

El Salvador frees woman jailed for murder after a miscarriage



Elsy poses for a picture after being released from jail in San Salvador, El Salvador, on February 9, 2022 [Agrupacion Ciudadana por la Despenalizacion del Aborto/Handout via Reuters]

San Salvador, February 11 (RHC)-- Authorities in El Salvador have freed a woman who had been jailed on charges of killing her baby after suffering a miscarriage, according to a local rights group. The 38-year-old woman was freed on Wednesday. She had already served 10 years of her 30-year sentence.

The Citizen Group for the Decriminalization of Abortion in El Salvador said the woman, Elsy, was arrested in June 2011 after reporting an "obstetric emergency." She was then accused of aborting her pregnancy

and charged with aggravated homicide.

In El Salvador, abortion under any circumstances is outlawed, including in cases of rape and incest and even when the woman's health is in danger. The Citizen Group released a photo that it said depicted Elsy after her release from jail and said her original court case was full of irregularities and without a presumption of innocence.

"We celebrate Elsy's release after 10 years," said the group's president, Morena Herrera. "Her erroneous 30-year sentence for aggravated homicide is over. We must continue to fight tirelessly to free those who remain deprived of liberty." Elsy is among 17 women whose freedom the rights group is trying to win.

Last December, as part of a campaign called "Free the 17", celebrities including America Ferrera, Milla Jovovich and Kathryn Hahn called on Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele to free the women. Since the launch of the campaign, five of those women have been freed. That figure now includes Elsy.

The Citizen Group said Elsy's jailing separated her from her son, who only had her. Now, more than 10 years later, "she will be able to reunite with him and her family", it added.

The Inter-American Court of Human Rights has also condemned El Salvador's strict anti-abortion laws. In November, the court ordered the Central American country to reform its abortion laws following the death of a woman who was sent to prison for breaching those laws.

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