

ARGENTINA

»»» Activism against femicide

Although 18 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) have recognized and criminalized femicide, the region has the second poorest score in the [SDG Gender Index on female homicide](#).⁵ Feminist activism against femicide gained traction in the region from the 1990s. In Argentina, the movement came to a head with major protests in 2015, achieving landmark legal and policy changes to better address gender-based violence (GBV). The achievements of feminist movements in Argentina have been monumental, and their continued work is essential in the face of recent political shifts.

Mass mobilization in 2015

In May 2015, 14 year-old Chiara Paez was murdered by her boyfriend and buried in his parents' backyard. Her murder was one of a string of femicides, accompanied by a [victim-blaming media discourse](#) and indifference by authorities. In June 2015, these events triggered the wave of protests known as #NiUnaMenos.



We were expecting people, but we were expecting a normal mobilization of 10,000 people...during those three weeks we dedicated ourselves to everyone, all the important figures in the country, even TV presenters who did comic shows raised their sign of NiUnaMenos and called for mobilization.

— Journalist and one of the founders of #NiUnaMenos

The first march in Buenos Aires, organized by a [group of journalists through Twitter](#), gathered some [300,000 women](#) bearing banners, placards and photos of lost ones to demand an end to the widespread normalization of GBV. The movement called for the government to fully implement existing GBV legislation, raise corresponding budgets, provide gender-sensitive police training, create national statistics on femicide and improve support for survivors. It aimed to speak not just to government, but to the media and society as a whole.

The power of a unifying message

The initial #NiUnaMenos protest had a single, unifying goal: to stop the murder of women and girls. By creating an accessible discourse, not tied to party politics, #NiUnaMenos was able to [bring together existing movements](#), as well as to [mobilize women who had not previously been part of feminist activism](#). The simple poetic communications of the movement, and [the use of media](#), were key to its success in Buenos Aires and the expansion to other [Argentine cities and elsewhere in LAC](#). The first #NiUnaMenos protests also coincided with a general election, ensuring that femicide remained at the top of the political agenda.



One could even say it was revolutionary... Because it really changed the foundations, it changed the language, it changed the way in which women saw themselves, they saw men, they saw the State as a key actor to intervene in issues of violence, they began to demand that the State intervene.

— Feminist activist, author of "Nunca seremos las mismas"

Legislative changes in response to activism

#NiUnaMenos did not happen overnight. The movement was built on [many years of feminist activism](#) against GBV, including [by LGBTQI+ activist groups](#). The movement was central to the passing of Law 26.485 in 2009, recognizing diverse forms of GBV and establishing measures for its prevention; in 2012, [Law 26.791 criminalizing femicide](#) was also passed.

Gains from the 2015 protests included the creation of a [Femicide Registry](#) providing annual statistics to inform

prevention policies, a law [supporting the children of femicide victims](#) and an amendment of the Penal Code raising the [maximum sentence for rape to 30 years](#). In 2017, following [the murder of Micaela García](#), the federal law 'Ley Micaela' was passed, making gender-based violence awareness training mandatory for all government employees. Since then, GBV laws have expanded to include [2019 legislation recognizing violence against women in politics and street harassment as GBV](#) and the 2021 [Decree on the Prevention of Transfemicides](#).

The ongoing fight for gender equality in Argentina

While celebrating legal and legislative wins, feminist activists [continue to denounce the lack of implementation](#) of existing laws and policies and to highlight the challenges in [shifting the power to the State to define femicide](#). In 2021, just [six cases of femicide](#) resulted in conviction.

Argentina's election in 2023 marked significant changes in the relationship between feminist movements and the government. Upon gaining power, President Milei [dissolved the Ministry of Women, Gender and Diversity](#) and advanced efforts to [delegitimize the fight for gender equality](#). This shift in political leadership endangers the historic achievements of feminist movements in Argentina. For their work to continue and to hold the line against national efforts to roll back rights, movement actors require greater funding and solidarity from and with donors and the feminist community globally.

⁵ In Latin America, the terms "femicide" and "feminicide" have been codified in the criminal law of 17 countries. They both refer to the gender-based killing of women, giving political weight to a social phenomenon with its own characteristics that distinguish it from the term "homicide". (UN-Women/ MESECVI, 2018).