

## PERMIT SAFE ABORTION SERVICES THROUGH U.S. FOREIGN ASSISTANCE

United States law permits the use of foreign-assistance funds for abortion services except abortions conducted as “a method of family planning.” That means that ***existing law permits the use of U.S. foreign-assistance funds to cover abortion services in the cases of rape, incest, and life-endangerment.*** But the U.S. government has not funded ***any*** abortion services in countries where U.S. foreign assistance operates – even in these narrow instances.

The United States government should support safe abortion services overseas where a woman is raped (including in the context of an armed conflict), is the victim of incest, or faces a life-endangering pregnancy.

In addition, the U.S. government should take steps to ensure that its foreign-assistance programs permit the referral of women for legal abortions, and that foreign-assistance programs do not censor of discussions and materials related to safe abortion.

### Justification

Unsafe abortion and gender-based sexual violence are widespread in many countries where U.S. foreign assistance operates; unsafe abortion is also a major cause of preventable maternal death. Extending abortion services to women (where permitted under national law) in the cases of rape, life-endangerment, and incest will ***safeguard the health and lives of numerous women.***

Moreover, **United Nations Security Council Resolution 2122** (2013), which enjoyed the unanimous support of all Security Council members, including the United States, noted women’s “need for access to the **full range of sexual and reproductive health services, including regarding pregnancies resulting from rape, without discrimination.**”

Nonetheless, the United States government continues to oppose all support for safe abortion services through its foreign assistance, even for women raped in armed conflict. This position is not only at odds with Security Council Resolution 2122, but also with the rest of U.S. federal law and policy, which permits government support for abortion services in the cases of rape, incest, or a life-threatening pregnancy.

“Removal of blanket abortion restrictions on humanitarian aid covering medical care given women and girls who are raped and impregnated in situations of armed conflict.”

### Recommendation of Norway

**Universal Periodic Review of the United States of America (2011)**

#### The Center's Mission

The Center for Reproductive Rights uses the law to advance reproductive freedom as a fundamental right that all governments are legally obligated to protect, respect and fulfill.

## Proposed Question for the United States

- Why is it the practice of the United States to oppose all support for abortion services in its foreign-assistance programs, including in the cases of women and girls who are raped and impregnated in situations of armed conflict, and women and girls facing life-threatening pregnancies?

## Recommendation

- The United States should begin permitting foreign assistance to support safe abortion services, at least the cases of rape, incest, and life endangerment, as permitted by existing federal law.

## Contact

Aram Schvey, Senior Policy Counsel, [aschvey@reprorights.org](mailto:aschvey@reprorights.org), +1 202 629 2657