

Brazil moves forward to abortion

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In just over two months, Brazil approved a bill that opens the door to the legalization of abortion. It was carried out under the protection of a rigid silence.

According to the internal magazine of the Chamber of Deputies, the initiative came from Health Minister Alexandre Padilha. In February 2013, in honor of International Women's day Padilha made an urgent request to vote in the full House on the proposed law 60/1999. This proposed law was about the priority of hospital care for women victims of violence.

Supported by the agreement of Minister of Health and the President of the Chamber of Deputies (Mr. Henrique Eduardo Alves), Congressman José Guimarães, leader of the Workers Party (WP) urged, as an "emergency proceeding,"² the voting of the bill. The presidency of the Chamber was assumed by Mr. Andrew Vargas (National Secretary of Communication of WP) due the absence of Mr. Alves.

At the meeting of leaders of the different parties, the "emergency proceeding" was approved. In the same day, the bill was modified and presented to the plenary of the House. The project was approved on March 5, and three days later it was sent to be reviewed by the Senate, speed unusual for parliamentary standards.

On April 10 the bill was renamed to 3/2013 or PLC 3/2013. After reading the favorable report of Senator Ana Rita (WP), the text was approved by the Human Rights Commission of the Senate. On June 19, after the favorable report of Senator Angela Roraima Portela (WP), the project was endorsed by the Senate Committee on Social Affairs. Finally, on July 4, with no request for amendment, the PLC 3/2013 was approved by the full Senate and then sent to the President, to be signed.

Strategically, the text avoids mentioning the word *abortion*, but opens shortcuts for its legalization.

By reading the text of the bill, it is easier to understand its proposals. The first article says *"all hospitals without any exception must provide comprehensive emergency services resulting from sexual abuse, and referral, as appropriate, to social services."*

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² According to the Internal Rules of the Chamber of Deputies, a Bill can be voted under an "emergency proceeding" if the leaders of the different parliamentary parties (coming to one third of all deputies) so request. This emergency proceeding allows the project to be voted by the plenary of the Chamber of Deputies without being previously approved by the Commissions of the Chamber.

"Emergency service" means the service should be performed immediately after the request; it cannot be rescheduled for a later date.

"Comprehensive" attention means that no health care aspect can be omitted, implying that if a victim of sexual violence is pregnant, she should be sent to social services for abortion.

The *"social services"* are precisely the services to legal abortion.

As can be seen, it is playing with words in service of a clear objective: to open the door to abortion in Brazil. Consequently, all hospitals in Brazil are required to assist victims of violence to the practice of abortion. This has the aggravating factor that the law does not contemplate the objection of conscience.

The second article clarifies that in the terms of this law, "sexual violence is any kind of sexual activity without consent". The problem is that the new law does not include a procedure that determines that the sexual act was not consensual.

The project was handled with surprising speed and undemocratic silence. It was a violent act to the Brazilian people, since Brazil is a pro- life country. This is not just an opinion, but an objective data that is measured repeatedly in surveys. The defense of life, liberty and the rights of minorities were only achieved in Brazil after hard fighting, and the citizens are committed to these ideals and are not willing to give them up.

The citizens demand transparency from their political leaders, and consistency of their speeches, particularly when it is about safeguarding a fundamental value, such as the right to life.

In 2010, President Dilma Rousseff, gave her word to reject any initiative in favor of the implementation of abortion. Therefore, the veto of the bill was her duty. At least it was expected that personal and institutional conscientious objection would be safeguarded. But she did not veto the bill. Thus, the confidence that the Brazilian people had placed in her word three years ago was frustrated. The door, to infringe the most fundamental human right in the most ruthless way, has been opened.