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Guatemala: Recourse and protection available to a woman harassed by a police officer who had attempted to rape her or solicit sexual favours from her (2004 - December 2006)

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Information on recourse and protection available to a woman harassed by a police officer who had attempted to rape her or solicit sexual favours from her is scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

An 18 May 2005 bulletin published by the Mutual Support Group (Grupo de Apoyo Mutuo, GAM) states that women can go to the Women's Ombudsman (Defensoría de la Mujer), an office that is part of the Office of the Attorney General for Human Rights (Procuraduría de Derechos Humanos, PDH) to report any type of violence they might face.

An October 2006 Freedom House report states that the Guatemalan police "are suspected of sexual abuse" and that, during the first 10 months of 2005, 25 women formally registered complaints of sexual abuse against officers of the National Civil Police (Policía Nacional Civil) (4 Oct. 2006). Furthermore, an article from the Guatemalan daily *Prensa Libre* reports that the Guatemalan Ministry of the Interior (Ministerio de Gobernación) created a commission to investigate allegations of sexual abuse committed by PNC officers (25 Nov. 2005). As of November 2005, 25 officers had been reported to the Bureau for Professional Responsibility (Oficina de Responsabilidad Profesional, ORP), a branch of the PNC (*Prensa Libre* 25 Nov. 2005).

According to a study conducted by the Comparative Institute of Penal Studies which is cited in Freedom House's 4 October 2006 report on Guatemala in a section on police treatment of detainees, "99 percent of all women detained by the PNC have been victims of harassment, torture or rape." The Freedom House report also cites an article by the Guatemalan Studies Centre (Centro de Estudios de Guatemala) from May 2005, which adds that "few such cases are investigated" (4 October 2006).

According to statistics from a PDH report on complaints against security forces officers, 20 percent of the victims who lodged complaints between January and June 2005 were women (Guatemala n.d., 17). The PDH reports that 237 people lodged complaints against the PNC between January and June 2005 (*ibid.*, 18). However, according to *El Periódico*, the ORP receives approximately 2,000 complaints against PNC officers annually (26 Nov. 2006; see also *El Periódico* 5 Sept. 2006).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

Freedom House. 4 October 2006. "Guatemala." *Countries at the Crossroads 2006*.

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Prensa Libre [Guatemala City, in Spanish]. 25 November 2005. Olga López and Lorena Seijo. "Investigan a 25 policías denunciados por abuso contra mujeres." <<http://www.prensalibre.com/pl/2005/noviembre/25/128680.html>> [Accessed 20 Dec. 2006]

Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: Comité de América Latina y el Caribe para la Defensa de los Derechos de la Mujer (CLADEM), Centro para la Acción Legal en Derechos Humanos (CALDH), Grupo Guatemalteco de Mujeres (GGM), Colectivo Lesbianas Liberadas (Lesbiradas) and the Coordinadora Nacional de Prevención de la Violencia Intrafamiliar y Contra la Mujer (CONAPREVI) did not respond within the time constraints of this response.

Internet sites, including: Comité de América Latina y el Caribe para la Defensa de los Derechos de la Mujer (CLADEM), Organization of American States, Pan American Health Organization, Policía Nacional Civil de Guatemala, Tierra Viva, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.


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