

Congress of the United States

Washington, D.C. 20515

July 21, 2017

His Excellency Guillermo Gallegos Navarrete
President of the Legislative Assembly of El Salvador
Centro de Gobierno "José Simeón Cañas"
San Salvador CP 1101
Republic of El Salvador

Dear President Gallegos,

Days ago, news outlets around the world reported the case of a Salvadoran teenager wrongly sentenced to 30 years in prison for having experienced medical complications that ended her pregnancy. According to press accounts, the teen became pregnant after being repeatedly raped by a gang member over the course of several months. This horrific case calls attention to the heartbreaking situation of far too many Salvadoran women and the urgent need for penal code reform.

For nearly two decades, El Salvador has criminalized abortion in all circumstances, even when necessary to save a woman's life, imposing harsh criminal penalties on both women and physicians. In fact, this unwise and harmful ban is responsible for the unjust imprisonment of more than 25 women whose pregnancy-related complications and miscarriages were wrongfully believed to be the result of an illegal abortion. Their convictions, which could carry sentences of up to 30 years in prison, are frankly a second tragedy for women who have already experienced pregnancy loss.

As Members of Congress committed to women's health and human rights globally, we urge you to support the decriminalization of abortion, in at least the cases of a life-endangering pregnancy, rape, or incest. As this most recent case demonstrates, such reforms are urgently needed in order to protect the rights and well-being of Salvadoran women.

Thank you for your consideration of this important request.

Sincerely,


JOAQUIN CASTRO
Member of Congress


DEBBIE WASSERMAN SCHULTZ
Member of Congress

The President of the Legislative Assembly of El Salvador

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NORMA J. TORRES

Member of Congress



ELIOT L. ENGEL

Member of Congress

Cc: His Excellency Mario Tenorio, President of the Commission of Legislation and Constitutional Issues in the Assembly of El Salvador