



INNOVATIVE LITIGATION FILED AGAINST 3 COUNTRIES TO PROTECT GIRLS' RIGHTS IN LATIN AMERICA

The cases from Ecuador, Guatemala and Nicaragua highlight the concerning human rights abuses against girls in the region, including forced pregnancies and sexual abuse

29.05.2019 Geneva, (PRESS RELEASE): Today Planned Parenthood Global, the Center for Reproductive Rights, Mujeres Transformando el Mundo Guatemala (MTM), Observatorio en Salud Sexual y Reproductiva Guatemala (OSAR), Surkuna Ecuador, Fundación Desafío and Asociación de Mujeres Axayacatl filed a lawsuit with the United Nations Human Rights Committee (UNHRC) on behalf of four girls, survivors of sexual violence from Ecuador, Guatemala and Nicaragua.

The cases demand accountability, justice and reparation for the girls, and call for the adoption and implementation of policies to protect the sexual and reproductive rights of women and girls, not only in Latin America, but around the world. This is the first time that four cases are presented before the UNHRC with a combined strategy against different States to tackle a regional issue, and are emblematic of on-going systematic human rights abuses throughout the region, where girls are regularly subjected to sexual abuse and forced into pregnancies and motherhood against their will.

The goal of the litigation is to make visible the health affections that girls suffer in highly restrictive contexts for sexual and reproductive rights. Each nation is obligated to guarantee the girls' rights to life and health, to be able to make their own decisions regarding their bodies and path in life, and to live free of gender-based discrimination and violence.

"The failure of States to guarantee reproductive rights is a clear violation of human rights," said Nancy Northup, President and CEO at the Center for Reproductive Rights. "Systemic sexual violence paired with minimal access to sexual and reproductive health services means that women and girls in Latin America and the Caribbean are frequently forced to carry unwanted pregnancies to term."

"The Center is committed to using the power of law to ensure that women and girls, not only in Latin America, but all around the world, are guaranteed access to sexual and reproductive health rights and services," added Northup.

Dr. Leana Wen, President and CEO of Planned Parenthood Global and Planned Parenthood Federation of America, said that "today, we are reaffirming that reproductive health care is a human right for all, no matter who you are or where you live. Too many young girls in Latin America, and around the world, have been put in situations that threaten their rights and put their lives at risk because they are not able to access abortion care. As a physician, I know forcing young girls to continue a pregnancy no matter their circumstances or wants, is not only cruel, but will have devastating impacts for them, their families, and their communities. We at Planned Parenthood are proud to stand with partners and say 'son niñas, no madres,' and urge nations to take action to address this issue and protect the health and rights of all young girls."



Women and girls in Latin America and the Caribbean are frequently forced to carry unwanted pregnancies to term due to restrictive abortion laws or the lack of implementation of the current law establishing its legality. Abortion is completely illegal in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Haiti, Honduras, Dominican Republic, and Suriname. In Guatemala, abortion is only legal to avoid risk to a pregnant woman's life, which is typically interpreted to mean immediate and imminent death. In Perú and Ecuador, abortion is legal when women's health and life is at risk, but women face multiple barriers in accessing abortion services.

"States in Latin America must urgently take the necessary measures to protect girls' health and rights. Today we hold our governments accountable for these human rights violations, and together we say: Niñas no Madres" representatives of Surkuna Ecuador, Fundación Desafío, OSAR, MTM and Axayacatl stressed.

Official data shows that in Ecuador the birth rate among girls between 10 and 14 years old grew from 2.5 per 1,000 births in 2013 to 8 per 1,000 births in 2016 — which means that 2,700 girls under 14 years old gave birth each year. In Guatemala, in 2018, 2,256 girls between 10 and 14 gave birth. In Peru, 4 girls under 15 give birth every day. In Nicaragua, 8 out of 10 sexual violence survivors are girls under 13. Maternal mortality increases when pregnancies occur in girls younger than 14.

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