



# #NiUnaMenos: Women and protest movements in Latin America

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## **Background**

The fight against the patriarchal ideas about what it means to be a woman has been the nerve spot to women protest movements over the past decades. The machismo culture, where men are expected to exhibit an overbearing attitude to anyone in a position perceived as inferior, has spread across the Latin American region. Latin America that ranks second in femicide has the distinction of being the most violent region in the world. For years, people have fled from Latin American countries to escape violence, search for economic opportunity and find a safe place to raise their family. Violence is the crux of the immigration problem, but specifically, women and girls in Latin America are most vulnerable to deadly violence. Even though there has been powerful women's movement in Latin America, for a long time the region remained mired in the cycle of gloom and doom. The protest against gender-based violence has gathered momentum in the past few years in Latin America. In recent times, the region has witnessed a marked increase in participation by women in social movements. The murder of the teenage Chiara Páez in the province of Santa Fe sparked an unprecedented social movement called the #NiUnaMenos movement. This movement was started in Argentina, in the year 2015 which is committed to fighting gender inequality and the abuse and murder of women. The name of the movement, 'NiUnaMenos' translates as 'not one less', meaning that not one more woman should die at the hands of men.

The #NiUnaMenos derives from "Not one woman less, not one more dead", a phrase that is attributed to the poet and feminist activist Susana Chávez Castillo, who denounced the cases of femicides that occurred in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua state. This movement inspired thousands of women in Argentina to take to the streets of their cities in protest. In its official website, NiUnaMenos defines itself as a "collective scream against the Machista Violence". The movement was catalyzed by the murder in May 2015, after a three-day search, 14-year-old Chiara Páez's body was found buried in the garden of her 16-year-old boyfriend's house. Chiara was beaten to death after having been forced to take medication to terminate her pregnancy. On June 3, 2015, nearly 300 thousand people went to the Plaza de los dos Congresos with the slogan #NiUnaMenos, with aftershocks of the murder, throughout the country and abroad. The rape, torture and murder of Lucia Perez in 2016 led to protests and a national women's strike in Argentina and across Latin America. This then blossomed into the first International Women's

Strike on March 8, 2017, which took place in over 50 countries. In the words of Marcela Ojeda, the number of people who joined the call is due to “their transversality”, since “the women realized that at some point in their lives they were violated, without the need to reach a physical blow”. It is the marginal woman who is represented there, but not only because of their class origin but because they do not abide by the heteronormative. They are the female heads of household, precarious workers, sex workers, artists, activists, lesbians, Trans, disabled, black, and fat. All women are expelled to the margins of the macho system.

Ni Una Menos movement holds protests against femicides. In addition to femicide, this movement also comprehends topics such as gender roles, sexual harassment, gender pay gap, sexual objectification, and legality of abortion, sex worker's rights and transgender rights. This movement is a huge and powerful movement resisting the femicides, abductions and sexual violence that plague many countries in the Latin American region. The movement became widely recognized by the use of the hashtag #NiUnaMenos on social media, the title under which massive demonstrations were held on June 3, 2015. In line with the massive mobilization called in Argentina, Uruguay, Chile, and Mexico organized marches, and rallies against violence against women. Uruguay echoed the regional call to reject violence against women, with mobilizations in more than 15 departments, organized by women's groups and local social organizations. The NiUnaMenos movement gradually spread across the Latin American region. Thousands of people marched in Buenos Aires to protest against sexist violence to the cry of NiUnaMenos in 2016. The 12-year-old girl, Micaela Ortega was missing a little more than a month from her home in the Buenos Aires city of Bahía Blanca.

The macabre find took place hundreds of kilometers from his home and although the perpetrator of the crime was arrested, the case again brought to the forefront the extent to which gender violence calls for less rhetorical strategies in Argentina. The protest movement in Buenos Aires also called for confronting other less visible forms of violence: psychological, obstetric, symbolic, economic, sexual, reproductive, and family. According to the first Survey of perception and incidence of violence against women in a relationship, in the City of Buenos Aires, only one in ten women who suffer violence makes a police report. Moreover, 15% of the more than 1,000 women surveyed said they had also been the victim of sexual violence. This movement in Latin American region made visible the tragedy of thousands of victims of sexist violence and encouraged a call to the conscience of the entire society to curb the drama of so many women who still suffer this scourge that puts them permanently in danger only because of their gender status.

The essay primarily hypothesis: the primary hypothesis of the paper focuses on how Social Media has helped the growth of Women protest movements in Latin America and established Solidarity for gender issues around the world.

### **A brief note on the developments**

On International Women's Day, March 8<sup>th</sup> 2020, thousands of women, including journalists, took to the streets in the main cities of Mexico, Brazil, Argentina and Chile. During the march, some journalists present were attacked. According to the Spanish news agency EFE, unknown men sprayed fire extinguisher powder and an unidentified gas in the faces of two journalists, respectively, in Mexico City. According to EFE, the March 8 protest brought together more than 80,000 people. The massive march had two colors, lilac that characterizes feminist movements and green for the fight for independence of the woman's body. Most of the women who participated in the protest wore lilac clothing as a representation of their gender and to demand justice for the women murdered in that country in the face of the growing wave of femicides.

According to official figures, during 2019 over one thousand women were murdered, Telemundo published. In Argentina, the March 8 protests this year were largely led by the #NiUnaMenos movement against gender violence and round the demand for the legalization of abortion and also the inclusion of a gender perspective, in keeping with El País of Spain in keeping with the National Federation of Journalists (Fenaj for its acronym in Portuguese) of Brazil, the most problems faced by women journalists in Brazil are moral and molestation on social networks. in keeping with a Fenaj report published in January 2020, attacks on journalists and also the media in Brazil increased by 54 percent in 2019 compared to 2018. Two particularly horrific crimes have galvanized the locomote March 8th, 2020. the first crime - Cabanillas, a women's rights activist and artist who was a part of a collective called Hijos de Su Maquilera Madre, which defends women's rights, ecofeminism, gender equality and assists families of victims of ladies who disappeared within the area on January 18th, 2020. She was found shot dead in Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua. The second crime - Escamilla, a 25-year-old woman was brutally murdered by her partner, on February 9th, 2020. In keeping with reports, her partner skinned her, removed her organs and dumped them during a sewer drain to cover the evidence. Photos of her gruesome death were printed during a local newspaper. The murders are a part of an extended line of femicides within the country and now, activists are rising to mention 'enough is enough'.

The hashtag #niunamas began to trend on Twitter, after the death of Escamilla, where many of us expressed their anger not just for the deaths of Cabanillas and Escamilla, but also protested against the gender violence in Mexico, that has escalated since the first 1990s. People protested and marched in cities across Mexico on February 14th, 2020

calling for justice and also the attention of the Mexican government to the epidemic of gender-based violence. Activists in the metropolis, Texas, which is true across the border from Juarez, also organized an indication in solidarity with their neighbours.

### **Causes, Concerns and Fallouts**

The day Argentine society made gender violence visible, the terms machismo and femicide began to be heard in television programs, bars and offices. There was a breakdown that seemed natural and was a source of shame that remained veiled, began to attract attention, not to be tolerated and to denounce. The paradigm started changing. An example of this was observed in the newspapers: in the Police section, the category "Crime of passion" was abandoned for "Femicide", breaking with the myth of romantic love, where jealousy and possession meant loving. A new stage was being born. The regional response of this movement was that, some legislative results were achieved to fight against femicide within the region. Judge Elena Highton de Nolasco launched the Femicide Registration Unit for the Supreme Court. Following the Femicide Registration Unit, the National Government, through the Human Rights Committee, formalized the Unit, yet because of the Fiscal Specialized Unit on Violence against Women (UFEM). However big this progress could appear, between the primary and second NiUnaMenos protests from 2015 to 2016, 275 women died as victims of gender violence. The demonstration transpires in Argentina were carried forward by women across the resident region, in Chile, Peru, Colombia, and Uruguay. This is often a section that has one in every of the best rates of violence against women within the world.

As far as a global response is concerned, notable one was the massive women's march was organized on January 21, 2017, at the United States of America which marked the origin of militant feminist struggle. The focus was against Trump and his aggressively misogynistic, homophobic, transphobic and racist policies. The idea of the march was to mobilize women, including Trans women, and all who supported them in an international day of struggle, a day of striking, marching, blocking roads, bridges, and squares, abstaining from domestic, care and sex work, boycotting, calling out misogynistic politicians and companies, striking in educational institutions. The march is aimed at making visible the needs and aspirations of women in the formal labor market, women working in the sphere of social reproduction and care, and unemployed and precarious working women in the United States. In embracing feminism, women in the United States took inspiration from the Argentinian coalition, Ni Una Menos as they define it. Ni Una Menos has many facets of gender issues.

Latin America is a region where femicide rates are highest and the funding has helped UN Women capitalize on existing progress, through the work with the National Citizen Observatory on Femicide which is a coalition of 49 human rights organizations across

Mexico to prevent and eliminate femicide. An occurrence at the UN Headquarters in big apple on 25 November 2019 featured prominent speakers and musical performances, to appeal preventing and ending violence against women and girls. Participants included Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, world organization Chef de Cabinet to UN administrator António Guterres, Susannah Grant, Executive Producer, Writer, Director and Showrunner of “Unbelievable” the Netflix limited series, Ajna Jusic, President of the Association “Forgotten Children of War” from Bosnia and Herzegovina and photographer Jonathan Torgovnik yet as musical performances by the choir of the UN International School. World organization commemorated the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women where multiple events were conducted worldwide, like marches, art competitions, cycling rallies, and marathons.

As a part of the UN System-wide activities for the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, to urge actions to finish this scourge that impacts one in three women worldwide. At the world organization, the annual 16 Days campaign, mobilized governments and public under the umbrella of the Secretary-General’s campaign UNiTE by 2030 to finish Violence against Women. This included recent movements like #MeToo, #TimesUp, #NiUnaMenos, #NotOneMore, and #BalanceTonPorc. World organizations conducted this campaign to throw fall upon the violence against women and girls that exist in every country. From treating rape as an insignificant issue, victim-blaming, the objectification of women’s bodies in movies, glamorization of violence in the advertisement, or the constant use of chauvinist language, women are all daily witnesses to the current rape culture, sometimes even silent spectators, and have a responsibility to prevent it. Every action that UN Women has taken or supported is a step toward fulfilling the words Ni Una Menos, a promise to the women the region has lost and to future generations of women.

## **Major Trends**

Today, the shifting discourse points to a renewed struggle against a cultural hegemony dominated by men throughout Argentina’s 200-year existence. The surging attention was given to the debate surrounding the legalization of abortion in 2019. Abortion is illegal across most of Latin America. In a predominantly Roman Catholic region of 21 countries, it is legal only in Cuba and Uruguay. Criminalizing abortion has been condemned by many women in the Latin American region, generally poorer women, to seek out abortions in totally clandestine situations, putting their health and sometimes their very lives at risk. Women in Latin America demanded the legalization of abortion, a health care issue being taken on with increasing fervor over the past two years in Argentina and across Latin America. Argentina's Congress has introduced eight separate bills for the early termination of pregnancies since 2007. On February 19, 2019 solidarity ignited by NiUnaMenos reportedly saw thousands take to Plaza Congreso demanding

legalization. For the first time in Argentine history, the legalization of abortion received enough support from lawmakers to be debated in the national legislature. President Alberto Fernández, on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2020 said that he intends to send a legal abortion bill to congress within 10 days. As a result, Argentina is on track to become the first major Latin American country to legalize abortion. President Alberto Fernández also added that “Society in the 21st century needs to respect the individual choice of its members to freely decide about their bodies.”

Argentina received a 56 billion dollars loan from the IMF in October 2018 and the National Congress passed an austerity budget to comply with the terms of the loan for 2019. Along with making gender violence a public issue, NiUnaMenos movement in 2019, intersected this problem with the nation's economic recession, government austerity and national debt. The national debt and austerity budget aren't just the source of economic woes, but feminist concerns as well. In this context, debt harms women because it forces them to stay in abusive relationships and take on undesirable work. The state's austerity programme had also cut retirement benefits for women who work from home.

Alongside its usual hashtags like #VivasNosQueremos (#WeWantUsAlive), NiUnaMenos has used new hashtags #LibresYDesendeudadasNosQueremos (#WeWantUsFreeAndWithoutDebt) and #NiUnaMenosSinJubliacion (#NotOneLessWithoutRetirement) to throw light on the economic issues that face women more heavily than men. Cecilia Palmeiro, one of the organizers of the NiUnaMenos movement said that since the government of President Mauricio Macri produced this National debt, which is the largest debt in the history of Argentina, one of the principal areas of interest is the relationship between state debt, private debt, and machista violence. There is also a clear relationship between the factors such as legalization of abortion and austerity programme, because abortion is a matter of social justice and women who have the economic means can have an abortion, and those who do not have the economic means are at risk of having unsafe or clandestine abortions.

One of the major trends in the NiUnaMenos movement was the impact of social media. A Chilean Feminist Anthem called “el violador en tu camino” (The Rapist is you) spread around the world to mark the International Day for the elimination of violence against women. For protesters, the lyrics and choreography directly reflected their experiences. This Chilean anthem by the women protesters because of their video and dance moves went viral on Social media and spread across the world with performances that took place in France, Spain, and the UK.

Women in Latin America turned to apps to combat sexual violence. Women across Latin America are combating the widespread violence which is a complex task that requires a

range of societal initiatives. One such initiative is the use of mobile technology in combating sexual violence against women in this region. In Latin America, a large number of apps for women have emerged, and they are widespread. Governments also played a significant role in developing such apps apart from the feminist organizations which demand a solution to violence perpetrated by men against women. In Latin American countries, there are free apps available featuring a panic button that sends a call for help to selected contacts or other users nearby. The app transmits the phone's geodata information, which allows the recipients of the emergency call to find the user's location in times of emergency. This is a significant helpful technology which was developed in order to fight gender violence in the region. Apps featuring this tool include We Help (Mexico), Boton de Panico Ni una menos (Argentina), #NiUnaMenos (Peru) and Antonia (Chile). Mexico's Laudrive app and Sara Ladies & Teens in Argentina offer an Uber-like rideshare service for female passengers, with women drivers. Women in Mexico City use the Vive Segura app to report harassment on public transport or in public places directly to the police. The SafetiPin app that originated in India is similar but also allows users to mark neighborhoods and streets on a map as safe or unsafe. SafetiPin is also available in Kenya and in Bogota, Colombia. The Mexican app, Mujer Segura Alerta Rosa, found a simpler way to call for help: the women wear a bracelet with a panic button that sends a signal to a police station. This form of emergency call, however, requires a degree of confidence in local police in all countries in Latin America. These apps not only help to share the current location and send a message at times of threat, but also help to find ways in closing the gap between the reporting time and judicial action.

The cases of symbolic violence are innumerable. As already mentioned, it is not by chance that there is a counterattack, possibly to defend a cultural, political, economic and social system that grants privileges and power to certain people. Despite these resistances, three years after the first Ni Una Menos, issues that are a matter of feminism were installed in the media, such as unpaid domestic work, equality of work and wages, femicides, linked femicides, the right to sexual enjoyment and, even, the debate on the autonomy of the bodies of people capable of gestating.

### **Forecast in 2020**

The struggle of the feminist movement in Argentina continues today with the so-called fourth wave, characterized by being a global, mediated and massive stage. The "Ni Una Menos" generation was born at a particular moment, in which the traditional and social media played a very important role. Women protest movements has now become an alliance in Latin America to end the brutal sexual violence and murder of women and girls, the rallying cry of "NiUnaMenos", or 'not one less' has galvanized a call for urgent action at all levels, from government policy-makers to individual change-makers. Social media produced and will continue to create awareness of the problems relating to gender

from its most visible edge. This movement started in Argentina in 2015, as women took to the streets to protest against femicide. The killing of women, simply because they are women, is one of the most heinous violations of human rights. From the massive turnout of the first marches under the slogan “Ni Una Menos” against femicides, the feminist movement in Argentina is now a firmly intersectional one weaving together all societal struggles. The slogans that appear every June 3 have expanded and will continue to expand. The violence against women’s bodies is not just physical violence. The violence is in the wage gap, in the unpaid labour that falls on women’s shoulders, in the debt, in the disciplining of their sexualities, in mandatory maternity, in unemployment, and precarious access to basic services. Recognizing this whole network of violence and the mechanisms that reproduce it enables us to question, through feminism, in all aspects of women’s lives. The slogan “We want to be Alive, Free, and without Debt,” in reference to the recent IMF agreement, is an example of how feminism in Argentina is not limiting itself to gender demands. The feminist movement today is perhaps the only one that is a mass movement with radical dimensions. #NiUnaMenos movement can be viewed as an evolving woman protest movement that will curb the rising chauvinistic nationalism in the Latin American region. The movement has come forward with a new kind of global battleground, different from the separation between the global and local thus paving way to globalization. The movement tends to form networks with other regions in the world, focus on the abuse women are facing across, mainly through social media to bring about solidarity among women and to fight against gender violence.

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