

November 20, 2017

[presidencia@stf.jus.br](mailto:presidencia@stf.jus.br)

Dear Carmen Lucia, President of the Supreme Court of Brazil:

We write on behalf of Global Doctors for Choice (GDC), an international network of physicians from diverse specialties committed to improving women's reproductive health and rights. We strive to protect and expand access to comprehensive reproductive health care through advocacy for evidence-based policy and medical research.

We write to urge you to oppose the PEC 181/2015 (Proposal of the Constitutional Amendment), which was approved November 8, 2017 by a Special Commission of the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies (in a vote of 18 men against 1 woman). The original aim of the PEC 181/2015 was to provide longer maternity leave to care for premature babies, but if enacted, the proposed amendment would ban abortion even for pregnancies resulting from rape, or when the life of the woman is in danger. Thus, we oppose the proposed amendment PEC 181/2015 as this claim would threaten the right to legal and safe abortion for women in Brazil.

This proposal would violate numerous commitments Brazil has made including the 1994 Cairo Programme and the 1995 Beijing Platform that together urge governments to protect human and reproductive rights and end punitive abortion laws, the Brazilian Magna Carta that ensures all people's dignity as a human right, and the 2013 Montevideo Consensus from the UN Regional Conference on Population and Development which reaffirms reproductive and sexual rights and denounces punitive laws that restrict abortion access.

As doctors, our first duty is always to our patients. There is extensive evidence underlying the consensus of medical and public health experts that safe abortion is essential to reduce maternal morbidity and mortality, and to guarantee women's human rights. If PEC 181/2015 were to be adopted, access to abortion services would become illegal again for women whose pregnancies involve serious health risks, are pregnant as a result of rape or incest, or are carrying a fetus with a serious abnormality.

An estimated 416,000 women had abortions in 2015 in Brazil<sup>1</sup>, and public health statistics underscore the current lack of access to reproductive health services. Brazilian women - particularly poor, young women of color - currently experience an unmet need for contraceptives, high rates of sexual violence and rape, and high rates of complications from unsafe abortion. If this proposal is passed, Brazilian women's access and right to reproductive health will be further threatened and violated.

As a global network of physicians, we urge you to reject the passage of the PEC 181/2015 and, by doing so, uphold Brazil's Federal Constitutional fundamental rights to dignity and citizenship and prevent unnecessary medical and psychological harms for women in Brazil.

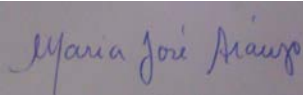
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<sup>1</sup> National Abortion Survey 2016 – Debora Diniz, Marcelo Medeiros, Alberto Madeiro

Sincerely,



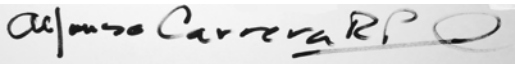
Dr. Cristiano Rosas  
Rede Médica pelo Direito de Decidir  
São Paulo, Brasil



Dr. María José de Oliveira Araujo  
Rede Médica pelo Direito de Decidir  
São Paulo, Brasil

**ANA CRISTINA GONZALEZ V.**

Dr. Ana Cristina González Vélez  
Grupo Médico por el Derecho a Decidir  
Bogotá, Colombia



Dr. Alfonso Carrera  
Grupo Médico por una Libre Elección  
México DF



Dr. John Koku Awoonor-Williams  
Global Doctors for Choice  
Ghana



Dr. Wendy Chavkin  
Columbia University  
New York, USA



Dick Van der Tak  
Executive Director, Global Doctors for Choice  
55 West 39<sup>th</sup> St, New York, USA