



## **WAS Statement about human rights and accessing abortion services in the United States of America**

On Friday June 24, 2022, the US Supreme court overruled the 50-year-old precedent of Roe v. Wade, which provided the constitutional right to abortion. As a result, many states will immediately enact bans or restrictions on access to abortion or are expected to pass laws limiting access in the very near future. Some of these bans will not include exceptions for instances of rape, incest, or the life of the pregnant person. This will result in significant burden on women and all persons who can get pregnant who reside in these states with bans or restrictions; it will also stretch the capacity of services offered in the states that maintain a commitment to providing accessible reproductive health care. Women and families with fewer economic resources and from underserved and marginalized groups will be particularly impacted by these laws.

Already, the US has significantly higher rates of pregnancy-related mortality and morbidity compared to other developed nations. There are significant racial inequities such that Black/African American women are three to four times more likely to experience pregnancy-related death than white women. We do not have data on the rates of pregnancy-related mortality for sexual and gender minorities, but we do know they are more likely to experience negative infant outcomes, including miscarriage and stillbirth. Restrictions on abortion access are expected to exacerbate these disparities and lead to higher rates of maternal and infant mortality. Additionally, access to pregnancy prevention including condoms and contraception and comprehensive sexual health education is limited in many places in the US.

Access to reproductive healthcare enables people to exercise their human right to sexual health and pleasure. Without access to reproductive health care, such as abortions, marginalized groups are not afforded equitable reproductive or sexual rights.



The US has often been considered a world leader in the advancement of human rights. The overruling of Roe v. Wade is a step backward and could have ramifications for the recognition of the rights of access to safe and effective reproductive health care and sexual health around the world. This could empower countries that already limit the rights of women and sexual and gender minorities to continue to do so.

Based on the Sexual rights declaration (2014) which states,

- The right to equality and non-discrimination (declaration point 1)
- The right to autonomy and bodily integrity (declaration point 3)
- The right to be free from torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment (declaration point 4)
- The right to privacy (declaration point 6)
- The right to the highest attainable standard of health, including sexual health, with the possibility of pleasurable, satisfying, and safe sexual experiences (declaration point 7)
- The right to information (declaration point 9)

The World Association for Sexual Health reaffirms that people's access to safe abortion services and the creation of a supportive legal environment for accessing safe abortion services is a matter of sexual and human rights. We recognize and acknowledge the inherent freedom, dignity, equity, and non-discrimination of all human beings and are committed to protection from harm.

WAS is an international organization that promotes and advocates for sexual health and sexual rights throughout the lifespan and across the world by advancing sexuality research, comprehensive sexuality education, and clinical care and services for everyone.

June 25th, 2022