Executive Summary

Abortion law in Northern Ireland should be reformed. All women should have the choice of abortion in cases of fatal, foetal abnormality, rape and incest not just those who can afford to travel and pay for it. God is a pro-choice God, He gives choice, but with choice comes responsibility. The U.K. government should intervene by giving the people in Northern Ireland the opportunity to vote on this issue.

Introduction

I am a married working mother of two children and have never sought or required an abortion. I am making this submission for a few reasons.

Firstly I feel very strongly that women in certain situations should have the choice of an abortion. They should be able to access one in their own country and not have the stress, on top of what they are already experiencing, of travelling to another country.

Secondly there is a movement in Northern Ireland called Both Lives Matter, they are an anti-abortion movement even though they are called Both Lives Matter. I do not want their viewpoint to become the viewpoint of all Christians in Northern Ireland because they don't represent me.

1. My view on the Northern Ireland abortion law is that it is archaic and should be reformed. When the Republic of Ireland were voting on the 8th amendment I was shocked to discover that a woman in Northern Ireland could not have an abortion if she was raped or if she discovered that her baby had a fatal foetal abnormality. Obviously I knew that abortions were illegal but I had assumed that in these circumstances a woman could have an abortion. I think that women should have the choice of abortion in these circumstances.

2. As women have to travel across to the mainland to have abortion and then pay for them it is understandable that only more affluent women are able to access abortions and women from a lower class status cannot afford to have abortions so the choice becomes a "class" issue. If you can afford one you can have one, if you can't...you can't.

3. I am a Christian and as the committee are probably aware Northern Ireland is a "religious" country. The Both Lives Matter movement was co-founded by the Evangelical Alliance (EA) in Northern Ireland and although I have time for the EA I do not want the Both Lives Matter movement to represent all Christians in Northern Ireland because there are people who do not agree with their stance on abortion. Although they are called Both Lives Matter they only represent the unborn child, they are pro-birth rather than pro-life. They state that the abortion laws have saved 100,000 lives. Who are those people? What is the quality of those lives?

4. I believe that God is a pro-choice God. When he created man and woman he put them in the garden of Eden and gave them commandments and choice. "You are free to eat from any tree but don't eat from the tree of knowledge." With freedom and choice come responsibilities. People can choose but they have to take responsibility for their actions.

5. I attended a Both Lives Matter presentation and during the question time after a woman, from another country, became upset as she disclosed that she had been raped in her own country and had had an abortion. She made the point that if she had lived in Northern Ireland how awful it would have been for her because she would have either had to keep the baby or travel to England for an abortion. How do local people feel when they don't have the option to travel?

6. I think that under its international obligations the UK government should intervene however I understand that this could be seen as undermining the UK devolution settlement. I propose that
the UK government intervenes by giving the people of Northern Ireland the opportunity to vote on this issue, so it is addressed and the people can decide.

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