

Mexico - Summary Report

WPS National Action Plan (NAP) Status:

In January 2020, Mexico announced the adoption of a feminist foreign policy. Mexico is also developing its first 1325/WPS NAP.

Overall Assessment:

In 2019, the government of Mexico restructured the security and defense apparatus extensively.¹ The reforms created a new *National Guard*, which functions as a national police force. While this is a civilian force under civilian direction, its leadership and the majority of its personnel come from the armed forces. In addition, in May 2020, the Mexican President, Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador (also known as AMLO), issued an executive decree that formalized and expanded the role of the military to participate in public security tasks.² In both the military and police, the number of women serving is low, and they often serve at the lowest ranks. Until recently, civil society has not been much involved in the integration of women in the security forces.

National Importance/Political Will:

The Mexican Constitution, national laws and a number of national policy documents and statements recognize and support the notion of gender equality and women's rights, but these laws and regulations are not systematically enforced by the police and the courts.³ For example, the National Development Plan mentions both the police and military as principal actors, but it does assign specific actions to the police or military, and there are no goals or benchmarks to measure progress.

National support for the WPS agenda in Mexico has been weak, but there are some signs of support under the new AMLO administration. A WPS NAP was set to be released in October 2020. It is worth noting that this did not occur, and the authorities are expected to launch it before the end of 2020. The Mexican security forces have reportedly participated in the development of the plan. (See the Report of the Secretariat of Security and Citizen Protection).⁴

¹ Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador (aka AMLO) assumed the Mexican Presidency on December 1, 2018.

² The military is indeed heavily involved in public security. Unlike many other countries in Latin America, Mexico has no territorial disputes, and the AMLO administration considers the threat of external aggression low to non-existent. See also Maureen Meyer, *One Year after National Guard's Creation, Mexico is Far From Demilitarizing Public Security*, Commentary (Washington, DC: Washington Office on Latin America, May 26, 2020). See Also Mark Stevenson, "Mexico puts Military in Charge of Customs Operations," *Associated Press* (July 18, 2020).

³ Red Nacional de Organismos Civiles de Derechos Humanos, *Impunidad Femicida*, (Ciudad de México, March 2020) at: <https://redtdt.org.mx/mujeres/wp-content/uploads/sites/11/2020/03/131019-informe-de-mujeres-6.pdf> ; National Federal Journal of the Federation, *Development Plan 2019-2024*, (Mexico City, 2019), at: https://www.dof.gob.mx/nota_detalle.php?codigo=5565599&fecha=12/07/2019 and National Institute for Women, *Qué Hacemos*, (Ciudad de México 2020) at: <https://www.gob.mx/inmujeres/que-hacemos>

⁴ The only information available was the announcement of the development of a NAP (page 112) in the Second Annual report of the Secretariat of Security and Citizen Protection. Secretariat of Security and Citizen Protection, *Second Annual Report: Security 2019-2020*, (Mexico City, 2020), at: https://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/574793/2019-2020_Segundo_Informe_de_Labores_SSPC_1.pdf

In January 2020, Mexico announced that it had adopted a feminist foreign policy focused on reducing structural differences, gender gaps and inequalities at home and abroad. Recent foreign policy documents make repeated references to gender equality, women's rights, and women's empowerment as major foreign policy aims.⁵ These are presumably also the stated aims of the feminist foreign policy. That said, the government has not yet published a detailed implementation plan how gender equality and women's rights will be advanced in the foreign policy context.

The National Peace and Security Plan (2018-2024) that introduced reforms to the security forces, including the creation of a National Guard, does not address the protection and prevention of conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence against women, nor does it address the need for the increased participation of women in peace and security activities.⁶

On the other hand, the National Defense Sector Program 2020-2024 considers the promotion of equality and inclusion as a priority strategy. It includes as tasks: to consolidate the culture of respect and equality among women and men to avoid gender violence, harassment, discrimination, as well as sexual abuse; and to strengthen the professional development of military women.⁷ The Navy Sector Program 2020-2024 has as a priority strategy the task of promoting respect for human rights, gender equality, and interculturality.⁸

Institutional Policy and Practice:

Strategy, Plans, and Policy

The Mexican military has integrated some gender equality/WPS principles into their strategies, plans, and policy documents. The most notable commitment by the military (army and air force) is the establishment in 2011 of the *Observatory for Equality between Women and Men*. The military reports that this *Observatory* functions as a Gender Advisor. However, there are no publicly available reports that detail the activities and members of the Observatory, or explain the resources it has at its disposal. Their access to the highest ranks of the military also remains unclear.

The National Guard has not systematically incorporated the principles of WPS in their strategy, plans, and policy documents, and they have not appointed any gender advisors or gender focal points in their organization.

⁵ Secretariat of Foreign Relations, *México anuncia la adopción de su Política Exterior Feminista*, (Mexico City, January 9, 2020), at <https://www.gob.mx/sre/prensa/mexico-anuncia-la-adopcion-de-su-politica-exterior-feminista?state=published#:~:text=La%20Pol%C3%ADtica%20Exterior%20Feminista%20de%20M%C3%A9xico%20est%C3%A1%20fundada%20en%20un,sociedad%20m%C3%A1>

⁶ Andres Manuel López Obrador, *National Peace and Security*, (Mexico City, November 2018) Plan, at: https://lopezobrador.org.mx/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/PLAN-DE-PAZ-Y-SEGURIDAD_ANEXO.pdf and Mexican Congress, *National Strategy of Public Security*, (Mexico City, May 16, 2019), at: https://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/434517/Estrategia_Seguridad-ilovepdf-compressed-ilovepdf-compressed-ilovepdf-compressed_1_.pdf. Mexican feminists have become increasingly critical of the actions of the AMLO administration, particularly its lack of response to the violence against women. See, for example, Denise Dresser, "Mexican Women Are Furious. AMLO Should Start Listening," *Americas Quarterly* (October 6, 2020)

⁷ Secretariat of National Defense, *National Defense Sector Program*, (Mexico City, June 2020), at https://dof.gob.mx/nota_detalle.php?codigo=5595529&fecha=25/06/2020

⁸ Navy Secretariat, *Navy Sector Program 2020-2024*, (Mexico City, 2020), at <https://transparencia.semar.gob.mx/rendicion%20de%20cuentas/Programa-Sectorial-de-Marina-2020-2024.pdf>

That said, to what extent the military and the National Guard have integrated WPS and gender equality principles is difficult to tell, since many policy documents are currently under development.

Gender in the Ranks⁹

Service	Total	Men	Women	Percent Women
Army/Air Force ¹⁰	214,153	188,758	25,395	11.8%
Army/Air Force - Senior Women			200 ¹¹	3%
Navy	88,100	76,000	12,100	14%
Navy - Senior Women			84 ¹²	1%
National Guard/Police	78,466	70,000	8,466	10.7%
National Guard/Police - Senior Women				19%
Women Deployed ¹³	13	7	6	46% ¹⁴

Most women serving in the Mexican military serve in the medical and administrative branches and not the operational and combat branches. Not surprisingly, few women are deployed during operations. Women also occupy very few senior positions in the Mexican military—a mere 3% in the Army and just 1% in the Navy. Furthermore, official information about the number of women in the armed forces is difficult to find in open sources. Although Secretariat of Defense personnel said that there are efforts to increase women’s participation in the military and reach a goal of 30% by 2024, this goal seems unrealistically high given that women currently only comprise 11.8% of the force.

Work Environment

Family Policies: The military and police provide three months of paid maternity leave and 10 days of paid paternity leave. Paternity leave must be used immediately following the birth of a baby.

⁹ Data for this report was provided through interviews with personnel at the Secretariat of Defense.
¹⁰ The Army and Air Force are part of the same organization.
¹¹ Estimated number of women in senior ranks, obtained by adding those reported on 2018 see: Fernanda Nava, “En el Ejército 5 mujeres logran grado de general”, *La Razón*, (November 5, 2018), at <https://www.razon.com.mx/mexico/ejercito-5-mujeres-logran-grado-de-general-sedena-escalafon-militar-mexico/> and Jorge Medellín, “Ascensos en el Ejército Mexicano. Defensa” (November 18, 2020), at: <https://www.defensa.com/mexico/ascensos-ejercito-marina-mexico-siete-nuevos-generales-division>; SEDENA, “Relación del Personal que asciende en la promoción general del 18 nov.2020”, (México: SEDENA, November 18, 2020), at: https://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/592807/BOLETIN_DE_ASCENSOS_2020.pdf
¹² This number refers to the number of women in senior ranks accounted up to 2013. See SEMAR, “Entorno de las Mujeres en la Armada de México”, (Mexico City: SEMAR, 2013), at: <http://www.semar.gob.mx/redes/igualdad/1.pdf>
¹³ Most of the deployments of the Mexican armed forces occur inside the Mexican territory as part of the efforts against organized crime.
¹⁴ These figures correspond to Mexico’s participation in UN Missions only. See Peace Keeping United Nations, *Summary of Troops Contributing Countries by Ranking Police, UN Military Experts on Mission, Staff Officers and Troops 2020*, at: https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/2_country_ranking_13.pdf

Childcare and other family leave policies support members of the military and they are widely used.

Equipment: Women in both the military and police are issued equipment designed specifically for women. Facilities, including bathrooms and living quarters are available to accommodate women in the military, but they are not systematically available in the National Guard.

Anti-Sexual Harassment Policies: Although the military has policies to address sexual harassment and assault of military members, the number of cases, the disaggregation of cases by sex, or the number of cases that is prosecuted is not made public. Prosecution of cases between military personnel takes place within the military command. However, when the offense is committed against a civilian, the case takes place within the civil tribunals. There is no program to address sexual harassment, assault or exploitation in the National Guard. Presumably, these cases would be referred to the civilian courts.

Training, Education, and Exercises

WPS principles are introduced and integrated into the education and training of personnel at the junior-level as part of entry-level training but it is not widely reinforced with follow-on training at the mid- or senior-levels.

Military personnel consistently receive training on the prevention and response to sexual violence and sexual exploitation and abuse. The training is both internally (within the organization) and externally (civilian populations outside the organization) focused. Although the Mexican government said that National Guard personnel will receive training on gender perspectives, it is unclear if this training is fully integrated into the curricula at all levels.

Monitoring/Reporting and Evaluation:

The military and police report that sex-disaggregated data and lessons learned are collected and analyzed to improve security outcomes for women, men, girls and boys but the data is not made publicly available. Furthermore, there are no national level programs to monitor and evaluate progress toward meeting the goals of the WPS agenda and civil society groups are not engaged in any assessments.

Recommendations:

Publish a robust WPS NAP as soon as possible and ensure that it provides clear goals, metrics, and resources for both the military and National Guard. Goals should include: metrics for analyzing and assessing progress in the areas of increasing women's participation in the forces; a minimum budget allocation; addressing sexual harassment, abuse and exploitation of military and police personnel and civilians in the areas of operation; applying a gender lens to all programs and operations; and annually evaluating and publishing progress toward meeting national goals. It is important that this plan is not limited to Mexico's performance in the UN missions, but that it has a firm internal focus. It is also advisable to include monitoring from the Defense and Marine Commissions of the legislative branch or through the Bicameral National Security Commission.

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