

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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SLOVAKIA: MPS MUST DITCH THE BILL AIMING TO RESTRICT ACCESS TO ABORTION

Amnesty International calls on the Slovak MPs to ensure that the legal and policy framework allows women and girls in the country to have access to safe abortion services, without barriers or restrictions, as required by international human rights law and standards. In line with the international human rights law and standards, everyone should be able to make their own decisions about their bodies and pregnancies, and have access to sexual and reproductive health services including safe abortion.

The organization is alarmed that the Parliament in Slovakia voted to progress a bill that obliges women and girls seeking abortions to undertake a sonography, obtain images of the embryo or foetus and even listen to the foetus' heartbeat.

Amnesty International reminds Slovak MPs that if adopted the bill runs the risk of exposing women and girls to degrading treatment and will create barriers to lawful services. The European Court of Human Rights clarified that a "treatment is considered "degrading" when it aroused in its victims feelings of fear, anguish and inferiority capable of humiliating and debasing them".

The right to access healthcare services, including abortion, is critical to enabling all people who can get pregnant to fully exercise their human rights and to live their lives with dignity. The authorities in Slovakia must create social conditions in which people can make pregnancy-related decisions free of pressure, discrimination, stigma, coercion, violence or punishment.

As recently as on 18 October, the UN Committee on Economic and Social Rights noted that women in the Slovak Republic face multiple barriers to sexual and reproductive health services, including access to safe abortions and contraceptives. It warned against the bill currently in the parliament, which would further restrict these rights and create further barriers to healthcare.

At the core of the issue is reproductive freedom and a person's right to make decisions about their body and pregnancy.