

# *Peruvian Congress Forces Rape Victims to Have Babies*

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Lima, May 28 (teleSUR-rhc)-- The Peruvian Congress rejected a bill on Tuesday, which proposed decriminalizing abortion for pregnancies resulting from rape.

"It has been decided to shelve this bill, which was proposed by civil society groups that aimed to decriminalize abortion, based on criteria proposed by the Congress committee that the basis of the right to life is from the moment of conception," said conservative Congressman Juan Carlos Eguren.

Some 64,200 signatures had been collected by local women's rights groups in 2014 so the bill would be debated in Congress.

The debate occurred while pro-choice and anti-abortion activists were demonstrating outside of Congress in Lima. Pro-choice groups have argued that rape victims' nightmares were made even worse with the law prohibiting public health services from providing the morning after pill.

The law instead created an unequal situation where only the wealthiest could afford or have access to the pill from private providers, they claimed. Moreover, illegal abortions are often carried out in unhygienic conditions and represent one of the main causes of maternal death worldwide – 12 percent in Latin America in 2008, according to the World Health Organization estimate. However, conservative lawmakers, along with the Catholic Church, which has a strong influence on Peruvian society, argue a

fetus should be protected at all costs.

Just over half of Peruvians (52 percent) were in favor of the bill, a recent survey by Ipsos Apoyo in Lima revealed, while 67 percent approved it when the mother's life is in danger. The latter is the only case of abortion allowed in Peruvian law, called “therapeutic abortion.”

Women who attempt illegal abortions risk up to two years in prison in Peru; if she was a rape victim, she “only” faces three months.

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