

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

HOPE FOR RAPE SURVIVORS

President Obama has been urged to ensure the rights of female rape survivors in armed conflict. On the 62nd anniversary of the Geneva Conventions, (August 12), the Global Justice Center leads a consortium of human rights groups in urging President Obama to lift abortion restrictions on all US humanitarian aid for victims of rape in armed conflict.

Thousands of girls and women raped and impregnated in armed conflict are routinely denied counselling and abortion imposing additional suffering on these victims. This can be attributed largely to the abortion restrictions the US places on all states and organisations that receive US foreign aid, including humanitarian aid for victims in conflict. The Obama Administration has retained this abortion clause, which went into force during the Bush Administration and contains no life or rape exception. Recognizing that this restriction can be lifted by a Presidential executive order, the Global Justice Center has launched a campaign to urge the President to lift this “no abortion policy” and reaffirm the US’s commitment to the Geneva Convention.

Janet Benshoof, President of the Global Justice Center says, “Why does the Administration persist in retaining this dirty tendrill of the Helms Amendment, something that neither Helms called for nor is being advocated for by even the most conservative Congressmen?”

The Geneva Conventions mandate that all persons wounded and sick in armed conflict receive non-discriminatory medical care including impregnated victims of rape. The omission of the option of abortion or even counseling for pregnant female rape victims is discriminatory because theoretically male and non-pregnant female rape victims are offered all necessary medical services as dictated by their condition. Further, denying access to safe abortion for rape victims has been characterized as torture or cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment by a variety of international human rights bodies.

Benshoof continues, “This US policy makes no sense - legally, politically, or ethically. No one doubts the personal commitment of President Obama to ensuring US compliance with the Geneva Conventions and to ending US complicity with actions that could be deemed cruel and inhumane treatment of persons who are protected under the laws of war.”

Over forty prominent human rights organizations, UK parliamentarians, numerous legal academics, UK NGOs and the European Women’s Lobby have sent letters to the President as part of this ongoing campaign. For more information about how the Global Justice Centre is fighting for women’s rights around the world and to sign the petition, visit <http://chn.ge/q95BXy>.

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Note to Editors

The Global Justice Center (www.globaljusticecenter.net) is an international human rights NGO that works to promote justice and gender equality by creating legal precedents and legal tools to advocate for the progressive interpretation and aggressive enforcement of international law.

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