

URGENT ACTION

HONDURAS SET TO BAN EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTIVE

Honduras is on the verge of becoming the only country in the world that criminalises the emergency contraceptive pill due to a Supreme Court conclusion that a ban is not unconstitutional. Women and girls who have been raped or whose contraceptive method has failed will no longer have the option of emergency contraception. The fundamental rights of Honduran women and girls are in jeopardy.

On 1 February the Supreme Court in Honduras upheld a decree imposing an absolute ban on emergency contraception. This decree had been vetoed in May 2009 by the then President of the Republic of Honduras on grounds that it conflicted with the Constitution. The Supreme Court has now concluded that the decree is constitutional and that Congress could proceed to develop laws to enforce a ban of the emergency contraceptive pill (also sometimes referred to as the "morning after pill") on the basis that the judges viewed it as "abortive".

The World Health Organisation and the Pan-American Health Organisation, amongst other expert bodies have all clearly stated that the emergency contraceptive pill is not abortive and is a form of contraception which works by ensuring the egg is inaccessible and impeding sperm from fertilising it.

Access to emergency contraception can be a critical tool in preventing unwanted pregnancies. If the criminalisation of the emergency contraceptive pill is carried out, it will have appalling consequences for women and girls. For example, rape victims will be unable to prevent pregnancy and mitigate one of the potential consequences of the crime they have endured. Banning the emergency contraceptive pill will also leave women and girls with no alternative contraception in situations where other contraceptive methods fail.

Following the Supreme Court's ruling, it is now up to the Honduran National Congress to decide whether or not to develop laws to enforce a ban on the emergency contraceptive pill.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Urge them not to criminalise the use and distribution of the emergency contraceptive pill
- Highlight that the emergency contraceptive pill is a vital form of back up contraception for women and girls and has been recognised as such by expert health organisations including the World Health Organisation, the Pan-American Health Organisation and the International Federation of Gynaecology and Obstetrics
- Urge them to ensure women and girls have access to the emergency contraceptive pill and to take action to protect the rights of women and girls in accordance with their obligations under international human rights law

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 9 MAY 2012 TO:

President

Porfirio Lobo Sosa
Casa Presidencial, Barrio Las Lomas
Boulevard Juan Pablo II,
Tegucigalpa
Honduras
Fax: +504 2290 5088
Twitter : @pepelobohn

Salutation: Dear President

President of the Honduran National

Congress
Juan Orlando Hernández
Congreso Nacional de Honduras
Palacio Legislativo, costado oeste de Banco
Central, Tegucigalpa, Honduras
Fax: +504 2238 6931
Email: juanorlandofernandez@gmail.com

Salutation: Dear President

And copies to:

Local NGO - Centro de Derechos de
Mujeres CDM
Colonia Lara Norte, Calle Lara, Casa # 834.
Tegucigalpa, Honduras
Email: cdm@cablecolor.hn
Fax: +504 2221 0459 (please say "me da
tono de fax, por favor")

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Emergency Contraceptive pill (also known as the levonorgestrel-alone emergency contraceptive pill) is recognised by the World Health Organisation, amongst other global and regional expert health bodies, as a form of emergency contraception. In its factsheet WHO/RHR/HRP/10.06, which is available on the internet, the World Health Organisation states that:

“Emergency contraception can prevent most pregnancies when taken after intercourse. It provides an important back-up in cases of unprotected intercourse or contraceptive accident (such as forgotten pills or torn condoms), and is especially valuable after rape or coerced sex.” The WHO factsheet concludes that “a careful review of the evidence shows that levonorgestrel-alone emergency contraceptive pills are very safe. They do not cause abortion or harm future fertility. Side-effects are uncommon and generally mild.”

Sexual and reproductive rights are grounded in human rights that are recognized in international human rights treaties, regional standards, national constitutions and other relevant human rights standards. The realization of sexual and reproductive rights requires respect for rights relating to physical and mental integrity, including the rights to life, to liberty and security of person; to freedom from torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment; and to privacy and respect for family life; as well as rights related to freedom of conscience and expression and freedom from discrimination. These rights correspond directly to the principles underpinning sexual and reproductive rights – the physical and mental integrity of the individual, his or her autonomy, and the principle of non-discrimination on grounds such as gender, race, national origin, sexual orientation, disability or socio-economic status.

Sexual and reproductive rights are central to the realization of every individual’s human rights. Respect for these rights is essential to human dignity and to the enjoyment of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being. Their fulfilment enhances life and personal relationships and helps to achieve gender equality and empowerment. All people must be allowed to enjoy their sexual and reproductive rights free from coercion, discrimination and violence.

Name: N/A

Gender m/f: N/A

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