I am writing as a woman living in Northern Ireland, as a mother of two girls and a grandmother of a precious baby girl. I have chosen to write to your committee as I am concerned that there could be an attempt or effort to change the law in Northern Ireland on abortion, despite it being a devolved matter, with the local Legislative Assembly having made its will on the issue known as recently as 2016.

At the outset, I wish to place on record that I am grateful that we live in a parliamentary democracy in which it is possible to make our views known to those charged with the responsibility of dealing with such issues. I note a quotation attributed to the CEDAW Vice-Chair suggesting that, “The situation in Northern Ireland constitutes violence against women that may amount to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.” As someone who has been opposed to abortion on a lifelong basis, I find the comments of Professor Halperin-Kaddari to be insensitive and ill-focussed, given the real challenges that women throughout the world face in terms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

The recommendation to adopt legislation to provide for expanded grounds to legalise abortion in at least three sets of circumstances gives me significant cause for concern, as the experience in Great Britain in 2016 was that 98% of abortions were carried out for social reasons. The obvious import being that what may be introduced as a minimal response, can so frequently be expanded and developed to make provision beyond what was initially intended.

It is somewhat disconcerting that the provision of abortion is classified as a human right. To my mind, it actually flies in the face of human rights – especially the right to life of the unborn, the most vulnerable in society. It is beyond my comprehension that a mother could countenance the taking of her own child’s life in the womb or that in some certain circumstances, the unborn child is punished for the sins of the father.

Thank you for your attention, it is my desire that the law in Northern Ireland will remain as it stands and that the lives and rights of the unborn will continue to be protected.

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