



Federative Republic of Brazil
Chamber of Deputies
PSOL Leadership

Brasília, October 06, 2021

Letter number **XX**/2020

Re.: Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro's vetoes against free sanitary pads for vulnerable girls and women (Bill 4.968/2019)

To: **Ms. Michelle Bachelet Jeria**,
United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
urgent-action@ohchr.org

Ms. Ms. Reem Alsalem
UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences
vaw@ohchr.org

Ms. Tlaleng Mofokeng
UN Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health
ohchr-srhealth@un.org

Dear Ms. Jeria, Ms. Alsalem and Ms. Mofokeng,

As we have reported in previous communication (Ref. Letter 04/2020), Mr. Jair Bolsonaro has been dismantling policies for women in Brazil. Today he carried out a new attack, vetoing provisions of Bill 4.968/2019 which would provide access to free sanitary pads for low-income students enrolled in public schools; homeless women or women in situation of extreme social vulnerability; and to women within penal system units or those compiling socio-educational measures.

Bolsonaro's vetoes are inhuman. Lack of sanitary pads lead girls to miss classes and resort to precarious and unhealthy alternatives, which includes the use of cardboard, plastic bags and even bread pieces. According to UNICEF and UNFPA's report "Menstrual Poverty in Brazil: Inequality and Rights Violations", 713,000 girls live without access to a bathroom or shower at home and more than 4 million don't have access to minimum items of menstrual care in schools in the country.

Bill 4.968/2020 was approved by Brazil's Chamber of Deputies on August 26, by the Brazilian Senate on September 16, and then sent to presidential sanction. Mr. Bolsonaro vetoed the provisions that would allow free access to sanitary pads for those in deep need and denied that those hygiene items could be distributed within public food baskets offered by the the National System for Food and Nutritional Security. The president argues the bill



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doesn't present "sources of defrayal", which isn't true: it clearly states that costs will be covered by the Unified Public Health System (SUS, in Portuguese), the National Penitentiary Fund, and the Ministry of Education budget.

There is no doubt that Mr. Bolsonaro's government has been failing in protecting women from violence and discrimination. However, even by the lowest standards, it is outrageous that the president actively acts to prevent low-income girls and vulnerable women from accessing basic menstrual health. The president insults the Legislative power and disrespects the dignity of millions of women and girls in Brazil.

Besides violating Brazilian Constitution and laws, Bolsonaro's vetoes contradict international commitments, such as those expressed by the CEDAW, the Belém do Pará Convention, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the American Convention on Human Rights, and others. The vetoes also put the country even further away from achieving UN Sustainable Goals, remarkably SGD 3.

In view of the foregoing, we urgently request the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the UN Special Rapporteurs on violence against women, its causes and consequences and on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health:

- to issue a public statement emphasizing the need for these vetoes to be overturned in order to assure the respect and promotion girls and women's basic human rights;
- to request from the Brazilian Permanent Mission to the UN in Geneva explanations for the violations described herein;
- to publicize the relevant exchange of letter in the OHCHR report on communications;
- to remain seized of the matter.