

Paraguay: Raped 10-year-old must be allowed an abortion

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Failure by the Paraguayan authorities to provide a safe abortion to a 10-year-old rape survivor could have devastating consequences on her health and will heap injustice on tragedy, said Amnesty International today. The organization is now calling on the government to intervene to ensure the girl gets all the medical treatment she requires, including the termination of the unwanted pregnancy.

In Paraguay, abortion is only permitted when the life of the woman or girl is at risk. In any other circumstances, even if pregnancy is the result of rape, incest or when the foetus has a severe malformation, abortion is not permitted. This restrictive abortion law is in violation of international law.

“The physical and psychological impact of forcing this young girl to continue with an un-wanted pregnancy is tantamount to torture. The Paraguayan authorities cannot sit idly by while this young rape-survivor is forced to endure more agony and torment,” said Guadalupe Marengo, Americas Deputy Director at Amnesty International.

“Forcing this child to carry a baby to term, against her will, could have devastating health consequences.”

The girl, whose name is being withheld, became pregnant after being raped by her stepfather. After arriving in hospital complaining of a stomach ache she was found to be 21 weeks pregnant.

Yesterday, 28 April, the child’s mother petitioned the hospital asking that her child undergo an abortion. However, the latest reports suggest the wishes of the mother and the girl are being ignored and that the girl has been sent to a centre for young mothers. The mother is currently in custody facing charges of breaching duty of care and being an accomplice of sexual abuse.

Experts around the world, including the World Health Organization, agree that pregnancy poses high risks to young girls whose bodies are not fully developed.

After the girl was examined the director of the hospital publicly acknowledged that the girl’s pregnancy is high risk. A few days later, the Public Health Ministry ordered the girl to be admitted to a different hospital, the Red Cross Hospital (Hospital de la Cruz Roja), to monitor her health.

“Paraguay must step up to its responsibilities under international law. The world is looking to the country’s authorities, asking them to stand by the girl and to provide access to potentially life-saving treatment for this child and the many other girls and women like her. It is heart breaking to think of the horrifying ordeal this 10-year-old child has already suffered, to force her to continue with this unwanted pregnancy would be a further violation of her rights and will only prolong the horror,” said Guadalupe Marengo.

Additional information

In March 2015 the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights called on Paraguay to review and modify its abortion legislation to ensure its compatibility with other rights such as health and life.

Amnesty International has issued an Urgent Action and its supporters have been writing letters to the Minister of Public Health and Welfare and the Attorney General calling on them to intervene to protect the girl and guarantee her human rights.

P.S.

* <https://www.amnesty.nl/nieuwsportaal/pers/paraguay-raped-10-year-old-must-be-allowed-abortion>