I wish to express my views on the abortion situation in Northern Ireland which I understand you will be investigating.

Firstly, an unborn child is a human being like you and me, and the aborting of such a human is murder and is against the law. Sections 58 and 59 of the Offences against the Person Act 1861 and Section 25 of the Criminal Justice Act (NI) 1945 together recognise that the unborn child, at each stage of development, is a human being and deserves protection under the law. These laws also protect the lives of mothers to be. Taking them away will result in the death of the unborn child and increase the risk of death of the mother, as no abortion is ever 100% safe for either child (obviously) and its mother.

Secondly, the maternal mortality rate in Northern Ireland is the lowest in the UK, and one of the lowest in the entire world. Northern Ireland is one of the safest places for women globally, and one of the safest places to have a baby because of these laws. A landmark published in the Journal of American Physicians and Surgeons in summer 2013 proved this. The evidence from the abortion regime in Britain over forty years has shown higher incidences of stillbirths, premature births, low birth-weight, cerebral palsy depression and suicide rates amongst post abortive as a consequence of abortion. No abortion is ever safe for women.

Thirdly, every person - born and pre-birth - deserves to be protected regardless of his or her race, gender, disability, circumstances of conception or predicted lifespan. A human life’s worth cannot be ranked based on the circumstances of conception. It is either a human being or it is not. If an unborn baby is not a human being - then no justification for abortion is necessary and it would be legalised up to birth worldwide and no debate would be needed. However, if an unborn baby is a human being, and science has proved it so, then no justification for abortion is adequate.

Fourthly, the hard cases. "Fatal Fetal Anomaly" is not a medical term. It does not exist and is highly offensive to families whose babies who have life-limiting conditions. A doctor cannot accurately predict a baby will survive for a minute, a day, a month, a year, a decade, or even a century. Babies with life-limiting conditions are just as worthy of protection, love and life as you and I.

Rape is a horrendous crime against women, and an abortion to ‘help’ means further physical, emotional and psychological trauma, pain and damage for a rape victim. Women who have been raped need emotional support and medical care. Abortion is more violence following a violent act. Killing a baby conceived in rape does not unrape a woman. We must punish the rapist – not by capital punishment, which is every bit as evil as abortion, but, in my view, by life imprisonment and chemical castration. Punish the rapist - not the innocent third party, the preborn baby.

Rebecca Kiessling, an American lawyer and pro-life campaigner, was conceived in rape. She says, "Did I deserve the death penalty for the crimes of my biological father?" She has also stated, "My crime was being conceived through rape. So next time you hear people talking about "exceptions" to abortion for rape, think of me. My name is Rebecca. I am that exception."
Valerie Gatto, Miss Pennsylvania 2014, was also conceived in rape. She says, "My Mom always told me I was her light. The way I look at it, from that moment of conception, I was the light associated with the darkness."

Between 85%-90% of women in the rape crisis centre in Dublin, who become pregnant, do not even seek or want an abortion. They need care, love and practical support. These very rare, difficult cases are also utilised by those who advocate abortion in order to change to on a much wider scale. Hard cases make bad laws. Every life deserves to be protected and women deserve holistic care and support. A person from conception - no exception!

Denise Mountenay, the Founder of Canada Silent No More and Together for Life Ministries, has direct experience with rape, teen pregnancy and abortion. Denise was raped when she was just 13 and she has had 3 abortions, which she deeply regrets, “Legal abortion is damaging women. Our mental health. Our reproductive health. As well as causing breast cancer.”

Fifthly, there is no human right to abortion. There is no treaty or convention anywhere acknowledging a supposed 'right' to abortion, yet the right to life of every person is widely recognised in international law including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the European Convention on Human Rights and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The right to life of all members of the human family, whether born or unborn, with or without a disability, irrespective of the crime committed against his or her mother, is enshrined in international human rights law.

Sixthly, the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW Committee) and other treaty monitoring bodies have directed governments to change their laws on abortion. Treaty monitoring bodies have no authority, either under the treaties that created them or under general international law, to interpret these treaties in ways that create new state obligations or that alter the substance of the treaties.

Thus, any such body that interprets a treaty to include a right to abortion acts beyond its authority and contrary to its mandate and thus states should not accept them as contributing to the formation of new customary international law.

Seventhly, as mentioned above, abortion hurts women and significantly increases the risk of mental health problems. Research, including the 2008 Fergusson Study, and the 2011 Coleman Study published in the British Journal of Psychiatry in 2011 shows that abortion carries an increased risk of mental health problems including anxiety, depression, alcohol and drug dependence, self-harm and suicidal behaviour.

Eighthly, your inquiry disregards the principles of democracy and the reality that Northern Ireland has rejected abortion many times as it is a devolved matter for Northern Ireland. For Westminster to overrule the democratic process and force their own abortion culture on Northern Ireland is utterly unacceptable. We are the most recent part of the UK to vote on abortion.

In April 2015, it was revealed that over 99% of the responses to the then Justice Minister David Ford MLA’s consultation of changing the law to allow abortion in cases of “lethal foetal abnormality and sexual crime” opposed any change in the law. 25,140 of the 25,320 responses to the consultation opposed any change in the law. Northern Ireland rejects not only abortion on demand, but abortion in every case and as recently as 2016, our devolved government voted against any change to our life-saving laws – laws that safeguard mothers and unborn babies and have ensured that at least 100,000 people are alive today. An
amendment to legalise the abortion of babies with life-limiting disabilities was defeated in Stormont in January 2016 by 59 votes to 40. The amendment to legalise the killing of babies conceived in rape or incest was defeated even more overwhelmingly, by 64 votes to 32.

Ninthly, there is no demand for abortion here in Northern Ireland. Huge support for our pro-life laws has been proven through the overwhelming response to many pro-life campaigns in recent years. In November 2016, 300,000 pro-life petitions were presented to the Stormont Parliament Buildings. These petitions, presented on behalf of the pro-life majority in Northern Ireland, served as a powerful reminder to the Northern Ireland Assembly that unborn children must continue to be protected by our laws.

Tenthly, in Northern Ireland, over 100,000 people including babies and their mothers are alive today because of our pro-life laws whereas in Great Britain there have been almost 9 million abortions – that’s one abortion every three minutes, 20 every hour and 600 every working day, with one in three pregnancies now ended by abortion. Britain now has abortion up to birth in the case of babies with disabilities (90 per cent of babies with Down’s syndrome are aborted, this figure is beaten by Iceland with a 100% extermination rate of unborn babies with Downs), and of unborn girls merely because of their gender. We do not want this culture of eugenics and gendercide in Northern Ireland.

Finally, Westminster’s attempts to push abortion onto Northern Ireland undermines the peace process here. The spirit of the Good Friday agreement was all about respecting devolution, and was founded on the principles of full respect for and equality of all rights, and of freedom from discrimination for all people in Northern Ireland. Our unborn children must never be discriminated against. Their most fundamental right – the right to life – must always be respected and upheld.

I urge you to reject abortion being introduced to Northern Ireland.

December 2018