

Power Without Protection
Grecia Alessandra Flores Hinostroza

To the legislators who value women's presence in powerful circles while ignoring their absence in hospital hallways,

To the donors who fund elections but not maternal health.

To those who ask us to lead, to heal, to carry, to serve—and never stop to ask how much it costs.

And to the women of Peru, who deserve better.

Peru has become a country where women lead political debates yet die giving birth without clean water, without doctors, without justice.

Where the word *igualdad* travels freely in the air of conference rooms but struggles to survive in the dust of rural clinics. Where gender equality is printed in reports, echoed in speeches, and then muffled in homes where the silence has lasted for generations.

This is not an accusation, but a call. Because numbers do not bleed like we do. Representation without protection is a fragile promise—one that shatters slowly, painfully, and quietly.

The paradox lives in the data: our scores on political representation are climbing, but our scores on health, safety, and rights remain dangerously low. In the statistics, we find confirmation of what Peruvian women have always known—having a seat at the table does not guarantee a say in the future. A microphone does not guarantee that anyone is truly listening.

In every room, in every hallway, we ask ourselves: *what a good is empowerment if it never reaches the women who need it most?*

We try to build certainty—brick by brick, law by law—only to find it blocked before our eyes. A set of cold hands reaches out against us; it stings, it bleeds, it carves lines into the deepest part of us. The blow is never sudden. Like a well-aimed shot, it arrives with a cruel precision we've learned to anticipate, yet can never prepare for.

Paper stains paper—government reports, investigate articles, NGO briefs. I see it everywhere, in the ink, in the headlines, in the stories told in low voices in bus station and market stalls. They mingle with my own thoughts, and it becomes impossible to tell where their pain ends and mine begins.

As I write, I wonder: Is this poetic tone a plea for justice, or a shield against despair? Is it a way to make the truth visible enough that it cannot be ignored? Perhaps that's why I delayed writing to you. The lump in my throat was too heavy. I worried it might sound too emotional. And yet—would you hate me if I said I want it to hurt?

I want you to feel the helplessness, the burning in the chest, that comes from reading a report where last year's tragedies are indistinguishable from this year's.

I want you to feel the outrage of knowing that while the corridors of power are filled with women, the corridors of rural hospitals remain empty. Because if you can feel it, you might not be able to look away.

Don't misunderstand me—I am not here to complain. I am here to bear witness. To tell you that it hurts, that it will keep hurting, and that this pain is the price of policies that treat women's lives as negotiable.

Isn't it unfair? I think so. Because with all the resources, all the declarations, all the strategies, the road we walk is still paved with empty promises and compromised commitments.

I wonder—will I live to see my country care for us? Truly care? Do those in power ever feel like they are failing us? And if they do, does it hurt them too? I ask these questions not to accuse, but to believe that somewhere in the machinery of government there is still a human heartbeat.

At the beginning, I said the women of Peru deserve better. I do not think you would disagree. You would not have read this far if you did.

So, as I said at the beginning—

For Peruvian women, we deserve better.

For the mothers who walk hours to reach a clinic without a doctor, we deserve better.

For the girls who know the names of their rights but not the taste of their freedom, we deserve better.

For every woman whose voice has been silenced by distance, poverty, or neglect—we deserve better.

And the time to make “better” real is not in the next five-year plan.

It is now.