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AMERICA/NICARAGUA - Alarm for the phenomenon of forced pregnancies of young girls and adolescents

Managua (Agenzia Fides) - The phenomenon of Nicaraguan girls who get pregnant at a very young age is becoming increasingly alarming. In the country, one of the poorest in Latin America, home to 5.8 million people, in the past 10 years, the public health service has registered 1.3 million births, of which 367,095 due to teenage pregnancies, including 172,535 girls under 14 years of age. According to these data, girls and minors account for 27% of all births registered in public health centers, and 47% of these young girls are between 10 and 14 years of age. In 2000, the "teenage mothers" were 31% of the total. Although the pregnancy rate among adolescents has decreased, it is still the highest in Latin America, besides being one of the highest in the world.
The phenomenon of pregnancies among minors in Nicaragua is part of the cycle of poverty, so many young mothers are getting pregnant before their biological maturity. They are underweight, suffer from chronic malnutrition and give birth to underweight and stunted babies. In addition, 47% of them fail to complete the cycle of primary schooling. According to statistics carried out by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2009, each year 16 million women give birth between 15 and 19 years of age, 11% of all pregnancies in the world. In a study of the local Quincho Barrilete organization, carried out in 2011 among adolescents in Managua, 60% reported being forced or induced to having sexual relations with relatives, classmates, neighbors or the parents themselves. The Penal Code of Nicaragua provides that sexual intercourse with children under the age of 14, even if consensual, is tantamount to rape and is punishable from 12 to 15 years in prison. According to the study Indignation: Statistics on Sexual Violence in Nicaragua 2011, about 40% of rape victims in the country do not have access to the judicial system. (AP) (Agenzia Fides 28/08/2012)

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