

via fax: 011 503 2281 5959 Gen. David Munguía Payés Minister of Justice and Public Security El Salvador	via fax: 011 503 22 61 14 36 Dr. Leonel Flores Director of Social Security El Salvador
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November 11, 2012

Dear Sirs:

We are outraged at the government's treatment of "Mery," (her real name is known to authorities), age 27, who clandestinely sought a medication-induced abortion in February of this year. After taking the medication she experienced out-of-the-ordinary symptoms and sought medical assistance at a hospital. Because abortion is criminalized in all circumstances, medical staff members at the hospital reported her to the police, who immediately arrested her, handcuffed her to the stretcher and kept her under police guard.

On August 28 "Mery" was convicted and sentenced to two years in prison. The judge insisted she serve her sentence in prison which prevented "Mery" from receiving the psychological treatment and support that her delicate, deteriorating physical and mental condition required.

On September 3 while in the Center for the Rehabilitation of Women in Ilopango, San Salvador Department, "Mery" attempted suicide by cutting her wrists with a rusty nail. She was transferred to the Psychiatric Department of the Arce Policlinic-Hospital, where she currently remains handcuffed and under 24-hour guard. Some of the guards have insulted her, calling her a "murderer." They and other state officials have prevented her from access to legal counsel and psychological support.

In June 2011, the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women expressed grave concern at the violence against women in El Salvador, and warned that government inaction on the investigation, prosecution and reparation for such crimes had led to a situation of impunity for gender-based violence. In her report, the UN Special Rapporteur also urged the government to review the laws which ban abortion in all circumstances, even where the life or health of the woman or girl is at stake or she is a victim of rape.

Because of "Mery"'s cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment and treatment we **strongly urge** that you

- immediately and unconditionally release "Mery";
- prevent any further ill-treatment of "Mery";
- order her immediate, unfettered access to legal counsel, psychological and medical treatment;
- immediately remove her handcuffs; and
- eliminate the universal criminalization of abortion.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Coordinator

cc: Citizens Group for Decriminalization of Therapeutic, Ethical and Eugenic Abortion ~ via fax: 011 503 2226 0356
 Mari Carmen Aponte, US Ambassador to El Salvador ~ via fax: 011-503-2501-2775
 Francisco Altshul, El Salvador Ambassador to the US ~ via fax: 1-202-234-3834
 Melanie Bonner, El Salvador Desk at US State Dept. ~ via fax: 202-647-2597
 Christopher Johnson, Diplomacy Officer for Central America, US State Dept. ~ via email
 Rosa María Ortiz, Rapporteur for El Salvador, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202.458.3992
 US Senators Brown & Portman ~ via email
 US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Latta, Renacci, Ryan, Sutton ~ via email

UA 316/12_El Salvador

The following people hereby urge you to take action on this matter as indicated in this letter: