

An open letter from Amnesty International to

Distinguished Salvadorian State Authorities,

Amnesty international writes to you today to call for justice for Teodora del Carmen Vásquez. Teodora has spent the last ten years in jail after being accused of having had an abortion and ultimately being convicted of 'aggravated homicide'. Today the same judges who sent her to prison will review her case and decide her fate. She could be released, but could also remain in prison to complete her sentence.

In 2007, 9-month pregnant Teodora suffered a stillbirth, after the rapid onset of serious pain while she was at work. She called 911, but help did not turn up on time. Instead, several police officers arrived, handcuffed her and arrested her on suspicion of 'aggravated homicide' under El Salvador's ban on abortions. She was presumed guilty of 'abortion' rather than the victim of pregnancy complications.

Under Salvadorian law all citizens must be presumed innocent until proven guilty. However, Teodora's trial was flawed and lacking in due process. Her sentence was based on inconclusive evidence and she faced discrimination of authorities. Being from a poor family, she could not afford an effective legal team to represent her. This is often the case for poor, rural women like Teodora who suffer pregnancy-related complications in El Salvador. They are immediately assumed guilty and sentenced to prison to up to 40 years—the maximum jail terms for this type of crime.

Teodora is one of many women in El Salvador convicted of 'aggravated homicide' for simply miscarrying and losing their own pregnancies.

To help these women it is urgent to overturn the total abortion ban in El Salvador that violates women's and girl's rights to life, health, and freedom from discrimination and from torture and ill-treatment. International law requires that abortion be decriminalized in all circumstances and that women and girls are guaranteed access to safe and legal abortion both in law and in practice, at a minimum, in cases where pregnancy poses a risk to the life or the physical or mental health of a pregnant woman or girl, where there is severe and fatal impairment of the foetus, or where the pregnancy is the result of rape or incest.

The total abortion ban also has devastating effects on the children and family of women jailed under this law, who are often unable to see their mothers or relatives for months because they don't have updated identification papers or they live far from the prison and don't have the money to pay for transportation and other costs related to the visit. Moreover, families are also placed in dire financial situations when they are compelled to provide for and look after the children of incarcerated women.

Teodora has already spent almost ten years in jail. The coming revision of her case is an opportunity to change the course of her life and correct the miscarriage of justice.

Amnesty International urges the State of El Salvador to guarantee due process in Teodora's judicial proceedings and ensure she receives the justice she was earlier denied in order for her to achieve her freedom.

Yours sincerely

Signature

Date / Address

**Bitte schicken Sie den unterschriebenen Brief bis spätestens 4. Dezember 2017 zurück an:
Amnesty International, El Salvador-Koordinationsgruppe, Postfach 7123, 71317 Waiblingen**