



**Heilbrunn Department of  
Population and Family Health**

To the Editors:

As 'Humanitarian Aid for Rape Victims' (Editorial, Sept 8 2011) describes, lifesaving care for women who have been raped in war should not be withheld because of US politics.

Our experience working in countries in conflict ([www.raiseinitiative.org](http://www.raiseinitiative.org)) shows clearly that rape is common, that women pregnant from rape are neglected – and that the improvements that have been made in other health areas could be extended to serve these women if US policy were clarified. Women in the developing world run an astounding 1 in 120 chance of dying in pregnancy during their lifetimes (American women's chance is 1 in 2,100), and the likelihood increases in conflict where safe delivery care is extremely weak. Providing safe abortion information, education and services to women who become pregnant through rape in war is a public health and humanitarian imperative.

We endorse the call to lift the restrictive policy as it applies to rape survivors. These women deserve the health care and the humanity that war has torn from them.

Sincerely,

Therese McGinn, DrPH

*The author is an Associate Professor at Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health and directed the RAISE Initiative, a global program to improve women's health in countries in crisis.*

60 Haven Avenue, B3 New York, New York 10032

TEL 212 304 5200 • FAX 212 305 7024 • [www.mailman.hs.columbia.edu/popfam](http://www.mailman.hs.columbia.edu/popfam)