



United States of America: Violation of Women's Rights to Bodily Autonomy and Dignity

To: The United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)

Subject: Complaint Regarding Discrimination and Violation of the Rights of Women in the United States: Denial of Bodily Autonomy and Protection from Degrading Treatment

Submitted by: [Women's Platform for Action International](https://www.womensplatformforaction.org/)

1. Introduction

The Women's Platform for Action International respectfully submits this complaint to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) regarding ongoing and systematic violations of women's human rights in the United States, particularly regarding the denial of bodily autonomy, medical coercion, and discrimination based on sex.

A recent and deeply disturbing case involves a woman in the US state of Georgia, Adriana Smith¹, declared brain-dead, whose body was kept artificially alive against her own prior expressed wishes and those of her family, solely to ensure the continuation of the pregnancy. The decision was made under state laws that subordinate women's rights to fetal rights, even in medically and ethically grave circumstances.

2. Violation of Women's Rights to Bodily Autonomy and Dignity

The 1973 *Roe v. Wade*² ruling recognised abortion access as a constitutional right grounded in privacy and liberty. However, in June 2022, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*³, eliminating federal abortion protections and allowing individual states to severely restrict or ban abortion.

Since the *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* decision, numerous U.S. States have enacted laws that forcibly limit women's ability to access life-saving care, bodily autonomy, and reproductive choices. These laws have led to egregious cases of coercive medical interventions, reproductive surveillance, and preventable deaths, particularly affecting marginalized women.

Recent cases of denial of bodily autonomy and violence against women and girls, include:

- **Adriana Smith (2025):** Adriana Smith, a 30-year-old nurse, was declared brain-dead while nine weeks pregnant. Georgia's "heartbeat" abortion ban compelled doctors to keep her body on life support for over 90 days to sustain the pregnancy, regardless of her or her family's wishes. Following an emergency C-section, Adriana was removed from life support on 17 June.

¹ <https://abcnews.go.com/Health/pregnant-brain-dead-woman-georgia-life-support-experts/story?id=122963319>

² <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/410/113/>

³ https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/21pdf/19-1392_6j37.pdf



- **13-Year-Old Rape Survivor Denied Abortion (2024)⁴:** A 13-year-old girl, victim of rape, was prohibited from obtaining an abortion under Mississippi's six-week abortion ban, even though she did not realize she was pregnant until after the legal cutoff. Medical providers and her support network were threatened with criminal penalties for assisting or facilitating an abortion. The denial of case compounded her trauma and stripped her agency as a minor survivor of rape.
- **Domestic Violence Victims Trapped by Abortion Bans (2025-2025):** Statistics⁵ indicate an increase up to 7-10% in intimate partner violence in jurisdictions that enacted strict abortion laws. Survivors of domestic abuse are increasingly coerced into pregnancy, as abortion is legally inaccessible, and some victims have been killed when attempting to escape abusive environments.

These cases indicate the United States of America's violation of the following international legal obligations:

- **Right to Life and Security of Person:** State laws that prevent life-saving medical intervention for pregnant women, even in cases of rape, incest, or medical emergency, compromise the right to life. The case of Adriana Smith, kept on life support without consent, and the 13-year-old rape survivor forced to carry a pregnancy, exemplify systemic disregard for the life and health of women and girls. This is in violation of the obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).
- **Freedom from Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment:** Survivors are subjected to forced pregnancies, medical coercion, and psychological trauma under hostile legal frameworks. Refusing abortion access to minors and abuse victims constitutes cruel treatment. Moreover, criminalising doctors and caregivers for offering compassionate care furthers this violation (ICCPR, Article 7).
- **Right to Privacy and Bodily Autonomy:** State bans include directly into private medical decisions. In cases like Adriana Smith's, the state superseded family and personal wishes in end-of-life decisions. For rape survivors, laws that prevent abortion violate deeply personal bodily rights. Such intrusions contravene the right to privacy and autonomy over one's reproductive choices.
- **Right to Equality and Non-Discrimination:** Abortion restrictions are applied to women and these laws reflect structural discrimination by failing to provide equal legal protection to women under U.S. law, in violation with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Article 26).
- **Right to an Effective Remedy:** Victims of coercive or denied medical care have no federal recourse, as protections vary drastically by state. Survivors of rape, domestic violence, or medical neglect are often left without meaningful legal remedies. This

⁴ <https://abcnews.go.com/US/13-year-rape-victim-baby-amid-confusion-states/story?id=108351812>

⁵ <https://harvardpublichealth.org/reproductive-health/how-abortion-bans-trap-victims/>



denial of redress violates the right to justice and undermines accountability for rights violation, as per ICCPR Article 2(3).

These systematic failures demonstrate how U.S. federal and state governments are enabling and enforcing a legal framework that subjugates women's rights to ideological objectives. The result is widespread reproductive coercion, denial of healthcare, and institutionalised violence against women and girls.

3. Our Call to Action

We respectfully request that the Commission on the Status of Women:

- Condemns U.S. State Law that override women's medical autonomy and family consent in cases like Adriana Smith.
- Urge the U.S. Federal Government to establish consistent reproductive rights protections across states in line with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.
- Call for emergency legal pathways for rape survivors, minors, and brain-dead women to avoid being subjected to forced pregnancy or coercion.
- Recommend the U.S. to ensure access to independent medical decision-making without fear of criminalisation for patients or providers.
- Call for an inquiry into the rise in domestic violence-related femicide in states with strict abortion bans.
- Call upon the United States to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) as a necessary step to demonstrate its international commitment to the rights of women and girls.
- Recognise that without ratification, the United States remains outside the global normative framework protecting women's human rights, and this limits its accountability for violence against women violations.

These cases reflect not isolated failures, but a systemic erosion of women's basic rights under international law. Women are treated as reproductive vessels, with state laws violating their dignity, autonomy, and equality under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

We thank the Commission for considering this submission.

Susannah Sjöberg
Secretary General