

Timeline of the Women's Link Worldwide fight for abortion rights in Colombia

As part of the Causa Justa Movement

November 2021

Colombia's Constitutional Court is expected to rule on the Causa Justa lawsuit seeking to remove abortion from the criminal code. Along with other organizations, Women's Link Worldwide wrote the legal action.

2020

In response to two 2019 legal actions seeking to reinstate Colombia's total ban on all abortions, one of the nine judges examining the case presented a proposal to consider legalizing all abortions in the first 16 weeks of pregnancy.

Although the Court declined deciding this issue, it demonstrated the tribunal's willingness to consider advancing and expanding abortion rights. This signaled an opportunity for the Causa Justa to pursue legal action before the Constitutional Court.

2019

Anti-abortion attorney Natalia Bernal [filed two legal actions in the Constitutional Court](#) seeking to criminalize abortion in all cases — a move that ultimately backfired, opening the door to file the Causa Justa lawsuit.

Women's Link Worldwide's work to expand access to abortion in Colombia

Since 2020 (ongoing)

Women's Link Worldwide is [litigating cases before the local tribunals in Norte de Santander](#), the Colombian-Venezuelan border region where the most vulnerable women and girls, including large populations of displaced Venezuelan migrants, face significant barriers to accessing sexual and reproductive health care as well as a lack of access to services for victims of sexual violence. This dire lack of access, the cases argue, violates the basic human rights of women and girls in the region.

2015

Women's Link Worldwide filed a lawsuit before the Constitutional Court, along with four other women's and human rights organizations, to [guarantee sexual violence victims' access to abortion](#) in public facilities.

The court ruled in Women's Link's favor, making it [mandatory](#) for public and private health institutions to provide sexual violence victims the opportunity to access abortion care.

2012

The Colombia Constitutional Court [ruled in Women's Link's favor](#) in its efforts to combat misinformation spread by public officials. The Court ordered former General Attorney and current Permanent Representative of Colombia to the Organization of American States, Alejandro Ordóñez, to retract and rectify false statements previously made about the right to abortion and contraception in Colombia.

2011

Women's Link led a creative legal and communications strategy asking former General Attorney and current Permanent Representative of Colombia to the Organization of American States, Alejandro Ordóñez, to stop spreading disinformation around the right to abortion and contraceptives in Colombia.

The strategy was innovative because it focused on the right to information and the responsibility of a public servant to speak the truth to protect girls' and women's sexual and reproductive rights.

Women's Link rallied 1,200 women from all over the country to sign a tutela (a special legal mechanism in Colombia to protect fundamental rights).

2006

In a [decision](#) that changed Colombian girls' and women's lives, the Court overturned Colombia's total ban on abortion. As a result, the procedure is allowed in three cases: Rape or incest, fetal nonviability and threat to a woman's life or health .

For many reasons, the decision was historical. Led by Women's Link Worldwide, it was the first time that access to abortion in Colombia was fought in court and not through the congress. Second, the decision positioned Colombia as one of the most advanced countries in Latin America in sexual and reproductive health and brought the discussions around the need to decriminalize abortion and protect women's lives to the whole region.

2005

Women's Link Worldwide led and filed a lawsuit requesting Colombia's Constitutional Court to declare unconstitutional the law that criminalized abortion under any circumstances. The legal action was supported by Colombian women's organizations which historically have worked in women's rights and sexual and reproductive rights.

Regional landmarks and inspiring decisions for Causa Justa Movement and Women's Link Worldwide's work

September 2021

México's Supreme Court decriminalized abortion on the basis that it was unconstitutional. This mirrors the growing trend across Latin America to reduce the use of criminal law to regulate abortion.

December 2020:

Argentina legalized abortion in the first 14 weeks of pregnancy (however it remains in the Criminal Code).