



Open letter from Amnesty International's Secretary General, Salil Shetty, to the President of the Republic of Paraguay, Horacio Cartes

Urgently protect the human rights of a pregnant 10 year old girl

Mr. President,

Amnesty International, a worldwide movement that campaigns for a world where human rights are enjoyed by all, is deeply concerned about the situation of a 10-year-old girl reportedly raped by her stepfather and pregnant as a result. The pregnancy was detected three weeks ago and yet the state continues to violate her human rights without offering her the possibility of an abortion.

To allow this girl who is just 10 years old to continue with her pregnancy is clearly cruel. Mr. President, the future of this girl is in your hands.

The facts speak for themselves. We have here the case of a 10-year-old girl from an underprivileged background, who has been raped and is now facing a future in which she, at a very young age, would be forced to become a mother. Rather than protecting her, the Paraguayan state has failed her for months. The girl's mother already reported the sexual abuse by her stepfather last year, but the authorities were of the view that she was not at risk. Then, during February this year, the mother took her to several health centres after the child complained of stomach pain, there doctors suggested she could be suffering from parasites or a tumour. Only in late April did the doctors establish that she was 21 weeks pregnant.

Mr. President, I respectfully urge you, - as the highest authority of the Paraguayan State, to address this serious human rights violation perpetrated against this 10-year-old child. The consequences to this girl's life and physical and mental integrity are grave, and will add immeasurable suffering to what she has already been through. I therefore urge you to grant her the option of terminating the pregnancy.

The World Health Organization considers that child pregnancies are extremely dangerous to the health of girls, as they can lead to complications and, in some cases, to death, especially as young girls' bodies have not fully developed to bear a pregnancy. This is compounded by the severe emotional trauma of a girl who has been raped, which can only be exacerbated considerably by pregnancy, birth and motherhood, for which she is clearly not ready.

The combination of the girl's powerlessness and absence of choice; her total reliance on the goodwill of the authorities; the severe pain she will suffer if she is forced to carry her pregnancy to term; and the intentional act by the authorities to coerce her into childbirth by denying her the option of abortion -based clearly on reasons of gender discrimination- would make the girl a victim of torture, a serious human rights violation and a crime under international law.

I hope that Your Excellency shows the world that the human rights of all girls are respected and protected in Paraguay without discrimination, and that the country, therefore, always prioritizes the child's best interest, as established by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Yours sincerely,

Salil Shetty
Secretary General

London, 15 May 2015