

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington D.C, 20500

July 07, 2015

**Re: Abortion restrictions on United States foreign aid**

Dear President Obama,

We are writing to urge you to lift the abortion ban attached to United States (US) foreign aid, including aid for girls and women who are victims of conflict-related sexual violence. The US abortion ban is a major reason that female war rape victims around the world are being denied abortions in humanitarian medical facilities. As the world's single largest aid donor, the US imposes its abortion ban on nearly all of the main providers of medical care for war victims, including the conflict countries themselves, multilateral organizations such as the United Nations, and non-governmental organizations.

This is a matter of utmost urgency as recently demonstrated by the use of rape and forced impregnation by extremist groups such as ISIL and Boko Haram as tactics of warfare to further their ideological goals. The denial of abortions violates the right of female war rape victims to non-discriminatory medical care, as well as the right to be free from cruel treatment and torture under international humanitarian law.

At the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the US before the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva in May 2015, five countries made formal recommendations for the US to take action on its abortion ban: France, the United Kingdom, Belgium, Norway, and the Netherlands. We urge you to accept these recommendations and issue an executive order:

- lifting the US abortion restrictions on foreign aid by allowing, at a minimum, for abortion to be provided in cases of rape, incest or life endangerment as currently statutorily permitted.
- affirming US support for the right of girls and women raped in armed conflict to be provided all necessary medical care required by their condition, without adverse distinction, including abortion services, under common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions.

An executive order lifting the US abortion ban would demonstrate historic leadership in implementing UN Security Council Resolutions 2106 (2013) and 2122 (2013). Both resolutions include language calling for girls and women raped in war to be provided comprehensive and non-discriminatory medical care, in response to the UN Secretary-General's recommendation that such care be in accordance with international humanitarian law and include "safe termination of pregnancies resulting from rape."

**We therefore urge you to take decisive action to ensure that US aid serves its purpose: To save human lives and alleviate suffering.**

**American Civil Liberties Union** (United States)  
**American Medical Women's Association** (United States)  
**Amnesty International** (United States)  
**Badeal Foundation** (Syria)  
**Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir** (Colombia)  
**Center for Health and Gender Equity** (United States)  
**Center for Reproductive Rights** (United States)  
**Center for Women Policy Studies** (United States)  
**Deutsche Stiftung Weltbevoelkerung** (Germany)  
**Egyptian Center for Women's Rights** (Egypt)  
**Elman Peace and Human Rights Centre** (Somalia)  
**Equality Now** (United States, Kenya, United Kingdom)  
**European Women Lawyers Association** (Belgium)  
**Fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l'Homme/FIDH** (France)  
**Feminist Majority Foundation** (United States)  
**FIDA Kenya** (Kenya)  
**FIDA Nigeria** (Nigeria)  
**Fonds pour les Femmes Congolaises** (Democratic Republic of the Congo)  
**Global Justice Center** (United States)  
**Global Network of Women Peacebuilders** (United States)  
**Human Rights Watch** (United States)  
**International Criminal Law Bureau** (United Kingdom)  
**International Federation of Women Lawyers** (United States)  
**International Foundation for Democracy & Human Rights** (United Kingdom)  
**International Organization for Victim Assistance** (United States)  
**International Planned Parenthood Foundation** (United Kingdom)  
**Ipas** (United States)  
**Iraqi Al-Amal Association** (Iraq)  
**Iraqi Women Network** (Iraq)  
**Komisyon Fanm Viktim pou Viktim** (Haiti)  
**Ligue du Droit International des Femmes** (France)  
**Madre** (United States)  
**Medica Mondiale** (Germany)  
**Medical Women's Association of Nigeria** (Nigeria)  
**Medical Women's International Association** (Canada)  
**Nine Bedford Row** (United Kingdom)  
**Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq** (Iraq)  
**Physicians for Human Rights** (United States)  
**Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice** (United States)  
**Solidarité Féminine pour la Paix et le Développement Intégral** (Democratic Republic of the Congo)  
**South Sudan Women Lawyers Association** (South Sudan)  
**Southern Africa Litigation Centre** (Southern Africa)  
**Synergie des femmes pour les victimes des violences sexuelles** (Democratic Republic of the Congo)  
**Syrian Women's League** (Syria)  
**Waging Peace** (United States)  
**Wales Assembly of Women** (United Kingdom)  
**West African Bar Association** (Nigeria)  
**Women Leadership Institute** (Iraq)

**Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice** (Netherlands)  
**Women's International League for Peace and Freedom** (Switzerland)  
**Women's International League for Peace and Freedom Ghana** (Ghana)  
**Women's International League for Peace and Freedom Nigeria** (Nigeria)  
**Women's International League for Peace and Freedom Sweden** (Sweden)  
**Women's League of Burma** (Burma/Myanmar)  
**Women's Link Worldwide** (Spain/Colombia)  
**World Organisation Against Torture** (Switzerland)

CC: John Kerry, Secretary of State

Samantha Power, Permanent Representative to the United Nations

Valerie Jarrett, Senior Advisor to the President and Chair, White House Council on Women and Girls

Tom Malinowski, Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor

Mary E. McLeod, Legal Adviser (Acting) & Principal Deputy Legal Adviser