
'FRANCE'S SHAME': THOUSANDS PROTEST IN PARIS AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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PARIS □ Several thousand protesters marched through Paris on Saturday to demand a national wake-up call and more government investment to prevent deadly domestic violence against women, a problem that President Emmanuel Macron calls "France's shame."

A wave of purple flags and signs snaked from the Place de la Republique through eastern Paris amid an unprecedented public campaign to decry violence against women □ and honor the 130 women that activists say have been killed in France this year by a current or former partner. That's about one every two or three days.

While France has a progressive reputation and pushes for women's rights around the world, it has among the highest rates in Europe of domestic violence, in part because of poor police response to reports of abuse. Many of the women killed this year had previously sought help from police.

At Saturday's march, French film and TV stars joined abuse victims and activists calling for an end to "femicide." Many held banners reading "Sick of Rape."

The protest came on the U.N.'s International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and is aimed at pressuring the French government before it unveils new measures Monday to tackle the problem.

The measures are expected to include seizing firearms from people suspected of domestic violence and prioritizing police training so they won't brush off women's complaints as a private affair.

Some of Saturday's marchers want 1 billion euros in government investment, though the funding is expected to fall far short of that.

French activists have stepped up efforts this year to call attention to the problem, with an unusual campaign of gluing posters around Paris and other cities every time another woman is killed. The posters honor the women, and call for action. They also hold protests, lying down on the pavement to represent the slain women.

A 2014 EU survey of 42,000 women across all 28 member states found that 26 percent of French respondents said they been abused by a partner since age 15, either physically or sexually.

That's below the global average of 30 percent, according to U.N. Women. But it's above the EU average and the sixth highest among EU countries.

Half that number reported experiencing such abuse in Spain, which implemented a series of legal and educational measures in 2004 that slashed its domestic violence rates.

Conversations about domestic violence have also ratcheted up in neighboring Germany, where activists are demanding that the term "femicide" be used to describe such killings.

In France, lawyers and victims' advocates say they're encouraged by the new national conversation, which they say marks a departure from decades of denial. Women aren't the only victims of domestic violence, but French officials say they make up the vast majority.

Kaynak/Source: