

ACTION ALERT

Urge Amnesty International to Rescind its New Abortion Policy

July 2, 2007

BACKGROUND: In April 2007, the Executive Council of Amnesty International (AI), preempting action by the International Council that is to meet in August, abandoned Amnesty International's neutral stance on abortion to take a pro-abortion position. Amnesty International's new policy advocates the global decriminalization of abortion. AI's policy also appears to apply to every stage of pregnancy and has already led AI-USA to oppose laws against the killing of partially-delivered children. Similarly, the new policy of advancing access to abortion to preserve women's "health," a word left undefined by AI, does not confine the practice to narrow circumstances. At the International Council meeting, Amnesty International may reconsider its policy on abortion.

USCCB POSITION: The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has been among those urging Amnesty International to reject this new policy when its International Council meets in August. (See [Bishop Skylstad's Statement](#).) For many years, the Catholic community in the United States and elsewhere has admired and worked with Amnesty International in its efforts to advance the cause of universal human rights. Much more urgent work remains, work that will be harmed by this unprecedented and unnecessary involvement in the abortion debate.

While the proposed action by Amnesty International may appear to some to support women's freedom or provide a compassionate response to women in difficult situations of pregnancy, abortion injures the health and dignity of women at the same time that it ends the life of the unborn child. A far more compassionate response is to provide support and services for pregnant women, advance their educational and economic standing in society, and resist all forms of violence and stigmatization against them. (See [Bishop Skylstad's Letter to AI](#).)

Many of the great figures of our time who advanced human rights and compassion for the destitute - Susan B. Anthony, Mohandas Gandhi, Mother Teresa, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Archbishop Oscar Romero, Dorothy Day, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Fannie Lou Hamer - also opposed abortion. Many will find it incomprehensible that these giants of human progress must now be seen as enemies of human rights. The action of the Executive Council undermines AI's longstanding moral credibility, diverts its mission, divides its own members (many of whom are Catholic or defend the rights of unborn children), and jeopardizes AI's support by people in many nations, cultures and religions.

ACTION REQUESTED: Ask Amnesty International to rescind its new policy on abortion at the International Council meeting in August. [Click here for contact information for Amnesty International USA's National Office](#). Emphasize these points:

- Point out that abortion injures the health and dignity of women at the same time that it ends the life of the unborn child.
- Indicate that the action of the Executive Council undermines Amnesty's longstanding moral credibility, diverts its mission, and divides its own members.
- Urge the members of the International Council of Amnesty International, when they meet in Mexico in August, to reconsider and rescind this new policy.

FOR INFORMATION: Dr. Stephen Colecchi, Director, Office of International Justice and Peace, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, 202-541-3196, scolecchi@usccb.org. Richard Doerflinger, Deputy Director, Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities, USCCB, 202-541-3171, rdoerflinger@usccb.org.