

Celebs Join March Against Mexico Killings

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February 15, 2004

Actresses Jane Fonda and Sally Field marched through this gritty Mexican border city urging authorities to investigate the brutal slayings of hundreds of young women and girls.

Mexican authorities say 258 women have been killed over the past decade in Ciudad Juarez, a city of some 1.3 million people. Many of the victims were sexually assaulted, strangled and dumped in the desert near Juarez, across the Rio Grande river from El Paso, Texas.

"I'm here because 300 young, vibrant women are not," Field said Saturday. "Now is the time on this planet when we have to stand up and shine the light on injustice."

The demonstration was sponsored by Amnesty International and the nonprofit V-Day Foundation, led by "Vagina Monologues" playwright Eve Ensler, which combats violence against women worldwide. Participants chanted, "Justice!" and "Not one more!" as they followed Ensler through Juarez.

Hundreds gathered at Juarez city plaza, where they recited a prayer and sang. Women in the crowd held enlarged black-and-white photos of some victims.

"There was a time when we could live in tranquility," said Guadeloupe Ruiz, 73, who walked from El Paso.

"But lately there have been too many crimes, and I'm here because I want to see an end to this."

Fonda, Field and Ensler participated in a panel discussion alongside mothers of slain victims, Mexican officials and U.S. Reps. Hilda Solis, D-Calif., and Janice Schakowsky, D-Ill.

President Vicente Fox's recent appointment of special prosecutor Maria Lopez Urbina has inspired some new hope that investigators will solve the killings. Fox also has appointed human rights lawyer Guadeloupe Morfin to head a commission coordinating the efforts of agencies

investigating the slayings.

The panelists urged Mexico to dedicate enough funds to the investigation. Fonda met Friday night with mothers of the victims and said she heard how the authorities have ignored their cry for justice.

Many of the victims' relatives blame police corruption and incompetence for allowing the murders to continue. They say police tampered with evidence, tortured suspects and forced confessions from them.

"I have a daughter and a granddaughter and I know that if they were killed the authorities would do everything possible to solve the murder," Fonda said. "Mexico, Juarez, Chihuahua deserve better than the authorities that are now ruling. These mothers deserve better."