

President Joe Biden  
White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20002

July 26, 2022

Dear Mr. President,

As the below undersigned organizations and groups who work together to end violence against women and girls globally, we would not normally speak to domestic U.S. policy, but the massive domestic and global ramifications of the recent U.S. Supreme Court decision on *Dobbs vs. Jackson Women's Health Organization* have brought us together to express our deep concern and sadness. This decision is a shameful reversal of years of precedent upholding the rights of individuals in the United States to bodily autonomy and privacy. This rollback of rights will have harmful domestic and global repercussions, including in the work to prevent and respond to gender-based violence globally.

The right to a safe and legal abortion is a human right, and any restriction to this right compounds the trauma and harm that survivors of gender-based violence experience, while also elevating of the risk and vulnerability of gender-based violence to women, girls, and those who can become pregnant. This decision strips people who can get pregnant of their agency and ability to freely decide the course of their life, and it will put domestic violence and other survivors of gender-based violence at risk of reproductive coercion. It will deny survivors of sexual violence their autonomy and ability to have control over their lives and the basic decision of whether or not to carry a pregnancy to term. The impact of this loss of rights will be disproportionately felt among survivors of color, those with disabilities, low-income survivors, and others who already face barriers in accessing the healthcare and survivor support they need.

While the immediate and direct impacts of the Supreme Court decision will be felt domestically, there are deeply concerning implications globally, including the emboldening of anti-abortion and anti-gender equality movements worldwide, which continue to push for restrictions on women's rights. The growth of transnational movements opposing so-called "gender ideology" have already gained ground and threaten gains in women's rights, including in ending gender-based violence.<sup>1</sup> Such movements threaten not only global work to prevent and respond to gender-based violence but also visibly challenge human rights standards.<sup>2</sup>

This recent Supreme Court ruling, coupled with the lack of codification for the permanent repeal of the Global Gag Rule and the continued enforcement of the Helms Amendment undermine the U.S.'s commitment to end gender-based violence globally. The United States must, both domestically and

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Women/WG/Gender-equality-and-gender-backlash.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0924051921996697>

internationally, create pathways for safe access and lift any barriers that impede upon the rights of individuals. Women and girls--and all survivors of gender-based violence--deserve the full spectrum of their rights, without discrimination or government interference.

You have stated that you plan to do what is in your power to address this injustice, and we applaud for the crucial first steps you have taken in the recent Executive Order Protecting Access to Reproductive Health Care Services,<sup>3</sup> but these are not enough.

We urge you to take further, bold action to protect the right to abortion and ensure accessibility for all Americans. We applaud the recent creation of the Department of Justice Reproductive Rights Taskforce,<sup>4</sup> and we encourage you to instruct the Department of Justice to rigorously defend the right to abortion medication, including by challenging roadblocks that impinge on the availability of medication. And we strongly urge you to recognize the historic significance of this rollback of rights and its impact on public health and declare a national emergency and public health emergency, as well as using all emergency and disaster authorities available to you. Additionally, we strongly encourage you to mobilize federal resources to support people forced to travel access transportation, hotels, time off work, child care, and other needs. We also call on you to build upon your public education campaign about the safety and availability of abortion and ensure that providers and individuals have the information they need to safely access care, and otherwise work to increase access to abortion health care for low-income people.

We call on you to live up to your commitments to advance gender equality and equity globally. This means taking necessary action to ensure restrictions on reproductive rights are reversed and that programs and policies supported by the U.S. Government advance – not undermine – reproductive justice.

Sincerely,

1. Amnesty International USA
2. Center for Women's Global Leadership
3. Equality now
4. Equipundo: Center for Masculinities and Social Justice
5. Fòs Feminista
6. Gender Action
7. Gender Equality Initiative in International Affairs (GEIA)
8. Global Rights for Women
9. Global Woman P.E.A.C.E. Foundation
10. International Action Network for Gender Equity & Law (IANGEL)
11. International Center for Research on Women (ICRW)
12. International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN)
13. Ipas

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/07/08/fact-sheet-president-biden-to-sign-executive-order-protecting-access-to-reproductive-health-care-services/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-announces-reproductive-rights-task-force>

14. Jewish Women International (JWI)
15. Last Mile4D
16. League of Women Voters of the United States
17. MADRE
18. Mina's List
19. Oxfam America
20. PAI
21. Population Institute
22. Universal Access Project
23. Women's Action for New Directions (WAND)
24. Women's Learning Partnership (WLP)
25. Women's Refugee Commission