



The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

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March 16, 2022

The Hon. Norma Torres
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington DC 20515
--via email--

RE: Recent Letter to the President of Ecuador dated March 8, 2022.

Dear Congresswoman Torres,

As Chairmen of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committees on Pro- Life Activities and International Justice and Peace, and in solidarity with our brothers in the Ecuadorian episcopate, we write with the utmost concern regarding a letter that you, along with 19 of your congressional colleagues, sent to the President of Ecuador, Mr. Guillermo Lasso Mendoza, on March 8, 2022. Evidently, your letter, signed by members from the majority party in the House of Representatives, seeks to pressure President Lasso into expanding abortion access in Ecuador as a "human rights imperative." Your letter also insinuates that exercising the presidential veto, which is a constitutional prerogative of the Ecuadorian head of state, would violate the democratic process in Ecuador, and would imply a lack of commitment to "upholding Ecuador's human rights obligations."

We object to your action and find it deeply troubling. As Pope Saint John Paul II observed, "At the center of the moral vision of [the American] founding documents is the recognition of the rights of the human person . . ." The greatness of the United States lies "especially [in its] respect for the dignity and sanctity of human life in all conditions and at all stages of development."¹ Additionally, your letter is a violation of Ecuador's sovereignty, constituting, in words Pope Francis has used in similar instances, an "ideological colonization" that seeks to homogenize nations according to an aggressive "throwaway culture"². Furthermore, your position, while widespread, is not universal, here or in Ecuador, as voices in defense of human life and dignity in both countries constantly advocate for the rights of both mothers and their unborn children.

The concern for victims of grave injustices expressed in your letter is laudable; rape is an egregious violation of human dignity, and victims deserve our proactive support and assistance. Nevertheless, we encourage you and your colleagues to support solutions that integrally uphold, promote, and defend the dignity of all human life. As a grave violation of human dignity itself, abortion only compounds the injustices already suffered by vulnerable women and girls around the world.

¹ Pope John Paul II, Departure from Baltimore/Washington International Airport, Departure Remarks, October 8, 1995; 25 *Origins*, p. 318 (October 19, 1995).

² Pope Francis, Speech to the Council of Inclusive Capitalism, Vatican City, November 11, 2019.

Sincerely,

+ *David J. Malloy*

Most Reverend David Malloy
Bishop of Rockford
Chairman
Committee on International Justice and Peace

+ *William E. Lori*

Most Reverend William E. Lori
Archbishop of Baltimore
Chairman
Committee on Pro-Life Activities

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The Hon. Jackie Speier
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