



## **Committee of Experts celebrates the release of Imelda Cortez in El Salvador**

The Committee of Experts of the Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention (MESECVI) welcomes the acquittal of Imelda Cortez by the Sentencing Court of Usulután of El Salvador. Imelda Cortez has been in prison since April 2017 on aggravated attempted murder as a result of an obstetric emergency.

The decision to acquit represents a significant step forward in women's human rights particularly by the State of El Salvador which has signed and ratified the Belém do Pará Convention. Still, one must remember that even though Imelda was a victim of sexual violence by her stepfather since she was 12 years old, she has not received any support, reparation or access to justice. Clearly, additional measures are needed to guarantee Imelda and all women and girls the right to live free of violence.

This Committee reiterates its concern about the vulnerability of women and girls suffering from obstetric complications in El Salvador, who continue to face criminal charges from the government, institutional and obstetric violence from health services, and lack of access to justice. The Committee through the Third Hemispheric Report on Prevention, has called on the States Party to adopt public policies aimed at preventing and eradicating conduct and/or cultural or discriminatory practices based on the subordination or inferiority of women and girls, taking into account other dimensions of discrimination and the diversity of the victims.

For these reasons, the Committee urges the State of El Salvador to take all necessary measures to prevent this type of persecution. In short, justice must be served for Imelda and all women and girls who are victims of sexual violence. Similarly, the State is urged to protect, assist and release from prison all women and girls currently serving time due to obstetric complications or in similar situations, applying international women's human rights standards, especially those emanating from the Belém do Pará Convention.

*The Committee of Experts is the technical body of the MESECVI responsible for the analysis and evaluation of the implementation process of the Belém do Pará Convention. It is composed of independent experts, appointed by each of the States Party among its nationals, who exercise their functions in a personal capacity*