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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**81 MEMBERS OF CONGRESS CALL ON OBAMA TO BREAK BARRIERS TO
ABORTION FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS GLOBALLY**
*CHANGE APPLAUDS CONGRESSIONAL MEMBERS FOR STANDING WITH
WOMEN AND GIRLS*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Eighty-one Members of Congress [wrote to President Obama](#) calling on him to break barriers to safe abortion care for women globally by ensuring U.S. support for funding for abortion in the cases of rape, incest, or life endangerment. Specifically, the [letter calls on Obama](#) to clarify the Helms amendment, a decades-old provision that prohibits the U.S. from paying for abortions overseas as a method of family planning but does not prohibit support in the cases of rape, incest, or life endangerment. Despite this distinction, the Helms amendment has been applied as a complete ban.

“In light of your recent trip to Ethiopia and Kenya, we ask that you take swift action to end the unduly strict interpretation of the Helms Amendment and continue your legacy to better the lives of women worldwide.”

The letter, led by Representatives Eliot L. Engel (D-NY) and Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), comes amidst a large [international effort](#) to secure [executive action](#) on the Helms amendment, specifically drawing attention to the issue of access to safe abortion for women and girls raped in conflict.

During his trip to Africa, Obama [spoke to the African Union](#) where he addressed the issue of sexual assault and rape as a weapon of war. It was the fourth such time the president has publically discussed the issue of rape in conflict.

“We applaud these Members of Congress for standing with women and girls globally,” said Serra Sippel, president of the Center for Health and Gender Equity (CHANGE), a D.C.-based women’s rights organization that has [helped lead](#) the effort around executive action. “While ultimately we want to see Helms repealed, at the very least, we cannot continue to let political barriers prevent women and girls raped in conflict from accessing comprehensive post-rape care, including abortion.”

In July, in advance of the president’s trip to Africa, [CHANGE joined 70 U.S.](#) and international NGOs in calling on President Obama to meet with reproductive health providers to see first-hand the damaging impact that U.S. policy can have on women trying to access safe abortion.

In June, CHANGE and the Religious Coalition of Reproductive Choice (RCRC) hosted a [faith-leaders’ summit](#) at St. John’s Episcopal Church, across the street from the White House, calling on Obama to ensure access to safe abortion for woman and girls raped in conflict.

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