

URGENT ACTION

BILL RESTRICTING ACCESS TO SAFE ABORTION REJECTED

On 20 October, the Slovak Parliament rejected a bill that would have further obstructed access to safe abortion care, violating the human rights of women and girls, and endangering the health and wellbeing of those who could be seeking an abortion.

NO FURTHER ACTION IS REQUESTED. MANY THANKS TO ALL WHO SENT APPEALS.

In the evening of 20 October, the Slovak Parliament rejected a bill that would have further obstructed access to safe abortion care, violating the human rights of women and girls, and endangering the health and wellbeing of all people who could be seeking an abortion.

Measures included in the bill, such as doubling the current mandatory waiting period to 96 hours before accessing an abortion; the imposition of a requirement of a second medical authorisation for abortions on health reasons; and the obligation to state the reasons for seeking an abortion to the doctor, were unjustified and did not fulfil a medical purpose. The bill also intended to prohibit the so-called “advertising” of abortion, restricting doctors’ ability to provide evidence-based information to women about abortion care and where to access lawful abortions in Slovakia.

The bill was debated during the September plenary session and triggered a national and international campaign calling for its rejection. Amnesty International was one of the over 100 organizations from around the world who send a letter to all Slovak parliamentarians on 7 September outlining the concerns raised by the bill (<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur72/3021/2020/en/>). On 30 September the vote was postponed until the next session, starting on 20 October, when it was finally rejected.

This was not the first time the Slovak Parliament debated retrogressive legislation to obstruct safe access to abortion care. A bill tabled in November 2019 attempted to force people seeking an abortion to view an ultrasound scan of the embryo or foetus, a measure that was not justified by medical reasons and would have violated the person’s privacy, personal integrity, autonomy in decision-making about health care. Following national and international outrage the bill did not get the required votes and was dismissed.

Slovakia must refrain from attempting to further restrict access to safe abortion care and must comply with its international human rights obligations to respect and protect the right to health, privacy, information, the right to be free from inhuman or degrading treatment and the principles of non-discrimination and equality in the enjoyment of rights, as well as the World Health Organization guidelines and clinical best practices

In line with international human rights law and standards, everyone should be able to make their own decisions about their bodies and have access to sexual and reproductive health services including safe abortion.

THIS IS THE SECOND AND FINAL OUTPUT FOR UA 128/20

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur72/3039/2020/en/>