I moved to Northern Ireland in 1996, and I know moving here saved my life, essentially.

I am a US citizen, but I feel I am an asylum seeker!

I was "cared for" in an orphanage from age 2 1/2 years until right before I turned 5. I have had various problems due to this background. I became pregnant age 15 and the father took me to have an abortion (probably about half my high school had had one). I said, "Can't I live in a little trailer somewhere maybe and you can come visit me and the baby?" But I was never able to say no to anyone in my life and he insisted on the abortion. So I had one. (I didn't tell anyone adult.)

Then when I was 17 I got pregnant again, right before I graduated high school, and I didn't know I was pregnant until I was over 3 months pregnant, and I am grateful for that, because I don't know what I might have done if it wasn't too late to have an abortion.

I had a little more maturity by that stage, and I decided to arrange to give the baby up for adoption. I had a friend who contacted an adoption agency and it was arranged that I would do this. So when the baby was 2 days old I gave him up for adoption. This was difficult, but I knew that due to my personal difficulties and due to the fact that America is not a place that cares for single mothers in terms of state assistance, I could not keep a child.

I managed to get a third level bachelor's degree after 6 years.

Over the years I have been diagnosed with various things, such as depression, generalised anxiety disorder, cyclothymic disorder, and never had any stability in personal relationships or jobs, and had a period of homelessness.

I moved here and became pregnant again shortly thereafter.

My first thought was (as usual) "Oh no! I have to have an abortion." Even though my fantasy since the age of 5 was to have a husband and child, I didn't believe that was possible for me. I checked and found that I would have to travel to England to have an abortion. I began to look around at what life here is like.

I gradually began to see that there was a safety net here for people, and that it might just be possible for me to continue the pregnancy....

Since I had my daughter I have gradually become more strong and stable. I have been working in the same public sector job for the past 8 years and have good friends and have been in group therapy the past year. My daughter is the love of my life. She is 21 and at university planning to become a primary school teacher. Since having her I have been able to develop other relationships - definitely still needs work - but she was the first stable attachment I have ever had, and that has led to more and better relationships - hope - a reason to live.

Please don't interfere with the entirely reasonable laws that this country has. Don't let ideology that believes that abortion is a human right drive the decision to interfere with these laws. We are all dealing from an ideology base, but my ideology says human beings should not "play God", and that there is no need for a permanent solution for a temporary problem. I believe that the Universal Declaration on Human Rights is a good framework. There is a right to life and a right to freedom from torture. Carrying a “fetus” for 9 months is not torture, any more than knowing that thousands are having abortions is torture. Both difficult to deal with, but it can be done. If Northern Ireland's
laws are incompatible with Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights—on respect for
private and family life—then not being allowed to kill one's elderly parents or school-age children is
also incompatible with Article 8. The only reason murder is still illegal is there is no demand for it's
legalisation as yet, therefore Article 8 is not being used to justify that as yet. You may say these are
extreme analogies, but look at where Belgium and Holland are.

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