

Minister of Public Health and Welfare
Ministro de Salud Pública y Bienestar
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May 1st, 2015

Your Excellency,

We represent Global Doctors for Choice (GDC), an international doctors' network active in many countries around the world. GDC is committed to the defense of human rights and to the provision of high-quality medical care grounded in science. Through advocacy for evidence-based policy and medical research, we strive to protect and expand access to comprehensive reproductive health care.

We write to express our deep concern for the health and well-being of a 10-year old Paraguayan girl, who is pregnant after having been raped by her stepfather. The life of this girl is in danger, because the pregnancy poses a high risk to her. Access to safe abortion has not been provided to the girl, despite her mother's request and the urgency of the matter.

As doctors, our first duty is always with our patients. The World Health Organization (WHO) and health professionals around the world agree that pregnancy poses specific risks to young girls whose bodies are not fully developed. Pregnancy of young girls can lead to serious consequences such as eclampsia, premature labour, prolonged labour, obstructed labour, fistula, anaemia, or infant and/or maternal death. These risks increase substantially for girls at a very young age, like the 10-year old girl involved.

Article 3 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child states that "In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interest of the child shall be a primary consideration." The Convention requires states, including Paraguay, to ensure girls access to abortion, when their health and life is in danger, and in cases of rape and incest.

We urge the relevant medical authorities to act immediately and maintain the integrity of the medical profession by granting the abortion the mother of the girl has requested. In addition, we call upon the authorities to initiate an independent investigation into the rape of the girl and to hold those responsible for the abuse accountable according to the laws of Paraguay.

Sincerely,



Executive Director
Global Doctors for Choice