - CIP DATA

Documentaries on femicide in Ciudad Juarez. –
(Materials of peace and human rights ; 18)

Referències bibliogràfiques

I. Herrera, Sonia II. Giró, Xavier, dir. III. Catalunya. Oficina de Promoció de la Pau i dels Drets Humans IV. Col·lecció: Materials de pau i drets humans. Anglès; 18

1. Dones – Delictes contra – Mèxic – Ciudad Juárez – Cobertura periodística

2. Delictes sexuals – Mèxic – Ciudad Juárez – Cobertura periodística

3. Assassinats en sèrie – Mèxic – Ciudad Juárez – Cobertura periodística

343.6-055.2(721.4)

Materials of Peace and Human Rights, 18

Barcelona, October 2010

© Authors: Sonia Herrera, Laia Farrera, Marta Muixí, Dolors Sierra and Xavier Giró (director)

© Published by:

The Government of Catalonia

Ministry of Home Affairs, Institutional Relations and Participation

Office for the Promotion of Peace and Human Rights

Avda. Diagonal 409, 08008 Barcelona

Tel.: 93 552 60 00

oficinapauddhh@gencat.cat

www.gencat.cat/dirip

This study was conducted by the **OBSERVATORI DE LA COBERTURA DE CONFLICTES - UAB**



Coordination of Materials de Pau i Drets Humans: Eulàlia Mesalles.

Layout and printing: El Tinter (ISO 9001, ISO 14001 and EMAS certified).

This document is printed on 100% recycled, biodegradable paper.



Legal Deposit: B-44350-2010



This document is subject to the Creative Commons licence – non-commercial – no derivative works Spain

For further information about the licence, please go to http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.5/es/deed.es_CL

This document may be copied, used in public communications, translated and modified as long as it is not used for commercial purposes and the source is acknowledged using the following text.

GIRÓ, Xavier [dir.] [et al.]. *Documentaries on femicide in Ciudad Juarez*. Barcelona: Office for the Promotion of Peace and Human Rights, the Government of Catalonia, 2010. (Materials of Peace and Human Rights; 18).

The opinions expressed in this document do not necessarily represent those of the Office for the Promotion of Peace and Human Rights (*Oficina de Promoció de la Pau i dels Drets Humans*).

The Office for the Promotion of Peace and Human Rights is the arm of the Catalan Government whose main mission is to develop public policies that promote peace and human rights.

The «Materials of Peace and Human Rights» series brings together working papers aimed at providing a new and original vision of fields, by publishing research carried out by specialised centres and experts.



Generalitat de Catalunya
Departament d'Interior,
Relacions Institucionals i Participació
**Oficina de Promoció de la Pau
i dels Drets Humans**

INDEX

0. INTRODUCTION	7
PART I. FEMICIDE	8
1. What is femicide?	8
2. General panorama of violence against women in Mexico	10
3. Study of the situation in the state of Chihuahua	12
4. Gender and the labour market in Ciudad Juarez	15
5. Corruption data for Mexico	16
6. Causes and motives for femicide	17
PART II. ANALYSIS OF COVERAGE	27
7. Methods	27
8. Results: sensationalism and sensitization	29
9. Results: sources and positioning	32
10. Results: context	37
11. Results: types of document according to treatment	39
12. Results: shortcomings	41
13. Conclusions	43

O. INTRODUCTION

More than 500 women have died and 1,500 have disappeared in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico between 1993 and the writing of these words in the autumn of 2009. And the numbers continue to rise. This is not the only city or the only country in which high numbers of victims and acts of violence, especially sexual assault, torture and the systematic murder of women has emphasised the concept of femicide. However, femicide in Ciudad Juarez has become a well recognised issue as it has received widespread media attention, covered in the news, in reports, and in documentaries and films based on real events.

The media has kept abreast of events and has conveyed the pain of the families and the demands of local, state and international organisations that effective measures be taken to put an end to the violence. Although journalism alone may not be enough to change the world as it sees fit, it can influence society and the opinions of people who make decisions and thus set in motion mechanisms to curb femicide and even stop it altogether.

These are the concerns that led the Office for the Promotion of Peace and Human Rights of the Ministry of Home Affairs, Institutional Relations and Participation of the Government of Catalonia to finance and organise the session held on 17 December 2009, dedicated to documentaries about femicide in Ciudad Juarez, in conjunction with the Catalan Association of Journalists, the Catalan International Institute for Peace and the Conflict Coverage Observatory.

The conference had three objectives. The first of these was to provide an analysis of the day-to-day reality and origins of femicide to help explain it and the difficulties that journalists face in investigating it. The second objective was to share the results of the study of documentaries on femicide in Ciudad Juarez, in order to provide an example of areas in which the media has been successful and to shed light on areas in which it needs to improve. The last of the objectives answers the questions “What else can we do?” and “How can we do this better?” from the point of view of journalists and the media.

The study follows the general critical discourse analysis (CDA) method applied to communication media used by the Conflict Coverage Observatory of the Autonomous University of Barcelona (*Observatori de la Cobertura de Conflictes de la Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona - OCC-UAB*). CDA is an approach that takes the viewpoint of the disempowered; it does not analyse from a neutral perspective, rather it aims to reveal the use of discourse to legitimise abuses of power, which in itself is an abuse of power. At the same time, it aims to discover how discourse is applied to delegitimising abuses of power in the sectors of society such abuses affect.

The OCC-UAB applies CDA methods to media discourse dealing with information, especially information related to conflicts. It is our belief that conflicts are engines of social change. They are not phenomena to be avoided, but are consubstantial with human life – on every scale. They are engines which must be managed properly so that they generate an opportunity to move towards peaceful coexistence and to possibly overcome the inequalities that caused them.

This is the basis for the three objectives we have taken on in our research of media discourse. They are: 1) to determine whether the coverage provides a comprehensive overview of the complexity of the conflict in question; 2) to determine whether journalistic practices respect deontological commitments, and 3) to determine whether the discourse provides an impetus towards the fairest, most peaceful resolution which causes the least suffering possible for the parties involved.

Femicide can be understood as a phenomenon which is founded on a set of subjacent structural conflicts, therefore, when analysing coverage it is important to apply the same methodology to all of them.

So before analysing what is being said in the media, we must first analyse the phenomenon of femicide and its causes. Then, after we have presented the specific method we applied and how we adapted it to this case, we will describe our results.

PART I. FEMICIDE

1. What is femicide?

Femicide is a theoretical category defined as the murder of women because they are women. The concept was not created by simply feminizing the word homicide when the victims of murders are women, because in femicide the gender of the victims is not coincidental. It is their gender that makes them potential victims of violence. Femicide occurs in social patriarchal contexts in which the objectification of women is a widespread phenomenon. Objectifying women converts them into things to be used, things that are easily replaceable, and as such, expendable. We could say then, that femicide is a consequence of dominance in gender relations within patriarchal systems that is expressed in different ways, including verbal, institutional and physical violence.

The term femicide was coined by the feminists Jill Radford and Diana E. H. Russell in the book *Femicide. The Politics of Woman Killing*. The authors define femicide as “the misogynous killing of women by men”.¹ This brief definition captures the essence of femicide, but there are several other factors involved which are also important to consider. The authors also state that femicide is “the killing of women often condoned, if not sponsored, by the state and/or by religious institutions”.² In the first definition of the concept, then, the importance is already underscored of a type violence that is frequently precluded: institutional violence. In certain contexts, as in the one we are analysing here, there is an atmosphere of impunity in terms of the possible consequences of violence against women, which serves to encourage murderers to continue killing women.

Institutional apathy is one of the structural mechanisms of violence in patriarchal societies which trivialise violence against women. An example of this is a lack of common decency when families are confronted with the excruciating task of identifying the cadavers of their daughters or when the authorities allege – as if to lessen the severity of the violence – that the young victims of the crimes led a double life of which the families were unaware. The trivialisation of violence towards women in its different forms – economic, social, symbolic and physical – grants these aggressive behaviours a certain degree of normalcy by means of reiteration.

As we have stated before, femicide does not refer only to the murder of women; rather it expresses the concept of a patriarchal model and relationships of dominance. Russell and Radford express this concept forcefully, using emotionally charged language to underscore the brutality as well as the heterogeneity which they consider to be mechanisms of violence against women. “Femicide is on the extreme end of a continuum of anti-female terror that includes a wide variety of verbal and physical abuse, such as rape, torture, sexual slavery, incestuous and extra-familial child sexual abuse, physical and emotional battery, sexual harassment, genital mutilation, unnecessary gynaecological operations, forced heterosexuality, forced motherhood, psychosurgery, denial of food to women in some cultures, cosmetic surgery and other mutilations in the name of beautifications. Whenever these forms of terrorism result in death, they become femicides”.³

The women who are killed are the visible face of femicide which is drawn from a social base of different types of violence against women. This violence is downplayed by the media because it is structural and much less visible, but it is critical foundation for the violence which degenerates into murder, as in the case of Ciudad Juarez and the more than five hundred women who have been killed in the last fifteen years.

1. Jill RADFORD and Diana E. H. RUSSELL, *Femicide. The Politics of Woman Killing*, NY, Twayne Publishers, 1992.

2. Jill RADFORD and Diana E. H. RUSSELL, *Femicide. The Politics of Woman Killing*

3. Jill RADFORD and Diana E. H. RUSSELL, NY, 1992.

Ciudad Juarez, a case of media influence

Unfortunately, femicide is a recurrent reality in many parts of the world, which leads us to ask why some areas where it occurs are placed in the media spotlight, such as Ciudad Juarez, while very little information or time is dedicated to providing information from other areas in the world with similar situations. Perhaps some data can shed some light on the subject.

According to the murder rates of women in the 32 federal territories into which Mexico is divided, Chihuahua, the territory to which Ciudad Juarez belongs, was ranked as follows:

1980 — 19th

1990 — 11th

2000 — 5th

2002 — 2nd

2004 — 7th⁴

Although we can see that from 1980 to 2002 the proportion of women murder victims increases in this area in relation to other federal states, it should also be noted that this is in no way the territory with the most women murdered. We should also emphasise that this rate does not include women who have disappeared, a number which is much higher in Chihuahua than in other federal states.

We believe there are two fundamental considerations that set Ciudad Juarez apart and explain why it receives more media attention than other cases in the world and in Mexico.

The first of these is the common pattern that most of the murders follow. Women disappear and their bodies are found in public places with clear indications of extreme violence and, in many cases, mutilation.

The second consideration is the mobilisation of the public to denounce the murders in Ciudad Juarez. Here we see collective, organised activism, while in other areas of Mexico or in other countries the denouncements have been made individually and have had less repercussion in the public arena and the media.

This collective mobilisation of the public also explains why there is not an analogous media response to femicide in Guatemala. According to available data, 2,200 women and children were murdered in Guatemala between 2001 and 2006. Amnesty International's 2009⁵ report indicates that according to police data, in 2008 687 women and children were murdered. The majority of them showed clear signs of sexual violence and torture.

This contrasting data on femicide is not meant to imply that it is overstated or that there is an excess of information on the issue in Ciudad Juarez, as the Mexican authorities maintain, rather that it is an issue that affects all of the territories and in each of them more work is needed to promote social action to denounce the impunity with which these crimes against women are committed.

4. According to calculations made by the INEGI from data collected by the *Geografía de la Violencia Femicida en la República Mexicana*, (Geography of Femicide Violence in the Mexican Republic), a study promoted by the House of Representatives of the LIX Union of the Special Legislative Commission to Recognise and Track Investigations Related to Femicide in the Republic of Mexico and to Achieve Justice (*Legislatura Comisión Especial para Conocer y Dar Seguimiento a las Investigaciones Relacionadas con los Femicidios en la República Mexicana y a la Procuración de Justicia Vinculada*).

5. <http://thereport.amnesty.org/es/regions/americas/guatemala#violencia-contra-mujeres-y-ni-ntilde-as>

Change in roles

The arrival of the *maquilas* or *maquiladoras* (factories that have come to Juarez for cheap labour and to manufacture exports) has brought demographic change with the arrival of workers from all over the country, but these factories have also instigated a change in roles, which has had a significant effect on gender relations. The *maquiladoras*, with their own manufacturing methods, have integrated women into the workforce, resulting in a feminisation of the manufacturing process.

The first *maquilas* were established in Ciudad Juarez in the mid sixties, but the number of factories in this sector has increased notably since the North American Free Trade Agreement, or NAFTA, was enacted in January of 1994. The approval of NAFTA coincided with an increase in the number of murders and disappearances of women in Ciudad Juarez.

The increasing number of *maquiladoras* – there are currently some 320 factories in Ciudad Juarez – has led to a marked increase in the number of women and girls with paying jobs in Ciudad Juarez and other areas of the country. The increased level of employment among women and girls has given them a greater degree of independence, because although their salaries are meagre, their efforts do provide them with an income. This is a destabilising factor for the role of men within the patriarchal model and implies a significant change in terms of gender relations. This change in roles can translate into violence in family, labour and social relations if men are incapable of handling and accepting this new situation. Understanding that their roles have changed can lead men to experience a sense of frustration that can manifest itself in violence intended to reinstate and maintain the patriarchal relationships of control and dominance.

This transformation of the social structure should not be considered the cause of femicide; rather it is just one of several contextual elements which may explain it.

2. General panorama of violence against women in Mexico⁶

- Nearly 30% of Mexican women over the age of 15 claim to have experienced a violent incident of some kind in the workplace, including harassment and sexual abuse.
- Sixteen percent of all women admit to being the victims of discrimination, spanking or sexual abuse or harassment at school.
- Forty percent of women have been the victims of some form of violence in public (in the street, market, public transport, the cinema, at church, in shops, the hospital, etc.): 42% were victims of sexual violence and 92% were victims of intimidation.
- Eighteen percent of Mexican women over the age of 15 have been victims of discrimination in public offices and 18% have been victims of harassment in the workplace. In school the figures for these types of incidents are 9% and 8% while in the home they are 7% and 10%.
- These two forms of violence (discrimination and harassment) are most common in private companies, shops, banks and other private services. Thirty-nine percent of women claim to have experienced workplace discrimination in these types of businesses and 43% have experienced workplace harassment. In factories or *maquilas* these percentages are 22% and 14%, respectively.
- Of all married and partnered women, 60% have been victims of some type of domestic violence at the hand of a family member or another person.

6. INEGI, results of the National Survey of Domestic Relationship Dynamics (*Encuesta Nacional sobre la Dinámica de las Relaciones en los Hogares* - ENDIREH, 2006).

- The states of the Republic of Mexico with the most married or partnered women who have been victims of violence are the states of Mexico, Jalisco and Colima. In these three states more than half of all women have been victims of physical, emotional, sexual and economic violence, and some are the victims of several types of violence at once.
- Emotional violence is the most prevalent type of violence experienced over the course of women's relationships with their last partners: 40% of married and partnered women have been victims of this type of violence, and 55% of partnered women have experienced it at some point. The next most prevalent segment is economic violence, which affects 28% of married and partnered women and 45% of women who have lived with a man as a couple. The next most common form of violence is physical violence, which affects 21% of married and partnered women and 39% of women who have lived with a partner, followed by sexual violence which affects 8% and 23% of these women, respectively.
- Thirty-five percent of married or partnered women over the age of 15 have been victims of some type of violence, and the highest percentage is found among the youngest age group, from 15 to 34, at 45%.
- Education level does not protect women from gender violence either, as 37% of women with a primary education claim to have been victims of some type of violence, whereas in women with a secondary education the percentage rises to 43% and of all women with education beyond secondary, 38% have been victims of violence.
- Married and partnered women who are active in the workforce have the highest rate of violence at 44%, while 38% of women who work only in the home have experienced violence.
- Gender violence is more common in urban areas than in rural settings. Of all married and partnered women living in urban areas, 42% have been victims of violence, while in rural areas this percentage is 33%.
- Of all women surveyed⁷ 79.7% stated that they have experienced violence in the homes of their mothers, fathers or partners, in school or at work. The aggressors were men 83% of the time. 71.98% of women who have experienced some type of violence have not told anyone about it nor asked that charges be brought against the perpetrator. Of the women surveyed, 36.7% believe that the responsibility for reducing or eliminating violence against women falls on mothers, while 24.2% believe that the responsibility is that of the federal government.
- According to the State Survey of Women, Ciudad Juarez has the highest percentage of women who claim to have experienced sexual behaviours or insinuations in the workplace.
- In the period from January 1993 to December 2008, Ciudad Juarez recorded 447 homicides of women, grouped into 418 files (cases).⁸ According to the State Attorney's Office, 292 of those cases have been solved. The same report indicated that in the period from 1993 to 2004 the State Attorney's Office recorded 4,522 reports of missing women in Ciudad Juarez. Of these, 4,488 were found alive. (This data does not coincide with that provided by women's associations, the families of missing women and non-governmental organisations: as of 21 August 2009, the Femicide Database for Latin America and the Caribbean has registered more than 500 murdered and 1,500 missing women.)
- As of 23 September 2009, according to information published in different media sources in Ciudad Juarez, among them the *Diario PM*, four young women disappeared in Ciudad Juarez over the span of only a few weeks. Specifically, these were Perla Ivonne Aguirre, 15; Graciela Ortiz, 12; Aracely López, 19, and Denisse López, 21. Including these four, more than 30 women and girls have disappeared in the border city since 2008.

7. Investigation of Catalysts for Violence against Women (*Detonantes de Violencia contra las Mujeres - Instituto Chihuahuense de la Mujer*), 2008.

8. According to the report "*Homicidios de Mujeres en Ciudad Juárez*": "justice is served by combating impunity" said the Attorney General of the State and Government of Chihuahua.

3. Study of the situation in the state of Chihuahua

Female, young and poor: high-risk conditions

The state of Chihuahua has a population of approximately 3,052,907 inhabitants, of which 1,519,972 are men and 1,532,935 are women. The capital is the city of Chihuahua, but the financial centre, and the city with the largest population in the state of Chihuahua is Ciudad Juarez, with approximately 1,500,000 inhabitants, or 40% of the total population of the state.

The Constitution of Chihuahua does not explicitly stipulate equality between men and women. In terms of the presence of women in the courts, the chief justice of the Supreme Court says, "All of the family judges are women. The highest court has 13 men and 3 women ... there are candidates, a short list is drawn up, it is sent to Congress and Congress decides".

Context in Ciudad Juarez

Of the almost million and a half inhabitants of Ciudad Juarez, 33% are under 15 years of age and another 33% are between the ages of 15 and 29. Immigrants make up 35% of the total population, and 22 of every 100 people was born in the state of Chihuahua.

Ciudad Juarez, known the world over for crimes of extreme cruelty perpetrated against women, is an industrial city in which public services have not kept pace with growth, and in which the basic needs of the populace – who live in poor suburbs – are not met. Many foreign and Mexican immigrants come to Juarez to find work in *maquiladoras* or with the intention of entering the United States in search of jobs. Juarez has one of the highest crime rates in the Republic of Mexico as a result of drug and human trafficking, prostitution and other factors.

Mexican cultural norms call for shared social responsibility, but on a more basic level these responsibilities fall to the government at the municipal, state and national level. The people do not trust the authorities due to the corruption and impunity that is rampant at all levels of public institutions.

The victims of femicide

A class problem

"...living in Ciudad Juarez for them [poor, young women], is knowing that they run the risk of being kidnapped, raped, tortured and murdered simply because they are women ..."⁹

There are economic development projects in Ciudad Juarez such as the Bi-National Santa Teresa (USA) and San Jerónimo Project (Mexico), which focuses on a sector called Lomas de Poleo, an area that has been inhabited by the poor for many years. The population of Lomas de Poleo is confined by a perimeter fence constructed by the project for their own safety. The inhabitants of Lomas de Poleo must ask for permission to enter their own neighbourhood. These types of projects increase the distance between the people of the neighbourhood and the general public, exacerbating the situation of exclusion and marginalisation.

The violent deaths of Chihuahua's women are a class problem. If you ask middle- and upper-class women about femicide, they do not identify with the issue. The women who are afraid, who live in fear from day to day are young, poor women who have to take the bus to get to work and around town.

9. Lucía MELGAR, Living and Dying in Ciudad Juarez. Speech for the forum organised by PIEM and PUEG Mexico, May 2004.

The state of Chihuahua is home to the Chihuahuan Women's Institute, which provides information, counselling and support to Chihuahuan women. This institute has conducted domestic violence awareness campaigns with posters in public areas and media advertisements, which have had promising results. However, in these campaigns it is important to consider the other manifestations of violence against women, and to bear in mind that the best way to fight this violence is to empower these women as individuals with rights and not to treat them as second-class citizens.

Violent deaths

How many people are victims of this calamity? Nobody really knows, nor can the exact number of victims be confirmed. The Attorney General of Chihuahua, Patricia González, has reported that since assuming her office in October of 2004 she has reviewed every case she could find one by one and recorded 372 cases in the period from 1993 to 19 September 2005.

She and her team reviewed motives, causes, perpetrators, and basically all aspects of the cases, and concluded that "approximately 80% of the crimes were related to domestic and gender violence; many of the victims came from southern Mexico; the number of victims from this state was insignificant; the majority of the perpetrators are also immigrants; and that everything is connected to drug trafficking to end users".

So, according to the state's highest legal authority, the deaths of women resulting from domestic violence are not considered femicides, since they occur in a family setting. Chihuahua avoids calling these murders femicide in order to lessen their importance. The authorities insist that femicide only refers to serial killers.

The Attorney General of Chihuahua has provided the following data on the procedural status of homicides of women in the municipalities of Chihuahua and Ciudad Juarez (from 21 January 1993 to 19 September 2005).

Total homicides	372
Resolved in juvenile courts	16
Resolved by definitive sentencing	153
In process before judge	65
Remitted to the Attorney General's Office (Federal Public Ministry)	14
Archive (homicide-suicide)	14
Under study (mixed Prosecutor's Office)	110

The head of the Special Prosecutor's Office for women's homicides in Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua reported that since 1993 an estimated 368 women have been killed, that 70% of the victims knew their assailant because they were victims of domestic violence, and that the remaining 30% included cases of serial homicide, accidents and transferred intent or malice. The office also concluded that for every woman who lost her life, five men died in Ciudad Juarez. The Attorney General's Office registered 32 femicides in its annual report for 2005.

There is no single registry or homogenous classification of the murders of women in Chihuahua. The figures used by the Special Commission on Femicide are not their own, rather they are statistics provided by the Attorney General's Office of the state of Chihuahua, which are very disparate.

The general public and the families of the victims believe the authorities' claim that 80% of these crimes can be attributed to domestic violence and therefore do not constitute femicide, which

serves to make these crimes against women less visible. Official figures state that 14 cases are being handled by the Attorney General's Office, however, this does not mean that there are only 14 victims, as two of the cases, specifically the cases of Campo Algodonero and Cristo Negro, involve eight and six victims, respectively. So "case" must be understood as "file" and not "victim".

The other victims of femicide, those that have histories of family violence and who have sought help from the courts, also demonstrate the inefficiency of the system and the lack of responsibility on the part of the municipal, state and federal authorities in not guaranteeing the right to life, the right to a life free of violence, and the many other rights stipulated in the various national and international instruments in effect in the Mexican Republic and ignored by public bodies.

Although it is generally recognised that there are high rates of violence against women, there is no state protocol to attend to women who are victims of intra-family violence or for women who are raped. It should also be noted that although the Attorney General of Chihuahua has a centre which attends to women who are victims of crime, it does not provide the specialised services required.

Disappearances

The Attorney General of Chihuahua reported when she assumed the post in October of 2004 there were 4,000 missing persons reports, according to the National Commission on Human Rights. She stated that almost all the women had returned home and explained that the error lay in the fact that the reappearance of these women was never recorded. There are currently 36 files that are considered high risk, since these include women who have not been seen since 1994. The Special Prosecutor's Office stated that the initial figure was based on 4,500 reported disappearances and that only 45 had not been resolved.

The press reported 4,454 women missing in the same period, of which 4,413 were located and 34 are still being investigated. The media also published a list of missing women, stressing that the Special Prosecutor's Office had not initiated investigations into these disappearances because they were already under investigation.

A report drafted by the Attorney General of Chihuahua concluded that "on 25 January order 1/2005 was enacted which created a Special Missing Persons Unit in order to establish an appropriate working methodology aimed at identifying persons who have been reported missing and to immediately implement corrective official measures to search for and locate these persons, and rejecting the criteria applied in the past of starting the investigation only after 24 hours has passed since the disappearance".

Although factory workers were enthusiastic about finding work, newcomers very soon found that their wages did not cover even the most basic needs. In 2003, the average salary in manufacturing plants ranged from between three and five dollars (2.23-3.80 euros) a day, the same as they had been in 1988. Most of these factories are owned by corporations based in the United States, and the work is tedious and exhausting.

With parental permission, anyone over the age of 14 can work in these factories. It is also not unusual to find 13 year-olds using falsified birth certificates to get a job. In order to make the most of these meagre wages, entire families work in these factories and combine their wages to pay for their homes and other expenses.

The primary difference, economically speaking, on the two sides of the border is that on the Mexican side, a worker can earn four dollars a day, while the minimum legal wage in the United States in 2006 was 5.15 dollars (3.83 euros) an hour. This is the main reason why immigrants risk their lives to cross the border illegally. The inequality of the two economies generates constant tension at the border. As both immigration officials in Mexico and the United States can attest, the border acts as a magnet for people from all over.

4. Gender and the labour market in Ciudad Juárez

The primary employment activity of women in the formal labour market is machine operator (36%), while in the informal market it is salesperson (31%) and domestic worker (25%), which is the most common form of employment for Mexican women working in the United States (39%). The primary activity for men in the formal labour market is the same as for women, although the percentage is lower (machine operator, 21%), followed by craftsmen and factory workers – not including the *maquilas*¹⁰ – at 16%, which for women is less than 2%. Men in the informal labour market primarily work as craftsmen and industrial workers (42%), followed by street vendors (17%), which is also a significant activity for women (14%).

The majority of the *maquiladoras* (80%) in Mexico are concentrated near the border. This is a clear example of boom and bust. The industry recorded 1,327,000 workers in mid 2000. It had grown by a million in only 15 years, and employed four in ten workers in Mexican manufacturing. But it also attracted millions more to the areas surrounding the factories. These factors have led to quickly improvised infrastructure to provide housing, food, services and transport for degraded urban areas and broken families.

Another unique result of the division of labour takes the form of disproportionate gender representation in the *maquilas*, which has reached three men for every seven women, almost all of them between the ages of 15 and 25. This is combined with the submissive attitude of the women, which can be explained by the high rates of rotation or migration of manual labourers among the different companies, by the age at which they begin working for the factories and by the fact that a large percentage of the workers are women.¹¹

Three-fourths of white collar workers (76%), blue collar workers (76%) and employees of *maquiladoras* (73%) are concentrated in the five Mexican states that border the USA: Tamaulipas, Coahuila, Chihuahua, Sonora and Baja California. The northern border continues to play a central role for the *maquiladora* industry, with 2,077 *maquiladoras* and 888,061 employees.

Data from the INEGI shows that workers in the border states make up 53% of total labourers in the region. This is one percentage point less than the figure for women nationally. Another factor which may play a role in this cluster at the border is the predominance of *maquiladoras* in the automotive industry there, which employ more men.

The state with the highest number of workers is Chihuahua, with 274,086 (24% of the national total) although it has less than half the number of *maquiladoras* found in Baja California. This is due to the fact that a *maquiladora* factory can have anywhere from five to three thousand workers. Baja California has 21% of the national total; Tamaulipas has 15%; Coahuila 9%; and Sonora 7%.

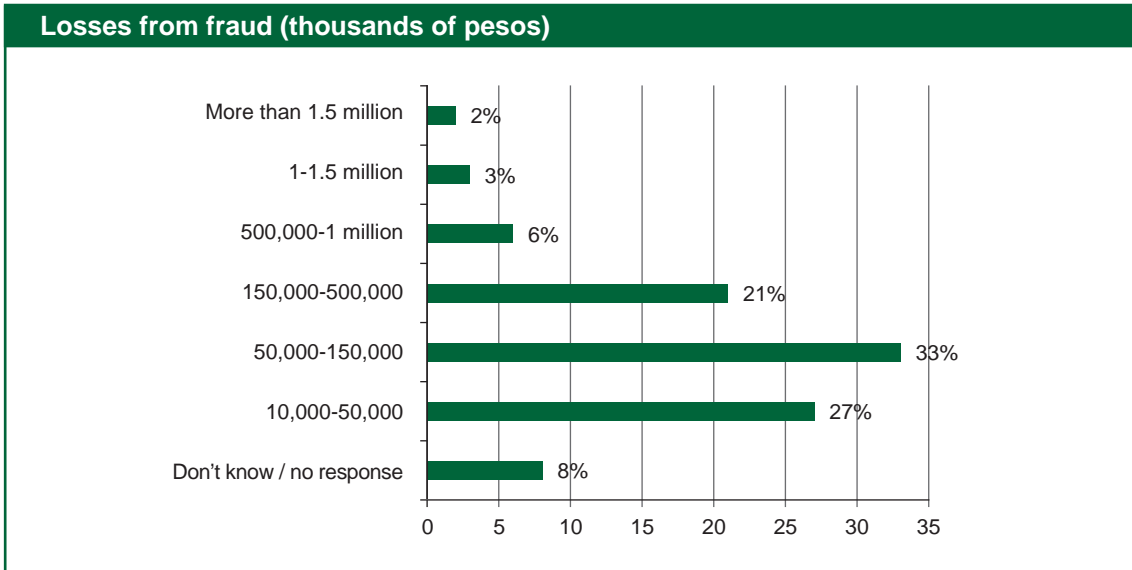
Chihuahua is one of the ten Mexican states with the highest levels of human development. But according to INEGI data, in 2004 the state of Chihuahua was ranked fifth for the number of homicides of women between the ages of 15 and 59 (3,584 women). On the other hand, in the same year, for the percentage of homicides which took place in the home, the state of Chihuahua was ranked thirtieth. In contrast, for homicides occurring on public streets, the same state was number two on the list.

10. In Ciudad Juárez the *maquilas* have become an important economic power which is the primary source for exports for the whole country. In international trade a *maquila* is generally considered to be any international company in a border region that subcontracts for a company or companies in another country where the final products are re-imported without paying customs duties. The *maquilas* originally operated in the wood and textile industries; currently they are primarily involved in the assembly of electronic components, magnetic tape and parts (primarily for the automobile industry).

11. Sergio ZERMEÑO, *Maquila y machismo (el asesinato de mujeres en Ciudad Juárez)*.

5. Corruption data for Mexico¹²

According to Transparency International, seven of every ten countries score fewer than five points on their corruption scale (maximum 10). Mexico scored 3.6 and is in 64th place of a total of 131 countries.



- Twelve percent of GDP is lost to corruption. This includes both bureaucratic corruption and problems with fraud in the private sector. For SMEs the loss is 6.5%.
- According to a survey of businessmen in forty multinationals, almost 35% of the foreign investment for which a decision was made not to bring money into the country in the last five years was due to a perception of high levels corruption and opacity to generate businesses.



12. The Communication Council, the voice of business (*Consejo de la Comunicación AC*).

6. Causes and motives for femicide

Experts who have been following the cases of disappearances and murders in Ciudad Juarez since 1993 have been unable to determine with 100% certainty what the motives for the crimes are. There is a certain degree of consensus on the most probable motives (parties with forced sex for rich and powerful people and serial murders) and some early theories have been discarded (organ trafficking and snuff films). There are also theories that have not been discarded, but are relatively unlikely, as they are based on a handful of isolated incidents that occurred in the surrounding areas, such as the satanic rituals in the eighties documented in Matamoros which are depicted in the 1997 film *Perdita Durango*, directed by Àlex de la Iglesia and starring Javier Bardem.

There is some agreement as to who is directly and indirectly responsible – in some cases with first and last names – but, there is also an absolute certainty that the persons who have been implicated as culprits by the Mexican Government are smokescreens and scapegoats (see attached table on page 3 about persons under arrest) intended to sidestep popular and international pressure and to prevent the prosecution of the parties who are truly responsible.

Organ trafficking and the production of snuff films have been dismissed for all practical purposes as possible motives. Police sources initially indicated that these were the root causes for femicide in the region. However, over the last 16 years not a single video has been found depicting extreme brutal sexual content and containing young Mexican women matching the characteristics of the victims from Ciudad Juarez.

Furthermore, in this same period there has been no indication that the bodies of victims have undergone surgical procedures to remove organs, even though the Mexican government indicated that this was a possibility in 2003.¹³ Experts also agree that the required specialised materials, environmental conditions and conditions for the transport of the organs are not present in the cases in Ciudad Juarez.

Having ruled out these two explanations, the remaining theories formulated since the first official death was reported in 1993, each of which has been more or less fortuitous in terms of evidence and the capacity to gain publicity, are: a) the women are unwilling participants in orgies¹⁴ and initiation rituals for gangs and drug traffickers, b) they are the victims of serial killers, and c) they are victims of gender violence.

This multiplicity of motives corresponds to a multiplicity of culprits implicated by journalists and investigators following the cases over the years. The guilty parties who, according to their accusers, remain free are one or two serial killers, drug traffickers, sadistic and violent gangs and a group of rich and influential people.¹⁵

More than 500 women have been murdered in Ciudad Juarez, and more than 1,500 have disappeared since 1993. And these numbers continue to grow. This is not the only city or the only country in which high numbers of victims and acts of violence, especially sexual assault, torture and the systematic murder of women has emphasised the concept of femicide.

Ciudad Juarez is only the most well-known case, due to the media attention it has received. The media has kept abreast of events and has conveyed the pain of the families and the demands of local, state and international organisations that effective measures be taken to put an end to the violence.

However, to put an end to this problem we need to first look at the root causes and in this respect, there is no argument. Everyone agrees: femicide in Ciudad Juarez feeds, on the one hand, on judicial, police and governmental **impunity** in a state that is strongly influenced by

13. Diana WASHINGTON, *Harvest of Women. Safari in Mexico*, 2006-2007, pg. 240.

14. Diana WASHINGTON, *Harvest of Women. Safari in Mexico*, 2006-2007, pg. 370.

15. Diana WASHINGTON, *Harvest of Women. Safari in Mexico*, 2006-2007, pg. 368.

drug trafficking, and on the other, on a **society dominated by patriarchy and male chauvinism** that deeply undervalues and under-appreciates women and considers them practically invisible.

Impunity

If there is an indispensable structural element for understanding the causes of femicide, and especially the fact that the phenomenon continues unabated, it is impunity. The state, with all the mechanisms it has at its disposal, has been unable to stop the increasing violence against women over the last 15 years in Ciudad Juarez.

The lack of a response by the authorities to these crimes against women has led to a general lack of social norms governing femicidal violence. This is what the sociologist Émile Durkheim described, using the concept of anomie, as “an emerging state of social deregulation”.¹⁶ For Durkheim, this lack or want of clarity of social rules stems from deviant behaviour. That is to say, the social context of impunity and lack of regulation mars the distinction of individual moral limits, which in turn translates into the reiteration of behaviours that are outside social norms or criminal behaviour, as in the case of femicide. Since there are no legal or penal consequences for acts of violence against women, a climate of impunity that reinforces social anomie is created, which leads to violence against women being considered natural.

Creating this framework of impunity requires the more or less active complicity of local and federal authorities to protect the persons responsible for the deaths of women in Ciudad Juarez. Relatives of the victims of femicide and experts in the field have reported several irregularities in police investigations including lost reports and relevant evidence. People have also been tortured to force them to confess to crimes that they have not committed.

Either out of negligence or because of corruption, what cannot be denied is that the authorities do not guarantee compliance with the law nor the well-being of young women, which leaves potential victims defenceless and creates a framework of impunity for violence of this type.

The organ trafficking theory

One of the theories that attempts to explain some of the deaths of women in Ciudad Juarez is organ trafficking. In 2003, the public prosecutor of penal procedures, Carlos Javier Vega, and the Head of the Special Unit against Organized Crime, José Luis Santiago, whose department answers to the Attorney General's Office, told the press that that 14 of the 300 dead women to date (2003) could have been murdered in order to “surgically empty them”. The line of investigation centred on the eight bodies found in November 2001 in Campo Algodonero and on the eight more bodies found in September 2002 in Monte Cristo, which according to officials, showed signs of having been preserved in refrigerators before they were disposed of.¹⁷

However, this theory has been vigorously refuted by several specialists, among them the criminologist and former head of expert services of the state of Chihuahua, Óscar Máynez Grijalva, who asserts that the theory has no scientific basis. The bodies of the victims did not show signs of any type of surgical procedure. “It is impossible”, said Máynez, “based on the infrastructure and logistics that this type of crime would require”. The scientist argued that “there has never been any evidence that would lead anyone to believe that organ trafficking was the motive for these crimes”.¹⁸

16. Émile DURKHEIM, *The division of labour in society*, 1983.

17. Juan Jesús AZNÁREZ, “El ‘deshuesadero’ de Ciudad Juárez”, *El País*, 03.05.2003, pg. 32.

18. Marcos FERNÁNDEZ i Jean-Christophe RAMPAL, *La ciudad de las muertas. La tragedia de Ciudad Juárez*, 2008, pg. 64.

The Executive Director of the National Transplant Council (CONATRA), Javier Castellanos, expressed a similar opinion, pointing out that “transplants are not common, everyday procedures. This is not like stealing a piece of a Volkswagen because it will work well on a Grand Marquis”.

Five months after the authorities announced this theory of organ trafficking, they revealed that they had no evidence to support it and released the suspects.

Recognising the difficulty of maintaining this supposition, some have put forth other theories for the motives for femicide in Ciudad Juarez related to trafficking in women’s bodies.

According to the journalist Diana Washington in her book, *Harvest of Women. Safari in Mexico*, a private investigator in Texas asserted that some of the victims were murdered in order to sell pieces of their bodies, and not precisely for organ trafficking. Other experts have stated that the body part industry does not require very complex infrastructure, unlike organ trafficking, and this would better explain the way in which the assaults and murders took place.

In her book, Diana Washington also explains the theory of another Mexican investigator who asserts that some of the women kidnapped and murdered in the border city had been taken to harvest embryonic cells.

However, none of these theories (trafficking in organs, body parts or embryonic cells) are backed up with solid arguments and evidence. This has led the majority of experts to reject them as a primary motive in the deaths of the women of Ciudad Juarez.

Theory of the active involvement of the police

According to the journalists Sergio González and Diana Washington the complicity between the authorities in different areas (politicians, policeman and the army) and the drug traffickers in Ciudad Juarez grew over the sixties, seventies and eighties, during the *priista* government’s repression of social and political movements, known as the Dirty War. During this period, the Mexican government created a paramilitary group called the *Brigada Blanca* whose goal was to spy on, monitor and repress dissidents under the regime and at the behest of the United States government, which wanted to put an end to communist movements in Central and South America. The *Brigada Blanca* executed these orders by kidnapping and torturing hundreds of suspects.

“These seeds planted in Mexico led to the femicides; these were not sown in the nineties. Details on the involvement of the police and army in drug trafficking and the incessant commission of crimes show that the original foundation for the femicides was established before the nineties. Social and legal breakdown in Juarez were factors which were influential in the murders of the women; it didn’t happen from one day to the next. These conditions were cultivated decades ago, during the violent repression by the government of social and political movements”.¹⁹

An FBI investigation in 1999 brought to light for the first time in Diana Washington’s book in 2006 documents 600 executions in Mexico during the Dirty War in which the involvement of the Mexican army is indisputable. The army had been trained in torture techniques by the Argentine army. One of the generals involved, Mario Acosta, attended the School of the Americas where he was trained in torture techniques used on victims in the Aztec area.

For a long time, the Mexican government denied the existence of the Dirty War against dissidents and tried to catalogue the existence of the *Brigada Blanca* as myth. But activists and sources in the United States assert that federal and state police of the state of Chihuahua collaborated and executed orders from this agency, which had personnel with expert crime-fighting training and training in torture techniques. The training these people received was similar to the anti-terrorism

19. Diana WASHINGTON, *Harvest of women. Safari in Mexico*, 2006-2007, pg. 271-272.

training imparted to specialist soldiers and policemen. They were primarily used to destabilise communities and whole regions and they were the perfect prototype for the *gatilleros* (gunmen) in the service of drugs traffickers. According to Washington, the drug cartels adapted the methods employed in the Dirty War to their own operations, i.e. fighting for turf or territory for cocaine trafficking. The criminal gangs used femicide as a weapon of terror to sow panic and to demonstrate and impose their control through their blanket pacts of impunity with the authorities.

The journalists Marcos Fernández and Jean Christophe Rampal²⁰ also treated the subject of the involvement of the police in the murder of women in Ciudad Juárez. They refer to an organisation within the police called *La Línia* which is comprised of municipal police, agents in the judicial police, hired assassins and small-time criminals. Their report implicates drug traffickers who have infiltrated the police as the persons responsible for a significant number of murders. In his book, José Luis Vasconcelos, head of the Organized Crime Specialized Investigation Office (SIEDO),²¹ asserts that “the primary objective of *La Línia* was not to cover up crimes against women [the murder of women]; rather it was merely to protect the interests of the cartel. [As a consequence] stopping the real murderers [as leaders of the cartel] from being harassed would now be one of the organisation’s responsibilities”.²²

La Línia’s involvement with the cartel came to light when, in 1999 and 2004, the Mexican federal police discovered a communal grave with a dozen bodies of men who had been tortured and strangled in the garden of a house in Las Acequias, a middle-class neighbourhood in Ciudad Juárez. It came to be known as the *narcofosas* (narco-graves) case.

Federal agents expected some of the cadavers to correspond to women who had disappeared, but that proved not to be the case. However, the house was less than three kilometres from Campo Algodonero, where several women’s bodies had been found. The police thought it very likely that the women had been in the house that the cartel used to eliminate rivals and traitors, but there was not enough evidence to prove it.

One of the tenants of the house admitted under interrogation that he was involved in the deaths of at least of eleven persons “following the orders of Heriberto Santillán Torres and a commander in the judicial police of the state of Chihuahua”.²³ In 2004, police sources asserted that some twenty judicial police were involved in *La Línia* and that Police Chief Miguel Ángel Loya Gallegos was their leader.

According to Fernández and Rampal, the *La Línia* clue proved the existence of a connection between the *narcofosas*, drugs and a significant number of murders of women. The journalists reported that for some investigators, finding the eight bodies in Campo Algodonero was “a macabre, planned, premeditated production designed to provide misleading clues. Basically, it is the work of *La Línia*”.²⁴

The two journalists follow the same line of thinking in their book, asserting that when SIEDO’s men arrived in Ciudad Juárez in March of 2003, they had to investigate the murders of several people who were suspected drugs traffickers. For weeks they did not achieve anything, and for a good reason. They discovered that the hitmen were the policemen themselves (municipal police and agents of the judicial police of the state).²⁵

20. MARCOS FERNÁNDEZ and Jean-Christophe RAMPAL, *La Ciudad de las Muertas. La Tragedia de Ciudad Juárez*, 2008.

21. SIEDO: Subprocuraduría de Investigación Especializada en Delincuencia Organizada.

22. MARCOS FERNÁNDEZ and Jean-Christophe RAMPAL, *La Ciudad de las Muertas. La Tragedia de Ciudad Juárez*, 2008. pg. 134.

23. MARCOS FERNÁNDEZ and Jean-Christophe RAMPAL, *La Ciudad de las Muertas. La Tragedia de Ciudad Juárez*, 2008. pg. 131.

24. MARCOS FERNÁNDEZ and Jean-Christophe RAMPAL, *La Ciudad de las Muertas. La Tragedia de Ciudad Juárez*, 2008. pg. 135.

25. MARCOS FERNÁNDEZ and Jean-Christophe RAMPAL, *La Ciudad de las Muertas. La Tragedia de Ciudad Juárez*, 2008. pg. 126.

According to Diana Washington, “the problem with the police was that they worked for someone else, not for the community. They work with organised crime. It is unbelievable that the crimes had been under investigation for years without looking into the role of the police in a corrupt system. The police maintain a strict code of silence with guaranteed death to anyone who dares to break it. This code goes beyond the typical bad custom of small bribes given to traffic police for traffic violations in exchange for not receiving a fine. The police are involved on all levels in ordered kidnapping and executions. The DEA and FBI assert that the primary concern of the police in Juarez is protecting the drug traffickers and their shipments of illicit drugs”.²⁶

Faced with considerable corruption in the Juarez police force, federal authorities decided to act. Diana Washington explained in her book that the federal police monitor the routes taken by the municipal police on their patrols based on the premise that half of them are corrupt. Municipal police vehicles are also marked with their section and a number in order to identify the cars that leave the designated area to which they have been assigned.

The FBI’s serial killer theory. The culprits: serial killers vs. gangs

The following people have been arrested for serial crimes:²⁷

- 1995: Abdel Sharif (condemned to 20 years in prison at the outset of 2003).
- 1996: ten members of the *Los Rebeldes* gang (supposedly paid by Sharif), six of whom remained detained and others who have retracted their confessions and alleged torture.
- 1999: Jesús Manuel Guardado Márquez, *el Tolteca*, a bus driver (raped Nancy Villalva and left her for dead). He incriminated four other drivers as members of a supposed gang responsible for twenty deaths between 1998 and 1999 (also supposedly paid by Sharif). All of them allege that they were tortured.
- 2001: Víctor Javier García Uribe, *el Cerillo*, and Gustavo González Meza, *la Foca*, also bus drivers were accused of eight homicides in Campo Algodonero. *La Foca* died in Chihuahua prison in 2003 after surgery; the following year his colleague was freed without charges. There were also allegations of torture.
- 2003: Ulises Ricardo Perzábal Ibáñez and Cynthia Louise Kicker. Both alleged they were tortured and forced to confess. They were released a year later without charges.

Mexican authorities ignored the FBI’s warning that 750 paroled sex offenders were living on the US-Mexican border in 2001.²⁸ The decision to ignore the warning was based on the premise that the persons responsible for the femicides were already in prison. It was not the first time that the FBI advised political and police leaders in Ciudad Juarez to investigate known serial killers to discover the parties responsible for the deaths and disappearances of these women.

The criminologist and former chief of forensics for the state of Chihuahua, Óscar Máñez, resigned from his post after he refused to manufacture false evidence. He is a staunch defender of the FBI’s theory, based on certain similarities he has seen among the murders.²⁹

In spite of a steady trickle of deaths and disappearances, the Mexican authorities closed ranks and refused to follow this line of investigation, denying the possibility of new culprits in addition to the serial killers already in prison, who they consider the real perpetrators of the crimes (see list on page 26): the Egyptian Abdel Sharif (1995) and supposed accomplices (*Los Rebeldes* gang, 1996; the bus drivers headed by *El Tolteca*, 1999; and the *Los Ruter* gang, 2001), who according to the version put forth by the Mexican police, followed Sharif’s

26. Diana WASHINGTON, *Harvest of Women. Safari in Mexico*, 2006-2007, pg. 173-174

27. Amnesty International (Mexico) *Intolerable Killings* - EDAI 2003).

28. *La Ciudad de las Muertas*, pg. 192-195.

29. Diana WASHINGTON, *Harvest of Women: Safari in Mexico*, 2006-2007, pg. 105.

instructions from prison to guarantee that the crimes continued while he was incarcerated. According to this same police version, Sharif showed that the accusations made against him were false, because the crimes continued to occur while he was in prison, thus proving his innocence.

In June 1998, five years after the first murders, one of the premiere specialists in the world in serial crimes, Robert K. Ressler, instructor and criminologist at the FBI academy and former member of the US armed forces, took charge of the investigation of femicides in Ciudad Juarez.

Ressler created a crime information management system, for both solved and unsolved crimes, for the purpose of ensuring uniformity and consistency. He also established night surveillance of the buses that transported the workers to their jobs at the *maquiladoras*, visited police offices and crime scenes, talked to investigators and trained the judicial police of the state of Chihuahua. However, according to Sergio González, the criminologist was only able to look over a portion of the reports, and the interpreter that was assigned to him tended to make it difficult for Ressler to enter into dialogue with others.³⁰

After a year, the Canadian criminologist Candice Skrapec went to Ciudad Juarez at the behest of authorities of the state of Chihuahua to help Mexican investigators create a profile of the suspects and to give some courses on serial murderers. According to Fernández and Rampal, a Spanish criminologist and a Brazilian anthropologist were added to the roster of experts studying femicide in Ciudad Juarez.

Robert Kessler came to the conclusion that there were two or three Hispanic or Mexican-American serial murderers who were able to blend in well with people and not be noticed, and who used the border crossing to their advantage to commit crimes: “a citizen of the United States of Hispanic origin who speaks Spanish very well, who goes unnoticed in the city and who becomes invisible when committing crimes”.³¹

Frank Evans, from the FBI office in El Paso, also said that the federal office of the United States wanted to explore the possibility of a group or gang having committed the serial murders and kidnappings. “According to FBI experts, the psychology of a group would be different from the mentality of a serial killer acting alone or a serial killer committing crimes with the help of another person”.³² However, the theory which proved to be more thoroughly investigated was that of the profilers Ressler and Skrapec.

Once the criminologists managed to get the authorities to look seriously into the theory of a serial killer, they were able to produce a name: Ángel Maturino Reséndiz, male, 44 years old, of Mexican origin, and imprisoned in the United States for murdering women, where he was known as The Railway Killer, because he found and abandoned his victims near train lines. Moreover, Maturino travelled to Ciudad Juarez regularly to visit his mother.

Robert Ressler asserted that “his personality fit one of the profiles we were able to establish for a serial killer who targeted women. He could move easily through the cities, cross the border with ease and disappear into a crowd”.³³ Candice Skrapec added that “autopsies of Maturino’s victims in the United States showed a great deal of similarities with the forensic evidence I was able to reference for the crimes committed against women in Ciudad Juarez in the nineties”.³⁴

In the opinion of both criminologists, Ángel Maturino could be the author some fifteen murders. For his part, he has always denied any involvement in crimes against women on the Mexican

30. Sergio GONZÁLEZ RODRÍGUEZ, *Bones in the Desert*, Anagrama, 2002, pg. 128.

31. Marcos FERNÁNDEZ and Jean-Christophe RAMPAL, *La Ciudad de las Muertas. La Tragedia de Ciudad Juárez*, 2008, pg. 67.

32. Diana WASHINGTON, *Harvest of Women: Safari in Mexico*, 2006-2007, pg. 312.

33. Marcos FERNÁNDEZ and Jean-Christophe RAMPAL, *La Ciudad de las Muertas. La Tragedia de Ciudad Juárez*, 2008, pg. 66.

34. Marcos FERNÁNDEZ and Jean-Christophe RAMPAL, *La Ciudad de las Muertas. La Tragedia de Ciudad Juárez*, 2008, pg. 67.

side of the border. Ressler and Skrapec's prime suspect was incarcerated in a Texas prison in 2002 and was executed by lethal injection on 27 June 2006 in that state.

Near the end of his investigation, Ressler came up with another name: David Parker Roy. The 60-year-old man lived in Elephant Butte Lake, New Mexico near the Texas-Chihuahua border. United States police confirmed that he had made several trips to Ciudad Juarez before he was arrested in 1999 and charged with several counts of sexual abuse, rape and murder. David Parker also died in prison.

Even if these suspects were actually guilty of some of the murders, this would not explain the more than four hundred women³⁵ who have disappeared and died in Ciudad Juarez.

In 1995 local police discovered a pile of papers tied together with a string and signed with the name Richie. The documents were printed in capital letters and contained texts, drawings and descriptions of extremely violent and sexual scenes which ended with the torture and murder of several girls. The stories were similar to violence inflicted on some girls found in the Ciudad Juarez area, but an investigation into the identity of the author led nowhere. In the summer of 1997, a macabre letter addressed to a teenager who committed suicide before the letter was delivered was also signed with the same name, Richie. The letter demanded that the teen bring three adolescents to a specific place to be drugged and raped by several men. The letter said the teen would be raped by these same men if the demand was not met. The author of the letter was never discovered and it is possible that it was false evidence designed to mislead the police or part of a macabre joke.

Robert Ressler left the femicide investigation definitively in 2003. He left the investigation in the hands of the Chihuahua police, and stated that "they are perfectly qualified to investigate and solve these crimes. They have demonstrated this in the past and they continue to do so today".³⁶

The Chihuahua police decided to abandon the FBI's line of investigation, and also ceased investigation into whether David Leonard Wood – the serial killer executed on the previous 20 August by the state of Texas and accused of murdering girls throughout the eighties and nineties – may also have been a culprit in any of the deaths and disappearances of women in Ciudad Juarez.³⁷

Since then, the theory that points to a serial killer as the main cause and author of these crimes has lost the strength it once held and is currently a secondary priority in the official line of investigation.

The copycat theory

One of the theories put forward to explain femicide in Ciudad Juarez is the copycat, or emulation theory. This theory is partially based on the impunity of the crimes, which is a critical element that must be considered in any theory presented to explain what is behind the murders of women occurring in Ciudad Juarez. In this theory, impunity plays a very important role. If it is used as a principal factor in explaining the violence against women, then the focus turns to administrative and institutional inaction as the root cause of femicide in the city. And if there are no consequences for the individual offences that are committed, a situation and a general feeling of impunity is created for certain types of crimes. This context of impunity means that the perpetrators of

35. The figure makes reference to the time when the two men were detained. The number of cases of women who have disappeared and or been killed was more the two thousand at the time of this report.

36. Marcos FERNÁNDEZ and Jean-Christophe RAMPAL, *La Ciudad de las Muertas. La Tragedia de Ciudad Juárez*, 2008. pg. 62.

37. Special on the process published in *El Paso* (http://www.elpasotimes.com/newupdated/ci_13028346) and recorded in the blog of Diana Washington (<http://dianawashingtonvaldez.blogspot.com/>).

violence against women do not consider the consequences, because there are none. As Israel Covarrubias puts it, “general impunity gives me justification to commit my barbarities”.³⁸

The copycat theory goes beyond theories which point to causes outside of the society in which the violence takes place, and emphasises the failure of society itself, i.e. anomie. According to this theory the structural violence of femicide would provide the explanation for the ongoing murder of women in Ciudad Juarez.

On the other hand, if we trust this theory to explain femicide in Ciudad Juarez we must also assume that there is a diversification of responsibility for the more than five hundred murdered women since 1993. There may be some distribution of the authorship of the crimes, but this does not mean that there are as many victims as perpetrators or as many murders as murderers. There may be parties responsible for several crimes, but this does not mean you can reduce responsibility to a dozen scapegoats. This also does not imply that this explanation necessarily excludes other explanations for the extreme violence against women in Ciudad Juarez.

The fact that there is no similar pattern found among the victims and the way in which they are murdered detracts from this theory and supports the theory of several serial murderers, organised crime or gangs involved in the drug trade. The fact that many of the bodies of many of the victims are not found for several months – according to autopsy results – must also be taken into consideration. What we can derive from this is that, at the very least in a fair number of cases these are well-organised groups that have at least the minimal infrastructure and resources required to hide bodies over several months and later distribute the bodies over several different areas of the city.

Parties charged by the police: Sharif, Los Rebeldes, the bus driver gang and Los Ruterros

Despite the claims of Ciudad Juarez police, there is no definitive evidence (that does not contain some aspect of irregularity) or testimony from investigations following the discovery of the bodies which show without a doubt that the accused (with the exception of *El Tolteca*) are responsible for the deaths of the women.

This lack of evidence, combined with irregularities in the investigative process, has detracted from the legitimacy of the actions of the Mexican authorities. The confirmation that the accused were tortured before they were brought up on charges detracts from the credibility of their confessions. The fact that the murders and disappearances continue reinforces the assertions of the experts and of the mothers and the relatives of the victims that the truly guilty parties remain free.

The appearance of bodies in Lote Bravo in 1995, Lomas de Poleo in 1996 and Campo Algodonero in 2001, led to intense popular and international pressure on the authorities in Ciudad Juarez. Authorities fingered Sharif, the *Los Rebeldes* gang, the bus driver gang and *Los Ruterros* in response to this pressure.

Abdel Sharif’s criminal record in the United States (several counts of harassment, two arrests and a prison sentence for sexual assault) combined with the fact that he was a foreigner³⁹ made him an ideal suspect, one capable of committing crimes against young women in Ciudad Juarez. He was arrested on 3 October 1995, although his involvement in the crimes for which he was accused could not be proven, due primarily to a lack of evidence and irregularities in the process (false testimony and torture resulting in self-incrimination). The police created a network of

38. Israel COVARRUBIAS, *Violencia y Anonimato: una Interpretación de la Violencia sobre las Mujeres en Ciudad Juárez* (Violence and Anonymity: an Interpretation of Violence against Women in Ciudad Juarez - 1993-2000), dissertation at the José María Luis Mora Institute, 2001.

39. Diana WASHINGTON, *Harvest of Women. Safari in Mexico*, 2006-2007, pg. 221.

people based around Sharif who could also be blamed. This was a group led by Sharif himself and included three gangs: *Los Rebeldes*, the bus driver gang and *Los Ruterros*.

According to the police, the gang **Los Rebeldes** was active in corrupting minors, drug dealing and other small-time criminal activity. In 1996 ten of the gang's members were detained, but in the end only five went to prison: Sergio Armendáriz, *el Diablo*; José Juárez Reyes; Luis Andrade; Juan Contreras; and Carlos Barrientos. All of them were accused of working with Sharif. They were supposedly paid 1,200 dollars per victim. The officials explained that Sharif payed for the deaths because if girls continued to be killed in the same way while he was incarcerated, then he could not be the killer. The members of *Los Rebeldes* claimed that they had been tortured and forced to incriminate themselves.

Government officials used the same argument when they detained five men in 1999 for five murders in Ciudad Juarez. Four of these men were bus drivers (the bus driver gang).

The bus drivers who were detained were Jesús Manuel Guardado, *El Tolteca*; José Cevallos; Agustín Toribio; and Bernardo Hernández. The fifth detainee was Víctor Moreno, from El Paso, who had a criminal record including robbery and possession of narcotics.

The bus drivers took part in a press conference after their detention. Diana Washington mentions this in her book, *Harvest of Women*,⁴⁰ and describes signs of torture on the four detainees. With the exception of *El Tolteca* – the only person accused for which there was real evidence of involvement in at least one crime – there was not a scrap of evidence to implicate the remaining detainees in crimes committed in Ciudad Juarez, except for their confessions given under torture.

In fact, the arrest of three of the drivers was a result of the false statement⁴¹ given by *El Tolteca* under torture. He stated that they were all members of one gang and followed the orders of – who else? – Sharif.

In the case of *El Tolteca*, unlike the others accused, there was indeed real evidence to link him to the crimes. There was the testimony of a young woman from Ciudad Juarez who had survived an assault and had been left in the desert. She recognised her assailant.

Sharif appeared again in 2001, when two more bus drivers (*Los Ruterros*) were accused of kidnapping, raping and murdering eight young women found in November of that year in Campo Algodonero. The detainees were Gustavo González Meza (*La Foca*) and Víctor Javier García Uribe (*El Cerillo*). They both admitted to the crimes after physical abuse. The torture of the pair was denounced publicly, as in the case of Sharif and the members of the *Los Rebeldes* gang.

These repeated accusations of torture were recorded and denounced by Amnesty International and the UN in 2003⁴² and a year later *El Cerillo* was set free. *La Foca* was not exonerated because he had died a year earlier in prison after a minor operation. His lawyer also died after being shot by the police, which also happened to *El Cerillo*'s lawyer.⁴³ Sharif also died in 2006 from internal bleeding after a heart attack as he was being transferred from the prison to the hospital. His death occurred a week before the date on which the judge was going to rule on his case.

The members of the *Los Rebeldes* gang and the gang of bus drivers remain in prison with sentences of 40 years. *El Tolteca* is also serving additional time for the rape of Nancy Villalva.

40. Diana WASHINGTON, *Harvest of Women. Safari in Mexico*, 2006-2007, pg. 229.

41. Diana WASHINGTON, *Harvest of Women. Safari in Mexico*, 2006-2007, pg. 267.

42. Diana WASHINGTON, *Harvest of Women. Safari in Mexico*, 2006-2007, pg. 263.

43. Diana WASHINGTON, *Harvest of Women. Safari in Mexico*, 2006-2007, pg. 268.

The involvement of influential, wealthy and powerful people (juniors) in the femicides

The journalists Sergio González and Diana Washington did not hesitate to implicate the involvement of wealthy, powerful players in the deaths of women in Ciudad Juárez. In a series of reports about the deaths in Ciudad Juárez published in 2002 in the newspaper the *El Paso Times*, Washington states that different anonymous sources confirmed that they had taken part in orgies organised by wealthy and powerful people, and others said they had been raped by groups of influential men.⁴⁴ The journalist dedicated an entire section of her book to the involvement of so-called 'juniors' (members of the wealthy, privileged class) in the murders, based on the results of a federal investigation that came to light in 2001 after nearly a year of work. The investigation revealed that influential men in the country were involved in the murders of women. According to Washington,⁴⁵ federal officials confirmed that women were used in orgies and later killed for sport. Although the names of the suspects in the murders (not mentioned in Washington's book) were revealed to upper level officials and evidence linking them to the crimes was provided, they were not detained. Washington agrees with the opinion that none of these people will face justice; they are practically untouchable thanks to their economic power and high-level political connections in Mexico. They are associated with the National Action Party (*Partido Acción Nacional* - PAN) and the Institutional Revolutionary Party (*Partido Revolucionario Institucional* - PRI). They have connections to international businesses and their power extends beyond the Mexican border. According to Washington, some of them contributed to the presidential campaign of Vicente Fox in 2000 as well as to the campaigns of other candidates.⁴⁶ Privately, Washington claims that members of the PRI have confessed to being members of the powerful Mexican ultra-right involved in the femicides.⁴⁷

Some of the names that appeared in the 2001 FBI report had previously come up in an investigation by the Mexican Attorney General's Office with the support of federal experts. According to the journalist Sergio González,⁴⁸ the report indicates that the serial homicides of women are the result of orgies and a brotherhood of one or more groups of killers protected by officials in different corrupt police bodies. González adds that these people were in complicity with and are supported by people who have made enormous fortunes, both legally and illegally, from drug trafficking and smuggling contraband. He mentions the former director of the El Paso intelligence centre, Phil Jordan, as a person who agrees with this theory explaining the impunity with which the crimes are being committed, which Rodríguez qualifies as crimes of "gender, race and class".

Without mentioning any names, Sergio Rodríguez points to six businessmen in El Paso, Texas, Ciudad Juárez and Tijuana as the promoters of the crimes. These crimes are entrusted to hired assassins that kidnap, rape, mutilate and murder the women. These businessmen, with political links to the Government of Vicente Fox have businesses related to transport, gas, media and leisure and gambling establishments.

44. Diana WASHINGTON, *Harvest of Women. Safari in Mexico*, 2006-2007, pg. 339.

45. Diana WASHINGTON, *Harvest of Women. Safari in Mexico*, 2006-2007, pg. 374.

46. Diana WASHINGTON, *Harvest of Women. Safari in Mexico*, 2006-2007, pg. 376.

47. Diana WASHINGTON, *Harvest of Women. Safari in Mexico*, 2006-2007, pg. 377.

48. Sergio GONZÁLEZ RODRÍGUEZ, *Bones in the Desert*, Anagrama, 2002, pg. 251.

PART II. ANALYSIS OF COVERAGE

7. METHODS

The focus of this study is the discourse content of a set of twelve documentary programmes and pieces related to femicide in Ciudad Juárez from 1993 to 2008.

To create the **corpus**, first we searched through everything that was broadcast on regular television in Catalonia, and then we looked at any and all documentaries available on the internet. The following is a list of the pieces we found:

- *Señorita Extraviada, Missing Young Woman* (2001), a documentary by Lourdes Portillo (Independent Television Source)
- *¡Ni una más! V-Day in Juárez* (2004), report by P. M. & Media
- *Silencio en Juárez* (Discovery Channel)
- *Amnesty International* (video denouncement)
- *Bajo Juárez* (2006), a documentary by Alejandra Sánchez and José Antonio Cordero
- *30 minuts - "Juárez: crims sense resposta"* (2006), documentary by Silvia Heras, Ferran Prat and Meritxell Ribas
- Interview on television channel 3/24 of Rita Laura Segato, anthropologist, (2008) by Montse Jené
- *Cuarto Milenio*, a piece in the programme directed by Iker Jiménez
- *El programa de Ana Rosa*, interview of a Mexican girl who survived an assault and her mother
- *Doble Injusticia - Femicidio y Tortura en Ciudad Juárez*, a documentary produced by the Mexican Commission for the Defence and Promotion of Human and Witness Rights (*Comisión Mexicana de Defensa de los Derechos Humanos* and Witness)
- *On the Edge*
- *TeleSur - Bajo Juárez*, a programme based on the documentary *Bajo Juárez*
- *Juárez Mothers Fight Femicide*, a documentary by May our Daughters Return Home, Civil Association (*Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa A.C.*)
- *La lucha de la Mujeres de Juárez*, a documentary by the news channel EFE

We did not select a sample of documentaries; rather we analysed all of the material we found on the subject.

Our general objectives were:

1. to analyse the degree of complexity of the information provided about femicide;
2. to look for violations of the deontological code and recommendations for the treatment of gender violence; and
3. to determine if solutions are provided, and if so, to examine them to the extent required.

Our research also had **specific goals** which, so as not to repeat them, are described in the analytic template for the collection of data used for each of the programmes after they were viewed and transcribed, including relevant elements that were not explicit in the text, but were spoken or written on the screen.

The **analytic template** includes the following parts:

Technical data:

1. Title, authorship, length, production dates, broadcasting channel, and format (programme type: whether it is truly a documentary, or an interview, a report, etc.)

Contents:

2. Subject: the macro-propositions, i.e. the central theme focused on and the main ideas presented
2. Extraction of narrative theme:
 - Presentation of data
 - How data is combined with statements
 - How sources are combined with statements
 - Presentation of theories and proposals, in the words of the persons presenting them
 - How the theory they put forward is illustrated, with what evidence or sources
4. Reconstruction of the mental model the piece presents
 - Adding secondary propositions based on the macro-propositions extracted:
 - What does it say about femicide?
 - What does it say about patriarchy?
 - What does it say are the primary causes?
 - What data is given to support it?
 - Who is responsible?
 - What reasoning is given (is it solid or unfounded, debateable or untenable)?
 - What solutions does it indicate, what must be done?
 - What activist groups are mentioned (mothers' groups, feminists, etc.)?

When we extracted these ideas we also looked at the relationship between the text and the images and what that relationship may have been implicitly transmitted. We took into account that some images by themselves – found in specific cognitive contexts – transmit definable concepts.

We also considered that sometimes ideas are advanced directly by the person who makes the documentary, and other times the ideas are transmitted in the words of other people, but in such a way that they become the position assumed by the piece.

To analyse the collection of data and create the template, i.e. to discuss the mental model constructed by the documentary (or the piece in question):

- a) We compared what we know and what we have established in the first part of this document (What is Femicide?) with what is said in the documentary.
- b) We examined what is said through micro-analysing the most significant propositions, paying special attention to:
 - If the choice of words reduces or exaggerates responsibility

- If there is questionable reasoning
- If relevant rhetorical or linguistic resources are used in terms of ideology (for or against something in a way that cannot be justified)

After creating the analytic template, we were able to examine results.

8. Results: sensationalism vs. sensitisation

In this first section we will describe the type of documentaries that we analysed and determine whether sensationalism was present in the audiovisual treatment of femicide in each piece.

Firstly, we would point out that practically all the audiovisual materials involve sensitisation. These documentaries seek to expose a problematic reality, specifically, femicide in Ciudad Juárez, and to explain its causes and consequences and, in some cases, to explore possible ways to end it.

The first positive aspect that should be noted about the audiovisual materials that we watched and analysed is that, in spite of the delicacy of the subject that they deal with, they do not fall into the trap of sensationalism, the use of risqué images or recreations that emphasise the most horrifying details of the assaults.

However, as indicated previously, these are documentaries that aim to sensitise, they do not make use of the most provocative elements, rather, they aim to sensitise through emotion. The majority of the documentaries make use of the testimony of close relatives of the victims of femicide, giving these parts a very strong emotional element. The victims and their families are treated with dignity in almost all of the documentaries.

Representation of death

One of the criteria we used to gauge the use of sensationalism was analysing how death is represented and if explicit images of the lifeless bodies are used. There are several ways to portray death in audiovisual media that do not involve images of the victim's dead body. Below we will look at some different examples of how death and violence are visually represented in the different documentaries.

1. **Emotion.** At one point in *Bajo Juárez* we hear the voice of the mother of a murdered girl, Lilia Alejandra Andrade, reading a poem that her daughter had written. This segment is representative of the tone of the documentary from which it was taken, *Bajo Juárez*, as well as that of most the documentaries we analysed. It is very emotional because of both its images and text, read by the mother, and it does not require the use of explicit images of death.

Norma Andrade: "She competed in poetry, speaking, singing ... ah, also with Mexico. She got first place ... in Mexico. 'I believe in you', she said, 'Mexico, I believe in you' ... like the crown of an oath, you smell of tragedy, my land, but you still laugh. Maybe because you know that laughter is the edge of hidden pain, if I know heaven it's because of your heaven, if I know pain it is from your tears that are in me learning to cry. Mexico, I believe in you. Because you spell your name with an x, which has something of the cross and suffering. Because the brave eagle of the emblem enjoys playing with those filled with life, and at the same time, with death."

Emotion is also transmitted through the images shown as the mother reads the poem. The voice of Norma Andrade plays over images of crosses in memory of the victims, images

of the burial of the young woman and images of a symbolic act in commemoration of the women victims of femicide in Ciudad Juárez.

2. **Life and death dualism.** In many cases the families of the victims have audiovisual material of the young women when they were still alive. These videos are frequently used in the creation of the documentaries with images which symbolise death to transmit a feeling of loss of life to the viewer. In the segment that exemplifies this mechanism, a fragment of video showing the young woman when she is still alive and celebrating her fifteenth birthday is contrasted with a static image of a cross, which symbolises death. Thus, loss is represented without the need to show cadavers, and great emotion is conveyed through these images, especially because the young woman is shown full of life, at a party.
3. **Symbolic resources.** Femicide is represented with different symbolic elements. The most common are the pink crosses in the desert to commemorate the victims, an emblematic symbol of the impunity of femicide. The fact that the majority of the bodies are found in the desert has led to the use of travelling shots in the desert to symbolise death and impunity. Absence is also frequently represented through posters placed along the highway which denounce the disappearance of the young women. We have chosen a selection of images, also taken from the documentary *Bajo Juárez*, which show the most recurring themes used to depict death, from the most explicit (the body of a victim of femicide) to the most symbolic (posters, pink crosses and a travelling shot of the desert). In a segment in this group of images we find the image of the naked body of a dead young woman, but this cannot be considered a disorienting or sensationalist element, as it is a momentary event and not the result of a recreation of the scene.

The presence of violence in the media is a recurring topic of debate. The main question is if showing the most brutal pain in others generates empathy. Because seeing explicit violence does not intrinsically facilitate sensitisation and understanding of the dimensions of the tragedy, other forms can be used to depict death.

Exploitation of femicide

Two of the programmes that we analysed go beyond common bounds of respectful treatment and a desire to sensitise. Specifically, these are the only two programmes that we analysed from private television channels in Spain: *El programa de Ana Rosa* and *Cuarto Milenio*. In both cases instead of sensitising the viewer to femicide, they exploit it, as we will show below, for their own purposes.

The first of these is the interview conducted by Ana Rosa Quintana with a person presented as the only victim of femicide to escape with her life. The presenters' introduction to the subject and the interview are both declarations of the show's intentions. Throughout the show, emphasis is placed on the uniqueness of the testimony, making the critical element the fact of exclusivity. So, it is quite clear that the objective of the interview is not to analyse femicide and its ramifications, but rather it seeks to boost viewership by providing shocking details in an exclusive interview. This becomes quite clear in the speech of the presenter as well as the formal resources used, such as captions and so on, which place the emphasis of the programme on the presentation itself, minimising the relevance of the content of the interview.

Ana Rosa: "They have found a new body, they say there might even be many, many more. Only one person has survived these crimes. Her name is Maria, and she is here with her mother, Gloria. These names are fictitious, as you may imagine. We are going to talk to them, but we don't want them to be recognised, because they are living through a terrible experience and have an incredible story. Threats, fear. They have never spoken to the media and this may be the most important first hand account to date, because she may be – she is, surely – the only woman who can tell this story."

Consider this section, which demonstrates the tone maintained throughout the interview:

“Ana Rosa: They kidnapped you ...

María: Yes, this ...

AR: ... by force. ¿How was it?

M: Well ... She tells him that... He will give her money and I will work for him. At first I accepted it, because I thought it was for an event, I mean, I thought I was going to work at an event. Then he gave her the money and she gave me some condoms. I thought I was going to work with him. And when I saw them, I said no, I wasn't going to work with him with that.

AR: So, you really wanted to work as a model and they were making a deal with you as if you were ... a prostitute. And you said no. What happened then?

M: I tried to get out and there were several men waiting with guns to make sure I didn't get out.

AR: They kidnapped you. How long did they keep you?

M: All night.

AR: All night. And that night you were raped by nine people, right?

M: Yes.

AR: You thought you were going to die.

M: Yes. Yes, I did.

(CAPTION “María: I thought they were going to kill me, a man helped me to escape.”)

AR: How did you manage to get out of there?

M: At about 11 o'clock in the morning a man came in. I hadn't seen him the night before. He came in and told me to get out, to get my things and get out, because the man who had paid was in the other room and wanted to see me. So, I didn't want to, I didn't want to leave the room.

AR: Was this a ritual? Was it a gang rape and that was all they were going to do? Or what did they intend to do? María, what do you know now that you got out of there, that you escaped from there?

M: Well ... (silence)

AR: Or what relationship is there here with all the other crimes with adolescents and young women in Ciudad Juarez?

M: (silence)

AR: You don't know. Well ... It is very tough. I must say you are tall, you are a big girl, but I also have to say that you are a very young girl.”

The interviewee is presented in the context of an exclusive first hand-account of femicide in Ciudad Juarez because she is the only person to have survived it. In principle, she is there to describe her experience, but after this first stage of the interview is over, the interviewer asks that she analyse what is happening in Ciudad Juarez. The girl is not there to provide a discourse analysis of the situation in the country, but to recount her personal experience, and she has come there solely for that purpose, not as an expert on the subject who could analyse the situation impersonally. This is one reason why her account winds up being insubstantial and removed from its context. Furthermore, it is clear from the perspective of the audience that the

presenter is asking that the young woman provide answers that she does not have. So, throughout the interview there is uncomfortable silence on the part of young woman, which is conveyed to the spectators.

Another interesting element that should be noted is the clear lack of sensitivity throughout the interview. The tone is very direct and the questions are in the form of assertions, as evidenced in the fragment above. Also, both the questions and the captions emphasise the more shocking details of the kidnapping and rape.

Secondly, we have the programme *Cuarto Milenio*, broadcast on channel Cuatro, which dedicated an edition to discussing femicide in Ciudad Juarez. This is a very particular case because the presenter is forced speak about femicide in the framework of the subjects the programme usually deals with, which basically revolve around paranormal phenomena. Because of this, the programme focuses more on the shocking details and points to theories that are not solidly grounded in fact. They are forced to suggest largely incredible hypotheses to explain femicide in a way that does not clash with the usual tone of the programme. So, femicide ends up being linked to some supernatural entity, as exemplified in the following fragment:

Iker Jiménez: “And clearly another facet is that, of course, in Ciudad Juarez we know about death, we know that it is an immense puzzle that nobody knows how to solve, that continues with unabated impunity. And the media cannot let us forget this story, but obviously, the supernatural component is not known to us. Carmen, everything in this recording that we are going to listen to, obviously, is true and it will make your hair stand on end. The sound of this ‘ah you were murdered,’ if it is true that this is the content, that we did not know of, but of course, we hear it here and it is impressive.

It’s time to listen to it, it is time to pay close attention, to this information that has come to light thank to the efforts of Isabel Pisano. Afterwards, we will continue with a direct connection to the people who were involved in this supposedly psychophonic find, and of course, regardless, there is a sense of evil that has a lot to do with the atmosphere, with the vapour you breathe here and what we are continuing to hear. Let’s listen.”

“Ah... you were murdered ..., ah... you were murdered ..., ah you were murdered ...”

The programme points to the possibility of a paranormal background to the femicide; the presenter asserts that this component exists based on the evidence of the voices that they hear in a recording. No other reasonable explanation is given as to what the cause of femicide in Ciudad Juarez might be. The phenomenon is used to provide new content for the programme, but not to expose the basis for the causes which would explain, even in part, the drama that Ciudad Juarez is experiencing.

9. Results: sources and positioning

We have analysed some fifteen visual materials, mostly documentaries, but also interviews, reports and magazine programmes on femicide in Ciudad Juarez. We have studied the primary actors and their positions, not only the sources used to explain the situation in which the women live in Ciudad Juarez, but also the positions of the journalists who present the reports and the producers of the documentaries.

Unanimously, they tend to explain the phenomenon of femicide in Ciudad Juarez from the point of view of the victims.

The stories of the femicides are recounted in most of the documentaries by the victims’ families, by the people who have been falsely blamed for some of the deaths (the falsely accused), by experts who have researched the cases and by the authorities that are generally criticised for

reacting passively to the situation. Examples of these four types of sources can be found in the report *Silencio en Juárez* by the Discovery Channel.

“I think we have done painstaking investigative work to purge the bad elements that existed previously in the police force.”⁴⁹

“Probably, most of these homicides will not be solved.”⁵⁰

“As long as there is no punishment of the responsible parties we will continue to see increasing violence towards women, who are the ones who pay the consequences.”⁵¹

“If she were alive, I would be the happiest person in the world.”⁵²

The sources

Four different types of sources turn up in the majority of the documentaries studied. On the one hand, and as the indisputable protagonists, there are **the victims**, i.e. the people directly affected by femicide: victims of assaults in the first person who have survived the attacks or relatives who have experienced the pain of the loss of a daughter. The girls who have lost their lives in Ciudad Juárez generally have a specific profile:

“Young women, who are generally from poorer families with few resources, people in normal situations. We are talking about students, women who worked, who went home and disappeared, who went to school and disappeared, who were going to meet the bus and disappeared.”⁵³

The girls are indirect and mute witnesses with strong emotional, non-sensationalist presences, in all the documentaries. They appear in pictures and videos that contrast life and death: images of young teenagers enjoying life in the form of pictures of the missing. Only they take on testimonial significance in cases in which the girls have survived and relate their experiences, such as the first person account of Roxana Ruíz Menéndez.

“I was on this corner on the phone and I was going to make a call when all of the sudden a van pulled up and four people got out and pushed me in. I had never seen them before. I thought they were just going to threaten me or that it was a prank. That was where I was raped. We actually came in here, right here... I never noticed if the people were there. I remember that we went up to the upper part where the lot is, about 30 or 40 meters from here, and that is where three of them started hitting me. I screamed for help a few times and every time I screamed they hit me. Finally, when they had done what they wanted to do to me, they asked me what I wanted before I died, and what I came up with was that I wanted to go to the bathroom. The bathroom is here, when I entered the bathroom the man stayed outside and just up here I was able to get out, where it goes like this, I was able to get out there. When I fell, there were people sitting on the benches and I asked them to help me. I told them I had been beaten, that I had been raped... and they said “look, I am a detective”, “I am a judicial police officer” and they were armed. The guy realised that I was already telling them and took off running and he got in a truck that was on one side, and he told the others and they left. And I reported it and everything, but to this day they have never asked me to answer any questions and they haven’t investigated anything.”⁵⁴

49. Patricia González, Attorney General.

50. Óscar Máynez, former Head of Forensics for Ciudad Juárez.

51. Lilitiana Velázquez, Amnesty International (Mexico).

52. Ramona Morales, mother of one of the victims.

53. Documentary *Silencio en Juárez*, Discovery Channel.

54. Documentary *Silencio en Juárez*, Discovery Channel.

The documentaries construct the history of the femicides from the sum of individual stories that transmit feelings of sorrow and impotence to the viewer. The girls' and families' stories explain, case by case, the disappearance of each of the victims and the impossibility of advancing the investigations. These feelings are added to the denouncement of the impunity and negligence that surrounds the investigation of the disappearances and deaths.

A second source are the “**falsely accused**”, the people who have been accused without evidence over the last 15 years for the murders and disappearances of young women in Ciudad Juarez. They are presented as victims of circumstance and reinforce the documentaries' positions on the role of the authorities, who instead of investigating their sources thoroughly and finding the truly guilty parties, created false culprits in response to pressure from the general public and to avoid confrontations with powerful groups related to the disappearances and deaths of the girls.

The falsely accused who appear the documentaries are people who match two different profiles. The first is exemplified by Abdel Sharif and *El Tolteca*, individuals with criminal records related to sexual abuses. The other is exemplified by David Meza, cousin of one of the victims, and *El Cerillo*, a bus driver, neither of whom had a criminal record and both of whom were released without charges after a year in prison.

In none of the cases was evidence presented to implicate the accused in the deaths and disappearances, and their incarceration was based on false evidence and torture – which was subsequently proven and condemned.

The documentaries demonstrate the role of the government in the resolution of the cases of femicide in the report broadcast by the programme *Realidades*, in which *El Cerillo* demonstrates how he was tortured and forced to admit to crimes that he did not commit. His declaration is backed by the former head of forensics in Ciudad Juarez and does not agree with that of the president, Vicente Fox, who holds that the perpetrators of the femicides have been found.

“They pulled down my trousers, they lifted my shirt and they threw water on my stomach. They threw water on me and they sprayed my privates and began to give me electric shocks in my privates.”⁵⁵

“It was evident that these people had been tortured so they would confess to the crimes. There is no evidence relating them to the homicides. The profile does not fit.”⁵⁶

“The majority of the homicides have been resolved and the guilty parties are in prison.”⁵⁷

The role of the **experts and activists** as sources who back the opinions of the family members is critical. This is the third type of source which appears in the reports, people who have analysed the cases and who point to the authorities as the parties responsible for their failure to solve the crimes. They clearly demonstrate negligence on the part of the Mexican authorities, who they claim seek out scapegoats, falsely accused innocent people, and thus ensure the impunity of the real culprits and impede the definitive resolution of the cases.

The journalist Diana Washington accuses the responsible parties:

“The responsible parties, the intellectual authors of the systematic murders in Ciudad Juarez, are the following: two serial killers, at least, who are still free; low-level drug traffickers who have killed with impunity; two extremely violent gangs who have used murder as an initiation rite for new members; a group of powerful men who have killed with impunity; and the copycats who have taken advantage of all this to hide their crimes.”⁵⁸

55. Víctor Javier García, *El Cerillo*, Telesur TV programme *Realidades*.

56. Óscar Máynez, former Head of Forensics for Ciudad Juarez, Telesur TV programme *Realidades*.

57. Vicente Fox, former President of Mexico, Telesur TV programme *Realidades*.

58. Documentary *Juárez: Crims Sense Resposta*, TV3 programme *30 minuts*.

The nearly non-existent use of testimony from the Mexican authorities demonstrates the lack of credibility the documentaries assign them as the fourth type of source used to explain the femicides.

The testimony of the Mexican authorities is used primarily as a counterpoint to the declaration of experts and members of the victims' families on the different points related to the cases. They are contradictions which often antagonise the viewer, because they are absurd or they minimise the importance of the femicides, as can be seen in the statements made by the federal public prosecutor for gender violence, Alicia Pérez Reverte, and refuted by Vicky Caraveo, the former president of the Chihuahuan Women's Institute.

“About 70% are due to causes that I, Alicia Elena, as an investigator would deem of a private nature, which implies domestic violence, violence in the workplace or possibly from sporadic relationships, even outside the home, but I don't see any relation to organised crime like drug trafficking. The other 30% very probably involve organised crime related to human trafficking and handling, exploitation of children and drug trafficking.”⁵⁹

“The people who disappeared, the people who were mutilated, the people who were most certainly mistreated, there was no justice for them. Then we opened the door for them so they could see what justice means: 80% of the cases have been solved or are in the process of being solved and only 20 remain, 20%. But 20% is femicide. These are the horrific deaths that not even a monster would do. This opens a door to total impunity.”⁶⁰

Finally, we should point out that we found a critical factor lacking in the understanding of femicide in Ciudad Juarez: the party responsible for the disappearances and murders. Most of the documentaries and books we have analysed in order to understand femicide in Ciudad Juarez place the guilt on a powerful group of people with connections to wealthy drug trafficking interests in Mexico. None of the documentaries go beyond vague accusations by experts which do not give names – names that do indeed turn up, for example, in some of the books that we have used to document femicide.

Positioning (explicit or implicit)

All of the documentaries we studied, without exception, clearly chose to explain the femicides from the point of view of the victims and gave the segments with the testimonies as much time as possible. All credibility is given to them, and they are set in a context of an economic, social and political environment marked by the Free Trade Agreement, in which being a woman or a poor woman is a risk factor and in which the political powers fraternise with drug traffickers. It places the testimony of people who have devoted their time to investigating femicide professionally at the disposal of the victims; people who at one point or another have suffered the consequences of this dedication.

The documentaries make the messages of the victims and the experts into their own explicit message, a message which points to the **negligence** of the authorities as one of the factors which impedes the investigation which would lead to a resolution of the cases. Maria Salas, the mother of one of the victims, relates her suspicions of negligence to TV3:

“I wasn't sure that it was my daughter, although I knew that she wasn't dead, and I knew that only from the clothes. It started to come out that the bodies were showing up with clothes from other people and that they checked the DNA and it wasn't theirs. So, that is why I wanted them to take them out, to look at the DNA, and now I am sure that is it her.”⁶¹

59. Documentary *Juárez: Crims Sense Resposta*, TV3 programme 30 minuts.

60. Documentary *Juárez: Crims Sense Resposta*, TV3 programme 30 minuts.

61. Documentary *Juárez: Crims Sense Resposta*, TV3 programme 30 minuts

Corruption and impunity are recurring arguments that the documentaries we studied agree are evidence of the difficulty of providing justice, of detaining the truly guilty parties and putting an end to femicide in Ciudad Juarez. There are several testimonies that denounce irregularities in the report *Silencio en Juárez* by the Discovery channel.

“Tell me who has the capacity to infiltrate and corrupt. These people have resources. Who has resources? Well obviously, the drug traffickers.”⁶²

“There was a lot of hiding of information; even bodies were hidden by the state, by state officials.”⁶³

“There were murders linked to organised crime, with drug cartels, with power. So belonging to this wide network of organised crime meant you had the protection of the police, from the law.”⁶⁴

“It may be that the police at some point were kidnapping women for the cartels, so we wouldn’t even know what it was like or what happened, if the police only collaborated or if they were also participants.”⁶⁵

“Someone discovered a body and told the police. The police went there and there were police standing around taking photos. And everybody knows some of the ex-police are hired killers and they were connected to this murder.”⁶⁶

“There are good police officers, obviously, but really the system has been infiltrated too much, there is too much corruption to provide a feeling of safety and trust to the citizenry.”⁶⁷

“The authorities know who they are because they have already been investigated. Their report was given to the authorities on two occasions and nothing was done, because these people are untouchable.”⁶⁸

“No, there are no powerful people involved because the majority of the cases are domestic violence cases. I think that this perception is due to the level of impunity we have seen since 2004. From 1993 to 2004, there wasn’t really a clear picture of what was happening in Ciudad Juarez. And well, from 2004 to 2008, 80% are completely resolved; we only have seven cases that have not been resolved of about seventy, for example.”⁶⁹

The documentaries clearly position themselves against the authorities, using testimony that **discredits and creates doubt** of their ability to handle the situation.

“(They pressured Óscar Máynez to manipulate the crime scene. They wanted him to put strands of the victim’s hair in the van, and to make sure the drug tests of the people arrested were positive...) ‘The ease with which judges, experts and public agencies are manipulated... the impunity of the officials who were responsible for the irregularities. The problem with this is that the only way to stop torture is to punish the torturers. Laws, campaigns, speeches... they don’t do anything. As long as the officials who commit these criminal acts are not punished, the door will always be open...’ (Óscar Máynez resigned immediately before he was to be fired).”⁷⁰

“(The office of the Attorney General of the state of Chihuahua proposes a curious solution)...

62. Óscar Máynez, former Head of Forensics for Ciudad Juarez

63. Marisela Ortiz, representative of the May our Daughters Return Home Association

64. Diana Washington, journalist for the *El Paso Times*.

65. Marisela Ortiz, representative of the May our Daughters Return Home Association.

66. Diana Washington, journalist for the *El Paso Times*.

67. Óscar Máynez, former Head of Forensics for Ciudad Juarez.

68. Diana Washington, journalist for the *El Paso Times*.

69. Patricia González, Attorney General of the State of Chihuahua.

70. Documentary “Juárez: Crims Sense Resposta” (Juarez: crimes without answer), TV3 programme 30 *minuts*.

- The community should apply a curfew. All of the good people would be in their homes, with their families. And, well, the bad people, they would be outside on the street.
- And how is this going to work in a city like Ciudad Juarez where we have so much industry, where 185,000 people work in the *maquiladoras* and many of these people are very young, women who start work at 5 or 6 in the morning and finish the second shift at midnight and they feel that because their work requires it, they have to be in the streets?
- Ok, well look, I think we just need to take a look at it, clearly someone who has to go to work has to do it, but let's apply it to everyone else we can apply it to, at least. And people who go to work ... it is easy to see who's going to work by the clothes they're wearing and it's very clear by the way people are dressed whether they're going to work, and that's obvious."⁷¹

10. Results: context

Even though there is no way to understand the situation in Ciudad Juarez, much less femicide, we need to speak about the context in which this is taking place in order to attempt to take a coherent approach in terms of possible causes.

In the first place, it must be said that Ciudad Juarez is located on the border with the United States, where *maquiladoras* and drug trafficking are two of the most important factors. The situation is represented in three distinguishable ways:

- The social border. There are two very different income levels (the most powerful country in the world economically, the USA, contrasted with Mexico, a developing country)
- The cultural border. You often see characteristics of both Western and Latin American worlds in border zones.
- The natural border. The Rio Bravo (or Rio Grande in the US) flows along a large section of the border between the two countries, from near El Paso, Texas, to where it meets the sea in the Gulf of Mexico in the state of Tamaulipas.

The border receives a steady flow of immigrants from Mexico and Central and South American countries who want to cross into the United States to improve their standard of living and that of their family. When they fail to do this, many of them look for work in border cities like Ciudad Juarez. Many of these also have "tolerance zones" in which prostitution, drug dealing and violence are daily occurrences. In this context, a statistic that takes on particular significance is that 80% of the *maquiladoras* in Mexico are concentrated near the border.

Below is a segment from a documentary that is particularly illustrative of the situation in Ciudad Juarez as a border town. It is from a documentary on femicide made by the Discovery Channel in the US.

"Adriana is one of the women who disappeared in Ciudad Juarez, a city in the state of Chihuahua on the banks of the Rio Bravo and on the border with the United States. With more than a million inhabitants, this city has seen a marked increase in economic activity in the last years thank to its *maquiladora* industry, which is the fourth largest in all of Mexico. Although the unemployment rate is 1%, one of the lowest in all of Mexico, nearly 50% of the inhabitants are impoverished and live in marginal conditions. Its strategic location has made it one of Mexico's most prized frontier cities and also one of its most dangerous."

71. Documentary *Señorita Extraviada*, interview with the Assistant Attorney General of Chihuahua, Jorge López.

Máynez: “Ciudad Juarez is a very violent city due to its location; we are right on the border with the United States. We have a lot of problems with immigration and lack of infrastructure, when I say a lack of infrastructure I mean law enforcement, police stations, fire, rescue, emergency and medical services infrastructure. What’s more, it seems we also have a problem with violence against women that has got worse over the last years.”

It is important to consider the presence of the **maquiladora industry** in Ciudad Juarez and how this weighs on the question of social class and injustice, with the difficult working conditions found in the factories. The salaries at the *maquilas* are about 2.50 euros a day. Even though the standard of living in the United States is obviously different from the standard of living in Mexico, the salaries are still insufficient, since in the United States this is the minimum wage per hour and not per day. This means that many women are forced to work double shifts and overtime and up to 16 hours a day to make ends meet.

The jobs in the *maquilas* are considered to be women’s jobs and 36% of the women who work in Ciudad Juarez work as machine operators in these companies. In other words, one third of the actively employed population of Ciudad Juarez works in a *maquila*. Of these, 14% have suffered sexual harassment. According to governmental sources, 22% of women have experienced discrimination in these settings. In the following fragments several women describe the situation.

- Here in Ciudad Juarez there are three primary industrial sectors, these are automotive, electronics and paramedical products. Currently there are about 240,000 workers in the *maquiladora* industry in about 235 factories.
- The majority of the *maquiladoras* are foreign owned. In many of these they make parts to send to other countries to manufacture stereos, televisions, cameras and other appliances that everyone uses and needs, right? But made by women workers.
- The benefits and privileges of hiring women they said for a long time was that women were more docile, that women were better at manual labour. But they also say unofficially that it is because they thought that there would be fewer labour conflicts with women.
- Here in Mexico, here in Ciudad Juarez, what they pay for a day’s work is what they pay for an hour’s work in the US.
- We are talking about salaries of about 52 pesos a day. This salary doesn’t make ends meet for women with two or three kids, and so these women have to work more than the eight hours a day, which according to labour law, is what they are supposed to work in a day. Also there are several very serious issues such as sexual harassment in the *maquiladoras*. This is primarily done by men who have higher positions in the factories, supervisors or department heads.
- Really, when you look at the *maquiladoras*, you are looking at a sector that is in extreme violation of human labour rights.

The power of the drug traffickers in Mexico (especially along the border) combined with militarisation under the current president, Felipe Calderón, has led to a situation in the country in which violence is on the rise, but crime is not. Cartels vying to control territory, in this case in Juarez, has led to ongoing wars over *plazas*, i.e. territory considered strategically valuable for drug trafficking. The relationship between drug trafficking and both economic and political power has led to increasing rates of corruption in several areas. The United States is generally not mentioned in the debate on problems related to drug trafficking south of the border, even though this relationship is the most evident and fundamental for several reasons:

- The United States is the biggest consumer of drugs worldwide.
- Ninety cents of every dollar made from drug trafficking winds up in the US economy.
- A large portion of the clients in the “tolerance zones” in the border towns are from the United States.

Below, Irene Blanco, Sharif's former defence attorney, and the journalist Diana Washington look at the key role that drug trafficking plays in Ciudad Juarez.

Irene Blanco, Sharif's former defence attorney says, "What is perfectly clear? Basically my, or our, theory is that drug trafficking is behind this. Drug trafficking is behind this? Why? Because (and I don't care who the government is, or how honourable its governance is) there is a driving force which plays a very active role in this society called drug trafficking and we must deal with this. It must be invited to the table. Why? Because it is more powerful than you.

Narrator: Corruption has penetrated all levels of power and the lives of hundreds of women have been lost."⁷²

Diana Washington, journalist for the *El Paso Times* says, "The drug cartel in Ciudad Juarez is a very important factor, a critical factor in this whole situation. The cartel is a factor which has bred corruption to the point that we now see violence used as a way of terrorising the community."⁷³

11. Results: documentary types by treatment

The documentaries we analysed can be divided into three classifications according to **differences in their treatment of the subject matter**:

1. In-depth treatment, for example, *Señorita Extraviada* or *On the Edge*, which look at femicide in detail, although focusing on different aspects.
2. Documentaries with only partial treatment, i.e. they concentrate on a single case or a single factor of femicide, but without superficial treatment or oversimplification. Two specific examples of this type of documentary are *Doble Injusticia* and the 3/24 interviews.

3/24, segment of the interview on femicide:

"Who can this be attributed to?"

Yes. This can be attributed to different groups who are jointly engaged in criminal activities of different types that you typically see in this border area, and I think these brutal, collective murders we see are a sign of the sealing of mafia pacts. A pact is made between different people belonging to different sectors of that community, of that area, both the businesspeople and criminals, like, possibly younger employees of those businesspeople who benefit in some way from smuggling or other crime, who participate in organised crime. So when together they commit these types of brutal crimes against women, a pact of silence is sealed between the participants and the result is impunity.

- But, who does this benefit? Is this killing for killing's sake?

- This killing seals a pact. That is, it creates an indestructible alliance between the two parties who take part in the, how should we call it, sacrifice or ritual crime."

Segment from the documentary *Doble Injusticia*.

Carlos Castresana (Special UN delegate), "The fact that there are individuals who have been tried, even though their statements were obtained, as documented in the trials themselves, through abuse, in some cases through torture, means that they are giving credence to evidence that is legally worthless, that doesn't exist."

Caption: "Victims of torture accused of murder in Ciudad Juarez and Chihuahua"

72. Segment from the documentary, *Señorita Extraviada, Missing Young Woman*, by Lourdes Portillo.

73. Segment from the report on femicide by TV3 in the programme *30 minutos*.

Mothers of David and Neyra (a person who was falsely accused and a victim, respectively):
“I know that it wasn’t him, and there is nothing I can do about it, I want to see the people who are truly responsible for this behind bars.”

Caption: “US Congress is concerned about deaths in Juarez”

3. Those who resort to oversimplification, for example Amnesty International, who have no desire to make harmful criticism, we find that when these groups take on a topic as complex and delicate as the case of femicide in Ciudad Juarez, a superficial and stereotypical TV spot to get members is not sufficient. From time to time, the goodwill of many NGOs comes off poorly when they leave out the context and spotlight the media impact without providing complete information about the problems which they want to draw attention to.

“Ciudad Juarez, Mexico.

Over 400 women murdered.

Some worked in *maquiladoras* and were killed on their way to or from work.

The police won’t solve these murders ...

The government won’t investigate ...

Can you help?

Neyra Cervantes, raped, murdered.

The police never tried to find her killer ...

Patricia Cervantes, mother of Neyra,

‘This was what they gave us, but one month after she disappeared.’ *(She holds a missing poster for her daughter)*

David Meza, cousin of Neyra, tortured, forced to confess, innocent,

‘That was when they started to shock me, at first on the chest, with the electric wire ... ’
They said, ‘You have to say is that it was you, say it. No, I didn’t do anything.’

The government ignores police corruption and failure.

(Images of Patricia Cervantes responding to the Attorney General)

- Excuse me, Mr. Attorney General. If he is there, it is because of you.

- The judge issued an arrest warrant.

- Yes, because of the torture.

- No, no. If that were so, he would have considered it in the confession.

- Yes, and because of the torture, and it’s not right to torture people.

Neyra’s murder is just one of hundreds.

Join Amnesty International and help the women of Juarez.

Make the local government solve these murders by:

investigating the 177 state officials found to be negligent in their handling of the cases.

Make the big companies protect the women who work for them by:

improving security in consultation with the mothers of the victims.

It’s something you can do. And the least that they can do.

Join Amnesty International. Stop violence against women by taking action today.”⁷⁴

74. Entire transcription of the Amnesty International television advertisement. In the ad, both the captions and the dialogue are translated.

12. Results: shortcomings

After having analysed all the documentaries proposed in the study, we found that two points which to us seem important with regard to the murders of women in Ciudad Juarez are underrepresented in these works, although they are found in reports of the international media (US and European). These two points are: firstly, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA); and secondly, a society that is markedly patriarchal. We would also like to make it clear that we do not believe that these documentaries are of better quality than others, rather we would attribute the difference to the perspective provided by distance that sometimes makes it easier to view certain subjects that are not so easy to consider from the point of view of being immersed in the environment.

On the other hand, in all the documentaries analysed, we have also seen a general lack of the presence of people in power (employers, drugs traffickers, etc) who are important components in the mystery of the murders.

North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)

The relationship between the implementation of the NAFTA in 1994 and the murders of women is mentioned directly in the reports by the American productions *On the edge*, *¡Ni una más!* and *El silencio en Ciudad Juarez*. The depth of treatment of this facet is dependent on the length of each report. Obviously, the longer reports are able to devote more time to the subject, but all of the perspectives provided by the producers on the other side of the border stress the importance of this trade agreement, as can be seen in the following segments:

“These murders began to accelerate around 1993, 94, 95, which was the time when NAFTA went into effect and we really don’t believe that that’s a coincidence.”⁷⁵

In the case of *¡Ni una más!* so much importance is placed on the trade agreement as a determining factor for the murders of women that the report begins as follows:

“The extreme violence against the young women of Juarez became epidemic with the introduction of *maquiladoras* (sweatshops) and policies by the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Many of the women disappeared after work at the *maquiladoras*. The owners still refuse to provide basic security measures for their workers despite the ongoing terrorism.”⁷⁶

“Ciudad Juarez practically lives off the *maquiladora* industry. With the approval of NAFTA, signed by Canada, the U.S.A. and Mexico in 1993, a great deal of multinationals set up assembly plants in the city...”⁷⁷

As they delve deeper into the subject, the reports assert that NAFTA accentuates the differences between the north of the border (the United States) and south of the border (Mexico).

NAFTA establishes certain conditions that tend to harm the quality of life of Mexicans. One of them is a reduction in prices for agricultural produce for export (especially coffee and corn), which in some cases has decreased by 30%. We should bear in mind that these products usually comprise the basis of Mexico’s agricultural products, and a large part of the population is primarily agricultural. This decrease in price has led many farmers to search for alternatives that continue to be profitable, and one of crops that offer a good return is drug crops.

The other alternative is migration to more prosperous areas, whether attempting to cross the border to the United States or staying in Ciudad Juarez where NAFTA has offered yet more

75. *On the Edge*. Edition VIII, free trade.

76. *¡Ni una más!*

77. *Silencio en Juárez* (Silence in Juarez), Discovery Channel.

provisions for *maquiladoras* to be established. Increased population leads to overcrowding and reduced quality of life for these people both in the workplace and in social and urban life, since the majority of immigrants end up living in the outskirts of the city in improvised neighbourhoods usually lacking essential services. The result of this process makes women a cheap and docile labour resource, because they have few resources, few opportunities to find work and a lot of competitors who are willing to work in poor conditions just to get by.

All these conditions combined with the fact that Mexican society is markedly patriarchal make the women who live in Ciudad Juarez – especially the ones that have few resources – vulnerable to exploitation, harassment or intimidation and expose them to all kinds of violence, in the workplace as well as in other areas of their lives.

Patriarchal society

In spite of knowing that Mexican society has a strong chauvinistic component – in some cases even misogynist – which is derived from its patriarchal society, this is a factor that we see little of in the documentaries analysed. Once again, this perspective is approached in the foreign reports, in those from the US as well as the EU (*30 Minuts* or the interview in 3/24), although in a tangential and vague manner, as if in passing. That is to say, some of the interviews make reference to patriarchal society as part of the definition of femicide or when pointing to a solution to end the murders of women, but under no circumstances is there a show or edition that names it as one of the key factors in the events.

“It is the only cause. We are women. We are not important. We are replaceable, and above all, these women have very little means. No one speaks for them. No one defends them. No one raises their voice. It is as simple as the simple lives of these humble women.”⁷⁸

“The phenomenon known as femicide means the violent death of women simply because they are women who are, in some cases, mistreated, tortured, raped and murdered.”⁷⁹

“Whether it’s a serial killing, a case of domestic violence or an isolated incidence of violence. Whatever it is, they all have the same common thread: the need for domination and control of women by men.”⁸⁰

This last example is from an interview of participants of a demonstration against the murder of women in Ciudad Juarez.

“Do you think the murders and disappearance of women here in Juarez is related to violence against women everywhere? I think it’s an ingrained social disease that is called patriarchy and the dominance, male dominance that rules societies. That keeps inbreeding violence.”⁸¹

People in power

All the documentaries analysed are based on information supplied by the relatives of the victims, civil associations, specialists (that normally are not involved in the case), the falsely accused, journalists who denounced the impunity of the crimes who finger very powerful persons who are blocking the investigations of the women murdered and impeding the arrest and punishment of the true culprits. But none of this is mentioned in the documentaries.

78. *30 Minuts*.

79. *On the edge*. Edition IX, violence against women.

80. *¡Ni una más!*

81. *¡Ni una más!*

However, it must be said that the names (and surnames) of the people appear in the documentation studied prior to the analysis of the documentaries, specific people and specific relationships to powerful people (leaders of the drug cartels, businesspeople and politicians on both sides of the border) that are responsible in part for the murders or who have vested interests in seeing that they are not resolved.

The witnesses are only able to refer to these people in general way (“the powerful people”, “the heads of the cartel”, “the employers”) out of fear of possible and probable reprisal. And the image of these people’s power is reflected in the acts of self-censorship by these people themselves. In the documentaries, the allusion to these supposed responsible parties is equally vague. We see images of ranches, of the façades of huge factories or of the opulent villas of the rich from far away.

From the journalistic point of view, we understand that the absence of the voice of these people is because they themselves want it that way. The analysis of the documentaries infers that they have all the resources to ensure that this is the case.

This lack of concrete images only reinforces the feeling of the impossibility of adding to the climate of impunity. Even though all the reports denounce it, the documentaries do not go beyond the simple fact of communicating the power (which seems omnipotent) of these people.

13. Conclusions

We chose documentaries on femicide in Ciudad Juarez as an example of information about a phenomenon of much more general aggression against women in a context of high levels of violence. In other cities in Mexico, such as Morelos, and in other Latin American countries, those known as the “triangle of violence” (Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras) and other areas in the world that are at war, like Colombia or the Congo, the dimension of aggression against women is a clamorous reality.

We were not motivated to do this study based on a concern for whether or not the journalism was of a high or low quality – a perfectly legitimate concern; rather our motivation was based on an uncertainty about whether, from a journalistic point of view, there was a contribution towards ending the murders of women in these situations. We do admit that the conclusions presented are not very optimistic. However, this makes the need to act all the more necessary.

In our study of the causes of femicide, we were able to deduce that we must take steps towards ending the impunity of these crimes against the women, and in order to do this, the culprits must be identified and punished. However, to achieve this, police and judicial negligence must be ended, but this will not be possible unless the charges that one after another have proved useless are dismissed.

However, since the nomination of new government judicial and police officials is in the hand of state bodies that are often corrupt, we can not expect much, but this does not mean that we should stop exerting pressure, even if it only means unmasking the responsible parties so that they will eventually fall.

State corruption is deeply rooted in drug trafficking, which is also a significant source of economic power for those identified as responsible – not to say the only ones responsible – for femicide. So, ending drug trafficking is proposed as a necessity, to at least attenuate the femicide and reduce the extent of areas with elevated levels of violence in which the weakest parties, i.e. the women, suffer the violence more intensely. Especially the proliferation of arms further adds to the risks, and consequently, increases the number of victims.

So, information which aims to reduce situations with elevated levels of violence contributes directly to combating femicide. Good examples of this are the denouncement of corruption and the arms

trade; providing information on the advantages of legalising drugs as measure to end drug trafficking; exposing organisations and entities in northern countries that are complicit in the abuses in countries of the south, etc.

There have been legislative and formal advances, i.e. the creation of several commissions, but effective results have not been seen. There have been some successes, such as the ruling of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights against the Mexican State for human rights violations in the disappearance of three women who were beaten, mistreated and murdered in Ciudad Juarez and also for Mexico's violation of the human rights of the mothers and families (the Campo Algodonero case). But it remains to be seen how the state will act. The challenge for the media is to monitor how or if it is done.

Organisations, especially women's organisations fighting femicide, back the measures that have been taken. These are their successes. Sensitisation of Mexican and international public opinion and social mobilisation are steps that must be taken, although they may be insufficient, at least in the short term. However, this is an area in which the international media can help to sensitise the public, foment mobilisation and pressure governments and international entities to move forward.

The international community should also examine an area that we would also qualify as one with highly structural violence and shared responsibility in violence against women, that of the *maquilas*. The media can do a lot to inform the outside world of the day-to-day reality of the border factories, of the living conditions there, and of the products that are made there for consumption in the north. International journalists can contribute towards improving protection for the women who work there, as well as their employment conditions, salaries, living conditions and the basic services in the neighbourhoods where they live.

And legislation should not only be brought to bear in an effective manner on the subject of human rights, but also in favour of horizontal solidarity with the groups that work against femicide and who help the victims and promote preventive measures. In particular, journalists can show that the different forms of violence against women have a common factor, i.e. patriarchy, in both the south and in the north, in order to help to foster bonds, empathy, solidarity and effective cooperation.

Furthermore, in addition to denouncing the crimes, there is a lesser known group of citizen initiatives which aim to help women who live on the border areas help themselves that have proven to be real and effective alternatives. Of course for the citizenry to know of these groups, the groups must make themselves known to the citizenry, they must work closer with them and with other women's groups. This, when combined with the other information provided, goes beyond denouncing the crimes and helps in the search for solutions, to build optimism and in the fight against femicide.

Titles published in this series

1. *The Institut Català Internacional per la Pau and the social movement in Catalonia.*
Robert González and Esther Vivas (IGOP)
2. *Peace Research in Spain*
Escola de Cultura de Pau
3. *Peace and War: The evolution of Internacional Law*
Antoni Pigrau
4. *Peace Process models. Comparative study 1995-2005*
Vicenç Fisas and Kristian Herbolzheimer
5. *Peace-keeping and peace-building operations within the framework of the United Nations and regional agencies: situation, trends and future potential for cooperation*
Javier Sánchez Cano
6. *The state of peace education in Catalonia and the rest of Spain*
Anna Bastida
7. *The peace movement and antimilitarism in Spain: 2003-2008*
Enric Prat
8. *The Government of Catalonia and the European Union in the matter of Human Rights*
Montse Pi
9. *The Government of Catalonia and the international treaties on human rights ratified by Spain*
David Bondia
10. *Strategies of respect and governmental coordination in relation to human rights*
Argelia Queralt
11. *La economía de las drogas ilícitas. Escenarios de conflictos y derechos humanos.*(in spanish)
Col·lectiu Maloka
12. *The development of public policy to promote peace in Catalonia*
Antoni Pigrau Solé
13. *Chances for the catalan government to participate in human rights international organisations*
Xavier Pons Ràfols
14. *International disarmament campaigns: a current state of affairs*
Javier Alcalde Villacampa
15. *The right to housing*
Nolasc Riba Renom
16. *International justice, plunder in war, human rights and multinationals*
Jordi Palou Loverdos
17. *Plan Colombia II* (in Spanish)
Col·lectiu Maloka
18. *Documentaries on femicide in Ciudad Juarez.*
Xavier Giró [dir.] [et al.]



Generalitat de Catalunya
Departament d'Interior,
Relacions Institucionals i Participació
**Oficina de Promoció de la Pau
i dels Drets Humans**