



Public Statement

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In Solidarity with Salvadoran Women and Girls on Human Rights Day

On Human Rights Day, and as the global “16 days of Activism against Gender Violence” campaign draws to a close, Amnesty International wishes to reaffirm its solidarity with the women and girls of El Salvador and urges the State to put an end to the discriminatory practices, policies and laws that are violating their human rights.

The organization is particularly calling on the authorities to immediately release all women imprisoned as a result of the serious consequences of the total ban on abortion. This includes “the 17” women prisoners for whom pardons have been requested as an extraordinary measure. These women suffered obstetric emergencies or out-of-hospital births but, instead of receiving appropriate medical care, were sentenced to up to 40 years in prison for crimes as serious as aggravated homicide, a result of deeply discriminatory processes that violated their right to due legal process.

Last September, Amnesty International published the report [On the Brink of Death: Violence against Women and the Abortion Ban in El Salvador](#), aimed at the public and at the Salvadorian authorities and outlining the discrimination and institutional violence being suffered by women and girls. This ranges from the poor implementation of legislation that could enable women and girls to live a life free from violence through to the total ban on abortion, which results in unjust criminalization and a denial of the right to physical and mental health, particularly for women from poor disadvantaged backgrounds. Furthermore, the high suicide rate among pregnant teenagers is yet another devastating consequence of the abortion ban.

The extent of the injustice and discrimination suffered by women and girls living in El Salvador has aroused national and international interest. A growing number of activists, human rights organizations and governments are showing their solidarity and concern at this situation.

Last October, in the context of the Universal Periodic Review, nine countries recommended that El Salvador review its total ban on abortion and 12 countries voiced their concerns at the violence and discrimination being suffered by women. To date, more than 100,000 people worldwide have signed Amnesty International's [petition](#) calling for an end to the criminalization of all abortion in El Salvador. On 25 November, hundreds of activists from different organisations demonstrated in San Salvador to call for the release of the 17 women and for the decriminalization of abortion. Organisations around the world have echoed these same calls and requests. Five UN special mechanisms are monitoring the situation of these 17 imprisoned women.

El Salvador must put an end to the deeply discriminatory legislation and judicial practices being suffered by women and girls, and which disproportionately affect those from the poorest communities, who are vulnerable to multiple human rights violations. The world is watching and waiting for a radical transformation in the protection of women’s and girls’ rights. It’s high time.