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Chile must provide 11-year-old pregnant rape victim with all options, including abortion

The Chilean State must provide an 11 year old girl who was raped by her stepfather and is now pregnant, with all the psychological and medical support she needs, and make available all the options regarding the pregnancy including safe abortion services, Amnesty International said today.

Chile is one of just a handful of countries around the world that criminalise abortion in all circumstances.

This means that girls who are pregnant as a consequence of rape, or where the pregnancy threatens their life or health, are compelled to continue their pregnancies regardless of the risks. The criminalization of abortion constitutes a breach of international human rights law.

The girl, known as Belen, was repeatedly raped by her 32 year old step-father. She is now 14 weeks pregnant.

“The Chilean state is responsible to provide her with every support necessary as she contends with the horrendous physical and psychological consequences of being raped and pregnant as a result. Her life, health, hopes and dreams are all in the hands of the authorities,” said Guadalupe Marengo, Americas Director at Amnesty International.

Experts agree that pregnancy poses specific risks and potentially long term consequences for the physical and mental health of children. The state should ensure all victims of rape have the option of safe, accessible and legal abortion services, and that decisions on whether to continue or terminate a pregnancy are made without coercion.

“We urge the Chilean government to comply with their international obligations to ensure Belen has access to all the medical, psychological and legal support she needs and has a right to, including the special needs she has as a child including the option of safe, accessible and legal abortion services.”

The United Nations Committees on the Rights of the Child, on Torture, on Violence against Women and the World Health Organisation, amongst many other expert organisations, insist that all rape victims must be offered continued support to overcome the physical and psychological impact of their ordeal, tailored to their particular needs, including as to whether or not to continue with pregnancy resulting from rape.

While experts agree that the profound harm caused by rape and sexual violence can never be entirely redressed, such services are paramount in mitigating the consequences.

“We urge the Chilean government to ensure that all rape victims have the support they need to secure their life and health. No victim of rape should suffer be subjected to further fear and coercion while trying to recover from rape,” said Guadalupe Marengo.