

THE PROTECTION TO WOMEN'S FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS VIOLATED BY THE ZIKA VIRUS EPIDEMIC

The article by Teixeira et al.¹ assumes a heroic tone describing the Brazilian response to the public health consequences of the Zika epidemic.

As the article demonstrates, the epidemic is concentrated among poor women from northeast Brazil, for whom there is no comprehensive sexual and reproductive health care available. Long-term contraceptive methods, which are culturally accepted by these women, are not offered by the public health system. Additionally, termination of pregnancy is illegal, and there is no novelty in the Brazilian social protection to include women and children affected by the epidemic.

I am leading a group who will demand that the Brazilian Supreme Court protect women's fundamental rights violated by the epidemic. The right to terminate a pregnancy will be included in our demands, but the ethical reasons for our petition are largely different from the authors' arguments: women have the right to decide to be freed of psychological torture imposed by the

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epidemic. It is not the fetus's future impairments or the "extreme negative consequences for the families affected" that moves our demand, but the urgency to protect women's rights in the epidemic. *AJPH*

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TEIXEIRA AND RODRIGUES RESPOND

We are grateful for this opportunity to reply to the letter by Diniz whose work in defense of women's rights is greatly admired. We would like to thank her for using our article to give context to the very important discussion of legalization of termination of pregnancy in Brazil, and for expanding it to include reproductive rights and social protection to women and children.

Our article was written very early in the epidemic, and although we had limited space, we felt it was important to raise the issue of reproductive choice. We note that in countries where terminations are legal (e.g., French Polynesia, United States, and Slovenia), more affected women choose to terminate.

We would like to support the application by the group that is led by Diniz to the Brazilian Supreme Court based on the human rights argument, demanding the right of a woman to be freed of the psychological

torture imposed by the epidemic. We hope the application will be successful. *AJPH*

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