



RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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07 June 2007

MEX102544.FE

Mexico: Protection and resources provided to women victims of domestic violence in the state of Coahuila (2005 - June 2007).

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

Situation

According to the National Institute for Women (Instituto Nacional de la Mujer, INMUJERES), a government agency, 42 percent of women in the state of Coahuila are victims of domestic violence, in contrast to the national average of 47 percent (*Palabra* 15 Nov. 2006; *ibid.* 21 Oct. 2006). A representative of the Network of Family Development Agencies (Sistema para el Desarrollo Integral de la Familia, DIF) in Saltillo, the capital of Coahuila, is quoted as saying that the situation is worse in the capital and that 70 percent of the women there are subject to domestic violence (*ibid.*).

According to the Director of the Coahuila Institute for Women (Instituto Coahuilense de las Mujeres), Guadalupe Fraire Camacho, 20 women died from domestic violence in 2006 (Notimex 24 Dec. 2006). She indicated that the law in Coahuila does not protect women from violence (*ibid.*). Fraire Camacho reportedly submitted a draft bill to the government of Coahuila that would allow protection measures for women to be implemented, including heavier prison sentences for offenders and the requirement that they undergo therapy for six months (*Palabra* 15 Nov. 2006). No further information on this initiative by the Institute could be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

In correspondence sent to the Research Directorate, the Director of Planning at the Coahuila Institute for Women stated that domestic violence was redefined in Mexican law in August 2005: elements that were previously required for domestic violence to be considered a cause for divorce (repetition, regularity, intention) were eliminated (Coahuila 25 May 2007).

Government services

The Office of the Attorney General of Coahuila (Procuraduría General de Justicia del Estado de Coahuila, PGJ Coahuila) set up six units in its local offices to respond to the needs of women who are victims of violence (*Palabra* 21 Oct. 2006; Coahuila n.d.a). In addition, the state-level DIF in Coahuila implemented a violence-against-women prevention program that focuses on the Piedras Negras region in the northern part of the state (*Palabra* 30 July 2006). Through the program, which promotes living violence-free, the Coahuila Institute for Women offers training to 326 public servants from 60 government agencies, as well as to representatives of non-governmental organizations who work with women victims of violence (Coahuila n.d.b). The Coahuila government also manages a telephone help line for victims of domestic violence, which refers women to the appropriate services and offers them legal advice and psychological assistance (*ibid.* n.d.c).

The Director of Planning at the Coahuila Institute for Women indicates that there is an emergency telephone line that is [translation] "often used to report cases of domestic violence" and which allows callers to request police and medical assistance (Coahuila 25 May 2007). A police patrol goes to the scene, evaluates the seriousness of the medical needs and draws up a report that can be used later in a preliminary investigation (*averiguación previa*) (*ibid.*).

The Director of Planning stated that there is no specialized police unit for domestic violence problems and that no specialized training is provided to the police (*ibid.*). To prevent domestic violence from recurring, a victim can report the violence orally or in writing and request an order for [translation] "temporary emergency [protective] measures" from a family trial judge (*ibid.*). For example, an order can be issued against an offender prohibiting him from entering the family home (*ibid.*). An emergency procedure exists for requesting temporary emergency protective measures; the procedure allows a hearing to be held no more than three days following the request and a sentence to be imposed at or within eight days of the hearing (*ibid.*). No information on how frequently these protection measures are used or applied could be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

Non-government organizations

Civil society organizations provide services to women who are victims of domestic violence; for example, the Nueva Opciones de Vida shelter in Saltillo reportedly provided 255 women who were victims of violence with assistance over a two-year period (*Palabra* 22 Nov. 2006). A variety of services are offered at women's shelters, ranging from an assessment of risks presented by the offender to crisis intervention (*ibid.*). The Saltillo daily, *Palabra*, notes the existence of the Centre for the Guidance and Protection of Victims of Domestic Violence (Centro de Orientacion y Proteccion a Víctimas de Violencia Intrafamiliar A.C.) in the city of Monclova, and of the Opciones Dignas Help Centre (Centro de Apoyo) in Acuña (*ibid.*).

The Si Mujer Centre in Torreon is a partner of the state-level DIF and provides psychological and legal assistance services (*Palabra* 16 Oct. 2005). The Centre is known for the quality of its services and was the first in Latin America to receive ISO 9001-2000 certification (*ibid.*).

According to the daily *Palabra*, three help centres for women who are victims of domestic violence are operating in the state, in addition to the five shelters (*ibid.* 27 Oct. 2006; *ibid.* 21 Oct. 2006). However, Director Fraire Camacho reportedly stated that there is a waiting list for shelter services, despite the 200 places available to women and their children (*ibid.*). In addition to providing lodging and a haven, the shelters offer therapy, activities and legal aid (*ibid.*).

The Director of Planning of the Coahuila Institute for Women specified that each shelter can take in, on average, 10 families, and that access to the shelters is arranged through the agencies that provide assistance to the victims (the Institute, the shelter help units or the PGJ) (25 May 2007). Women are directed to the most accessible shelters and can stay there for a maximum of three months (Coahuila 25 May 2007). Services for ensuring the long-term independence of the women at the shelters are provided, including employment assistance, and follow-up is available for up to one year after they leave the shelter (*ibid.*). The shelters are open to all women, including those from other Mexican states (*ibid.*). Without referring to a specific case, the Director of Planning stated that, in Coahuila, if a woman tries to move to escape her violent husband, there is a strong chance that she will be found; the Director also indicated that no registry exists for these types of cases (*ibid.*).

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

Coahuila. 25 May 2007. Instituto Coahuilense de las Mujeres. Correspondence sent to the Research Directorate by the Director of Planning.

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Notimex. 24 December 2006. "Mueren 20 mujeres por violencia familiar en Coahuila en 2006." (Factiva)

Palabra. 22 November 2006. Rosa Esther Beltran Enriquez. "Los refugios en Coahuila." (Factiva)

_____. 15 November 2006. Sonia Perez. "Presentan plan contra la violencia." (Factiva)

_____. 27 October 2006. Rolando Chacon. "Solicitan hombres terapia." (Factiva)

_____. 21 October 2006. Maria Eugenia Alvarado. "Es grave la violencia." (Factiva)

_____. 30 July 2006. Francisco Liñan. "Busca DIF prevenir violencia domestica." (Factiva)

_____. 16 October 2005. "Recibe certificacion de calidad Si Mujer." (Factiva)

Additional Sources Consulted

Oral source: The non-governmental organization Nuevas Opciones de Vida did not respond within the time constraints of this Response.

Internet sites, including: Comision de Derechos Humanos del Estado de Coahuila, *El Diario de Coahuila*, Procuradoria General de Justicia del Estado de Coahuila, Secretaria de Seguridad Publica de Coahuila.

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