



**Media Response Letter on Amnesty International's
Policy on Sexual and Reproductive Rights**
April, 2007

Note: This letter is only to be sent to newspapers as a response to articles, editorials or letters to the editor that are critical of the new sexual and reproductive rights policy; it is not to be sent proactively.

To The Editor:

Violence against women is pervasive worldwide. In conflict zones from Bosnia to Sudan to Guatemala, rape has been used as a weapon of war. The World Health Organization estimates that one woman in five will be the victim of rape or attempted rape in her lifetime. Women who are raped suffer additional abuse and isolation. In some countries abortion is a crime with severe penalties. Recently in Nigeria, a woman who miscarried was accused of aborting and threatened with the death penalty. In many countries, women suffer terrible consequences when access to medical treatment is blocked. Every year, 70,000 women died from unsafe abortions and another five million suffer often debilitating complications.

As a human rights organization, Amnesty International cannot remain silent in the face of this suffering. The severe violence and dire circumstances women face inspired Amnesty International to initiate a global campaign to Stop Violence against Women through which we advocate for every woman's right to be free from inhuman treatment, cruelty, coercion, discrimination or violence. This campaign has led us to defend a woman's right to be free from any form of coercion, discrimination or violence as she makes and puts into effect informed decisions concerning reproduction, including decisions in relation to the continuation or termination of pregnancy. In particular, we call for protection of women who seek an abortion as a consequence of rape or incest or who are facing grave risk to their health or loss of life. We support the right of women to receive medical treatment for complications arising from abortion, and we oppose sending women and their health care providers to jail for abortion.

Amnesty International takes no position on whether a woman should have an abortion under any of these circumstances but instead seeks to assure that abortion services are safe and accessible to prevent grave human rights violations that can result if women are denied this option.

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