



23 November 2021

Dear Honorary Consul Larissa Garcia de Bochineck,

The decriminalization of abortion in the Dominican Republic cannot be postponed. Dominican Republic's current legislation that outlaws abortion under all circumstances causes a serious and urgent public health problem, leading to avoidable deaths of women and pregnant people, generally from the most vulnerable sectors of the population.

Over the last 25 years, more than 50 countries have changed their laws to allow for greater access to abortion, recognizing the vital role that access to safe abortion plays in protecting lives and health. Sadly, the Dominican Republic continues to be amongst the last countries in the world to maintain a complete ban on abortion. The current debate over the reform of the country's criminal code represents an historic opportunity to change this situation and stand on the right side of history.

Right now, human rights activists across the Dominican Republic are demanding that the reform of the country's criminal code includes the decriminalization of abortion in three limited circumstances: when the pregnancy poses a risk to the life of a pregnant woman or girl, when the fetus could not survive outside the womb, and when the pregnancy is the result of rape or incest.

Their demands are widely supported by human rights standards, as well as by public health experts. The World Health Organization, along with prominent medical associations, support the decriminalization of abortion, asserting that criminalization does not have the intended effect of reducing the numbers of abortions and only leads to women seeking unsafe clandestine abortion that put their lives and health at risk.

Additionally, the UN Committee Against Torture and several international committees on human rights have found that denying women access to abortion services can, in certain circumstances, cause suffering that is so severe it could amount to torture.

Therefore, I call on you to meet the Dominican Republic's obligations under international human rights law to respect, protect, and fulfil the rights of women, girls and life, health, autonomy, and dignity by approving a new criminal code that decriminalizes abortion in the three circumstances outlined above.

Sincerely,

31.266 attached signatories to this letter and Amnesty International Denmark