

BOARD OF ADVISORS

Diego Arria
Director, Columbus Group

Devry Boughner Vorwerk
CEO, DevryBV Sustainable Strategies

Joyce Chang
Global Head of Research,
JPMorgan Chase & Co.

Paula Cifuentes
Director of Economic & Fiscal Affairs,
Latin America & Canada,
Philip Morris International

Marlene Fernández
Corporate Vice President for
Government Relations,
Arcos Dorados (McDonald's)

Peter Hakim
President Emeritus,
Inter-American Dialogue

Donna Hrinak
Senior VP, Corporate Affairs,
Royal Caribbean Group

Jon E. Huenemann
Council Member,
GLG Inc.

James R. Jones
Chairman,
Monarch Global Strategies

Craig A. Kelly
Senior Director,
Int'l Gov't Relations, Exxon Mobil

Barbara Kotschwar
Executive Director, Visa Economic
Empowerment Institute

John Maisto
Director, U.S. Education
Finance Group

Nicolás Mariscal
Chairman,
Grupo Marhnos

Thomas F. McLarty III
Chairman,
McLarty Associates

Beatrice Rangel
Director,
AMLA Consulting LLC

Jaana Remes
Partner,
McKinsey Global Institute

Ernesto Revilla
Head of Latin American
Economics, Citi

Gustavo Roosen
President,
IESA

Andrés Rozental
President, Rozental &
Asociados

Shelly Shetty
Managing Director, Sovereigns
Fitch Ratings

FEATURED Q&A

What More Should Mexico Do to Deter Gender Violence?



A femicide protest that took place in Mexico City in 2019 is pictured. // File Photo: Thayne Tuason via CC license.

Q On March 8, an International Women's Day rally in Mexico City drew massive protests about femicide and other gender-based violence, which has been on the rise in Mexico in recent years. Government figures for 2021 recorded 969 cases of femicide last year, but human rights activists say there were more, with estimates of an average of 10 femicides per day in Mexico. Is President Andrés Manuel López Obrador doing enough to stem these crimes against women? What do demonstrators hope to achieve in their protests against López Obrador's actions on femicide? How else can Mexico's government act to curb femicide and violence against women, which has become increasingly serious during the Covid-19 pandemic? What has been the trajectory of the protection of women's rights during the Mexican president's administration?

A Merike Blofield and Nancy Madera, director of the GIGA Institute for Latin American Studies and Ph.D candidate in political science at the Universidad Nacional San Martín, respectively: "Femicide is only the tip of the iceberg of widespread gender-based violence (GBV). To prevent this crime, the government must address it much more broadly, not only through legal but also health, education and socioeconomic policies. While Mexico has made significant advances over the past 15 years, these efforts are nowhere near sufficient, and current President Andrés Manuel López Obrador has not prioritized the issue. In fact, some of his actions have decidedly exacerbated the problem, from meager funding of GBV services, to comments downplaying the seriousness of violence against women.

Continued on page 3

TODAY'S NEWS

ECONOMIC

Industrial Activity in Argentina Picks Up in February

Industrial activity in Argentina grew by 10.8 percent in February as compared to the same month last year. Employment gains show the number of jobs has returned to pre-pandemic levels in a majority of the country's provinces.

Page 2

BUSINESS

YouTube Unveils New Policies for Brazil's Elections

Social media company YouTube released new policy updates aimed at combating misinformation about Brazil's national elections in October.

Page 3

POLITICAL

Colombia Reverses on Vote Recount

Colombia's top election authority will reverse course and stop an electoral recount process for Senate elections that took place on March 13. Former mayor Gustavo Petro, a leftist, has been polling in the lead ahead of May's presidential election.

Page 2



Petro // File Photo: Ahperiodista via CC license.

POLITICAL NEWS

Colombia Halts Vote Recount Process

Colombia's National Commission of Electoral Guarantees on Tuesday announced plans to reverse course and to stop an electoral recount process for Senate elections that took place on March 13, *Semana* reported. Colombian electoral registrar Alexander Vega had announced on Monday that there would be a vote recount from the elections, given a number of fraud accusations, *Agence France-Presse* reported. Vega said earlier that he would request that the National Electoral Council recount the votes due to "the myriad inconsistencies in the ballot forms." But during a four-hour Commission meeting to discuss the possibility of a recount, Vega said that the request for it had been withdrawn and added that "although yesterday I announced the recount, it was clear that first we would listen to the political parties." The only political groups in support of the recount



Vega // File Photo: via Twitter @Registraduria.

were members of the Democratic Center and the Conservative Party, *Semana* reported. In a **Q&A** in the March 17 issue of the Advisor, Maria Velez de Berliner, managing director at RTG-Red Team Group, noted that "Colombia's Congress is and will continue to be very fragmented and factionalized." Meanwhile, the first public opinion poll since the local elections showed a surge in support for center-right candidate Federico Gutierrez, *Bloomberg News* reported Monday. Gutierrez obtained 23 percent of voter intentions in the poll by Centro Nacional de Consultoria, up 4 percent from February. Frontrunner Gustavo Petro saw his support rise to 32 percent from 27 percent.

ECONOMIC NEWS

Argentine Industrial Activity Picks Up in February

Industrial activity in Argentina grew by 10.8 percent in February as compared to the same month last year, according to data from the Ministry of Productive Development released Tuesday. The figure was twice the amount recorded in January, when a wave of Covid-19 related infections led numerous businesses to shut down operations. Compared to pre-pandemic levels, the increase was 12.6 percent compared to February 2020 and 11.9 percent compared to the same month in 2019. Indicators for employment have also been improving, according to the ministry. In December of last year, some 187,000 formal private salaried jobs were recovered that had been lost at the beginning of the pandemic, with 10,000 more workers registered in February this year than in the same month in 2020, before the pandemic. At the local level, 17 of Argentina's 24 provinces have now recovered the number of private jobs they had at the end of 2019, with Catamarca and Tierra del Fuego showing increases in employment of 9.5 percent and 9.4 percent as compared to December 2019, respectively. Meanwhile, Argentine President Alberto Fernández on Tuesday held a "constructive" virtual meeting with the managing director of the International Monetary Fund, Kristalina Georgieva, state news agency *Telám* reported. The IMF's Board of Directors is scheduled to take up a \$45 billion bailout package next Friday. Argentina's gross external debt stood at \$266.74 billion at the end of 2021.

El Salvador Puts Off Bitcoin-Backed Bond Issue Due to Markets

El Salvador's government decided to postpone a first-of-its-kind issue of a bitcoin-backed bond planned for last week due to unfavor-

NEWS BRIEFS

SoFi's Galileo Financial Expands Into Colombia

Galileo Financial Technologies, a subsidiary of San Francisco-based SoFi Technologies, on Tuesday announced it is expanding into Colombia. Since entering Mexico in 2020, Galileo says it has onboarded more than one million end-user accounts in the Latin America region. The company provides digital financial services ranging from debit, credit and business-to-business payments to remittances, cryptocurrency and other emerging payments. Mexico City will continue to serve as Galileo's regional headquarters.

Mexico GDP Remains Flat in Fourth Quarter of 2021

Mexico's gross domestic product remained flat in the fourth quarter of 2021, state statistics agency INEGI said Tuesday. Meanwhile, Mexico's imports of goods and services grew 0.6 percent in the quarter, while private consumption increased 1.6 percent in the period. In a client note, Goldman Sachs said Tuesday that Mexico's economic growth should return in the coming quarters, although high inflation, rising interest rates and sluggish credit flows will likely limit growth to 1.4 percent in 2022.

Chilean Constitutional Convention Extends Deadline for Draft

The chair of Chile's Constitutional Convention, María Elisa Quinteros, on Tuesday activated a three-month extension in order to produce a first draft of the nation's new constitution, moving the deadline from April to July 5, *La Tercera* reported. Chileans will vote up or down on the document in a plebiscite at a date yet to be scheduled later this year. Meanwhile, Chilean Minister of Finance Mario Marcel said Tuesday that the government will submit a major tax reform proposal in June and highly anticipated pension reforms in the last quarter of the year.

able conditions in financial markets, Finance Minister Alejandro Zelaya said on Tuesday, Reuters reported. The government of President Nayib Bukele, 40, had scheduled the launch of the \$1 billion bond during the week of March 15, but the armed conflict between Russia and Ukraine, as well as volatility in the cryptocurrency's value, prompted authorities to change the date, according to the report. The value of bitcoin has fallen by about a third since hitting a record high of \$67,500 last November. The launch could be rescheduled in September, Zelaya said. El Salvador's ruling party-controlled Legislative Assembly passed a measure last June proposed by Bukele to designate Bitcoin a legal tender, making the Central American nation the first in the world to do so. [Editor's note: See related [Q&A](#) in the June 15 issue of the Advisor.]

BUSINESS NEWS

YouTube Unveils New Misinformation Rules for Brazil's Elections

Social media company YouTube on Tuesday released new policy updates aimed at combating misinformation about Brazil's national elections in October. In a blog post, the company's public policy manager for Brazil, Alana Rizzo, said the new guidelines would target voter suppression, false information about candidates' eligibility status, efforts to incite the public to interfere with the democratic process and false information about widespread fraud, errors or technical problems that allegedly altered the results of previous elections, after the results have already been officially confirmed. The company will also try to reduce the spread of misleading information by recommending content from trusted sources. "For matters related to the 2022 Brazilian elections, we will ensure that credible sources appear prominently in survey results and on 'watch next' panels," Rizzo said. "Our goal is to keep recommendation views for dubious content below 0.5 percent," she added.

FEATURED Q&A / Continued from page 1

Moreover, the government's unwillingness to establish broad and adequate cash transfers to vulnerable families has aggravated risk conditions for domestic violence. In a comparative context, Mexico, like most Latin American countries, has a relatively robust normative framework on GBV. The problem is implementation, which has to date not succeeded in rendering these abstract rights meaningfully accessible to most of those who are at risk of or survivors of violence. Here, like most countries in the region, Mexico shows a yawning gap, acutely manifested in low funding for first response services, as well as a lack of economic assistance for those suffering from violence and at risk of femicide. While the Mexican federal government—as of 2022—coordinates 56 so-called Justice Centers for Women (with legal and medical assistance) and supports an additional 72 shelters and 34 day centers managed by social organizations, in a country with a population of 126 million, these numbers serve only a fraction of existing demand and are far from meeting per capita service guidelines set by UN Women. Moreover, Mexico is one of the few countries in Latin America without a nationwide, toll-free violence helpline. As a result, many women are not reached or cannot reach the services, and even when they are able to reach those services, many are turned away."

A **Jennifer M. Piscopo, associate professor of politics and director of the Center for Research and Scholarship at Occidental College in Los Angeles:** "Mexico has shockingly high rates of femicide and violence against women, but President Andrés Manuel López Obrador characterized record numbers of calls to emergency hotlines as fakes and pranks. The increased number of complaints came in March 2020, at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, and it is well documented that in Mexico and across the globe lockdowns and other pandemic-related stressors caused violence against

women and girls to soar. AMLO's words set the priorities and the tone. By minimizing violence against women—and scoffing at the feminist movement more broadly—he reinforces male privilege and foments impunity for abusers. Yet others in his government do act. When the lockdown arrived, Minister of Health Jorge Alcocer Varela declared all centers and shelters attending to women victims of violence as essential services, allowing them to remain open. The National Women's Institute launched the 'No estás sola' ('You are not alone') campaign, which organized and disseminated information about prevention and protection mechanisms in all 32 states. In fact, some feminist policymakers say that AMLO's dismissiveness actually gives them space to get things done. This is especially true at the state and local level. Take Mexico City Mayor Claudia Sheinbaum, one of AMLO's closest allies and a potential presidential successor. Sheinbaum opened more shelters for women victims and allowed judicial authorities to issue protection orders for family violence electronically or over the phone. These measures alone cannot suffice, but countless officials are striving to protect women and girls. Still, open support from the president would legitimize their fight."

A **Nicolás Mariscal, member of the Advisor Board and chairman of Grupo Marhnos:** "Mexico's massive march on Women's Day is the product of two growing tendencies: increasing femicides and a developing conscience for equal rights. During the last decades, Mexico transitioned from a rural and poorly educated population ruled by an authoritarian government to a predominantly urban, educated populace living in a democracy. These factors have expanded political, civil and social rights, a diverse and thriving media, and the rise of non-governmental organizations dealing with numerous public issues. Nevertheless, public institutions have not grown and professionalized to meet

Continued on page 4

FEATURED Q&A / Continued from page 3

growing social demands. But it's impossible to do so when, according to the OECD, Mexico has a tax-to-GDP ratio of around 16.5 percent, while the average for Latin America is 22.9 percent, not to mention Denmark, whose revenue is 47.6 percent of its GDP. So, on one hand, Mexico has growing social demands to resolve issues such as femicides, but on the other, authorities are unable—and sometimes unwilling—to meet those demands. And, what happens when governments are ineffective at meeting the population's expectations? People take to the streets. With increasing femicides and numerous problems facing Mexican women, they took to the streets on Women's Day. And they will continue with this practice until their just requests such as equal pay, equal rights and—above all—the end of femicides, are met."

A Magda Hinojosa, director and professor in the School of Politics and Global Studies at Arizona State University: "If Marisol had been a wall or a monument, the police would have protected her.' So read one protestor's sign. In anticipation of protest activity on International Women's Day, Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador did warn against vandalism. His message missed the mark. Feminists question López Obrador's commitment to addressing violence against women. He has dismissed protestors by arguing that 'suddenly conservatives are dressing up as feminists' and, absent evidence, suggested that 90 percent of calls made to emergency centers reporting violence against women

were fake. As he asked protestors to refrain from violence in advance of International Women's Day this year, he repeated earlier claims that these protests are a cover to damage his presidency. Dissatisfaction with López Obrador, however, is representative of the collective frustration being felt across Latin America. Women are fed up and demanding more, spurring a regional women's movement and sparking protests from El Salvador to Uruguay. Although almost all Latin American countries recognize femicide, killings remain rampant. Women are being murdered in the region at a rate of

“ In 90 percent of registered femicides, there are no convictions.”

— Magda Hinojosa

one every two hours. In 90 percent of registered femicides, there are no convictions. Latin American women have had enough. In Argentina, the murder of a 14-year-old girl by her 16-year-old boyfriend sparked feminists to mobilize around #NiUnaMenos (Not One Less). Fifteen thousand Chileans marched in Santiago during International Women's Day in 2020. Women across the region are finally demanding more—but all López Obrador can see are political enemies."

Editor's note: The Advisor invited Mexico's embassy in Washington to comment on this topic but did not receive a response by our deadline.

LATIN AMERICA ADVISOR

is published every business day by the Inter-American Dialogue ISSN 2163-7962

Erik Brand

Publisher
ebrand@thedialogue.org

Gene Kuleta

Editor
gkuleta@thedialogue.org

Leticia Chacón

Reporter
lchacon@thedialogue.org

Mark Kennedy

Reporter
mkenedy@thedialogue.org



Michael Shifter, President

Rebecca Bill Chavez, Nonresident Senior Fellow

Bruno Binetti, Nonresident Fellow

Sergio Bitar, Nonresident Senior Fellow

Joan Caivano, Senior Advisor

Santiago Cantón, Director, Rule of Law Program

Kevin Casas-Zamora, Nonresident Senior Fellow

Julia Dias Leite, Nonresident Senior Fellow

Ariel Fiszbein, Director, Education Program

Sandra García Jaramillo, Nonresident Senior Fellow

Selina Ho, Nonresident Senior Fellow

Edison Lanza, Nonresident Senior Fellow

Nora Lustig, Nonresident Senior Fellow

Margaret Myers, Director, Asia Program

Manuel Orozco, Senior Fellow

Xiaoyu Pu, Nonresident Senior Fellow

Jeffrey Puryear, Senior Fellow

Tamar Solnik, Director, Finance & Administration

Denisse Yanovich, Director of Development

Latin America Advisor is published every business day, except for major U.S. holidays, by the Inter-American Dialogue at 1155 15th Street NW, Suite 800 Washington, DC 20005

www.thedialogue.org

Subscription inquiries are welcomed at ebrand@thedialogue.org

The opinions expressed by the members of the Board of Advisors and by guest commentators do not necessarily represent those of the publisher. The analysis is the sole view of each commentator and does not necessarily represent the views of their respective employers or firms. The information in this report has been obtained from reliable sources, but neither its accuracy and completeness, nor the opinions based thereon, are guaranteed. If you have any questions relating to the contents of this publication, contact the editorial offices of the Inter-American Dialogue. Contents of this report may not be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted without prior written permission from the publisher.