

COMMITTEE FOR CITIZENSHIP AND REPRODUCTION

Abortion, emergency contraception and women's rights – Debate increases and it is time for partnerships.

The admission of *CCR – Comissão de Cidadania e Reprodução*, “Committee for Citizenship and Reproduction” and *Conectas Direitos Humanos*, “Conectas Human Rights” as *amici curiae* in the Unconstitutionality Action against Law 7.025/2008, from Jundiaí, was great news to the organizations that protect sexual and reproductive rights in Brazil. The referred law prohibited the distribution of the emergency contraception medicine known as “the day after pill” by city’s public health system. In the role of *amici curiae* - “friends of the court” in Latin - *CCR* and *Conectas* participate in the process by giving their opinion on the matter and contributing with factual and legal argumentation for the subject under judgment. This participation brings new perspectives and indicates a new strategy for other human right groups action, but was sadly ignored by the press which is showing lack of enthusiasm in covering matters related to the creation of laws restricting emergency contraception in Brazilian cities.

The subject on the spot in most editorial rooms seems to be the parliamentary agitation around the creation of the *CPI* - parliamentary investigation committee- to investigate abortion, and the confrontation between pro-abortion groups mainly formed by the feminine representative bench, and anti-abortion groups with masculine and religious majority. As reinforcement to the position of the latter, the Vatican took advantage on the visit of the new Brazilian ambassador Luiz Felipe Seixas to Holy See and once again pronounced themselves against abortion and strongly requested that Brazilian government “fomented fundamental human values, family values and the protection of human life from conception to natural death.” Pope Bento XVI spoke of the defense of “the right of the embryo to be born”. His constant pronouncements headlined in Brazilian newspapers and his appellations to the Government not to adopt abortion decriminalization measures in the country rekindle the discussion about a laic state.

In our current society the idea that abortion discussions should belong to a philosophical and dogmatic realm is quite weakened, and more than ever it is understood that the question is not only a matter of public health but also women’s rights. And although Vatican’s declarations against abortion still weigh heavily in the country, the debate on abortion practice as a women’s right is also growing – the right to decide about their own body and to choose if they want to carry a pregnancy to the end, disregarding current law impositions. This law dates from 1940 and by a long time regarded as obsolete is based on a society when women were seen as “partially incapable”, as stated District Attorney Daniel Sarmiento in *Jornal do Brasil* on February 8th. The rhetoric of “the” Brazilian parliamentarians against abortion, commanded by PT member Luiz Bassuna, defending the creation of a *CPI* that might incriminate a countless number of women and health professional is a remainder of the macho society of those times.

The goal of group mobilization in defense of sexual and reproductive rights is to weaken actions like Bassuna’s and others such as the creation of laws restricting the access to contraceptive methods. The joint action of *CCR* and *Conectas* is an example of this battle that aims at promoting the discussion in other layers of society, and constantly seeks the fundamental support from the media, which many times stands neglectful and unenthusiastic on the matter. There is not a deep understanding of pro-

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abortion groups true motivations, so the coverage on the matter is only punctual and the approach is outdated and focused on the polemic raised, the political race or on police cases. The debate is open, chances of development are countless and partnerships are pretty much welcome.