

Lisbon, 7 May 1979



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Dear Sisters:

We are calling your attention to the following issue:

Maria Antónia Paula, a woman journalist, has been accused of "moral offenses" and of "encouraging crime" because she was responsible for a film that was on television in 1976, which talked about abortion and the aspiration (Karman) method.

She was responsible for a television program (Mulher) about women that has been forbidden ever since.

The law that forbids the abortion and penalizes it with two to eight years in prison is almost a century old, and although many laws concerning women have been changed lately, since we have a new Constitution, this law still remains.

There has been some pressure to change the law from different women's groups, and a petition has been presented to the Assembly of Republic (our Parliament). In spite of this, the Assembly hasn't discussed the law yet.

There are about 180,000 abortions every year in Portugal and 2,000 women are estimated to die because of the bad conditions in which they have to perform the abortions. Maria Antonia's film talked about it and showed a women's group that performed abortions by the Karman method.

The trial will start on the 16th of May, and we want you to make it so that the law itself should be on trial, and not Maria Antonia. We ask for your support, that can be given in two different ways:

1. Try to make this news reach the press and make it as well-known as possible through the different media
2. Send protest letters or telegrams to the President of the Assembleia da República (address: Exmo Senhor, Presidente da Assembleia da República, Assembleia da República, Lisboa, Portugal; send copies to: Maria Antónia Paula, Rua da Vinha 51-2^o, Lisboa, Portugal.)

For further information write to: Editora das Mulheres, Av. Sidónio Pais, 28-5^o Dt^o, 100 Lisboa, Portugal.

Thank you for your support.

Madalena Barbosa (Editora das Mulheres)

P.S. We think it would be appropriate if you call the attention of the President of the Assembly of Republic to the fact that the law itself is criminal, since it is the cause of many deaths and that the program was defending women's right to health, abortion, and contraception.