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End the ban on abortion in El Salvador

Dear President Sánchez Cerén,

Every year, thousands of women and girls are denied their human rights by El Salvador's total ban on abortion. The Salvadoran government is ultimately responsible for the resulting deaths of women and girls, and for the thousands whose human rights have been violated by the ban.

The ban makes it a crime for women and girls to have an abortion, and for anyone to help them have one.

Under the abortion ban, women and girls found guilty of terminating their pregnancies face jail sentences of up to eight years. Those who have miscarriages may be charged with aggravated homicide and jailed for up to 50 years, because they too are suspected of having clandestine abortions. Convictions are often based on weak evidence, following flawed trials.

The effects of the ban are nothing less than institutionalized violence against women and girls, and amount to torture – a conclusion backed by the UN.

El Salvador's total ban on abortion is a serious human rights violation and must be urgently repealed.

I urge you to:

- Decriminalize abortion: eliminate all punitive measures for women and girls seeking an abortion, as well as for the health care providers and others who help them to have one.
- Immediately and unconditionally release all women and girls who have been imprisoned for having abortions or miscarriages. This includes those convicted of abortion, homicide and aggravated homicide.
- Ensure access to safe and legal abortion for all women and girls. As a minimum, ensure access in cases of rape or incest, where the woman's health or life is at risk, and where the foetus is unlikely to survive.
- Guarantee access to modern contraceptive information and services, and provide comprehensive sexuality education.

Yours sincerely,

Copies to:

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