



June 14, 2016

For Immediate Release

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OBAMA'S VICTORY LAP ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS RECORD FALLS SHORT; ADVOCATES CALL ON HIM TO ACT FOR WOMEN RAPED IN CONFLICT #ItsOnHim

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Women's rights and human rights advocates gathered outside of the Washington D.C. Convention Center this morning urging President Obama not to [walk away](#) from women raped in conflict. Specifically, the group called on President Obama to take action on the Helms amendment, a decades old policy that prohibits U.S. funding for abortions overseas as a “method of family planning,” but does not prohibit U.S. support in cases of rape, incest, or life endangerment. Despite this distinction, [no administration](#) — including the Obama administration — has applied Helms correctly.

The [call to action](#) was led by the Center for Health and Gender Equity ([CHANGE](#)), Amnesty International USA, Reproaction, and Catholics for Choice. The event was timed with the United State of Women White House Summit, which is designed to celebrate President Obama's legacy on women's rights and is slated to draw more than 5,000 participants from around the country.

Today's call on President Obama is part of an ongoing effort to secure executive action on Helms, an effort that includes calls to action by rape survivors and advocates, [28 U.S. Senators](#), [81 Members](#) of the U.S. House of Representatives, more than [30 U.S. faith leaders](#), and hundreds of U.S. and international [advocacy organizations](#). These efforts come amid accounts of both ISIS and Boko Haram engaging in campaigns of rape across Syria, Iraq, and Nigeria. To date, President Obama has failed to act on Helms.

“As long as President Obama continues to walk away from women raped in conflict, his legacy on gender equality is incomplete,” said CHANGE president Serra Sippel. “To remain silent and fail to act is unconscionable, deadly, and damages his legacy.”

Human Rights Watch, a leading human rights group, has [documented cases](#) of women escaping captivity and experiencing pregnancy as a result of rape, yet being unable to access safe abortion services in Syria. Women who survived rape in the [2007 post-election violence](#) in Kenya reported similar experiences. “Only President Obama can determine his presidential legacy on gender equality,” said Sippel. “It's on him.”

About CHANGE: CHANGE is a Washington, D.C.-based women's rights organization that promotes sexual and reproductive rights as a means to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls by shaping public discourse, elevating women's voices, and influencing the U.S. government. CHANGE works across global health issues including family planning, maternal health and rights, HIV prevention and treatment, gender-based violence, and access to abortion.

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