

Abortion Law in Northern Ireland Written Submission

RE: House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee Inquiry into Abortion Law in Northern Ireland

Introduction

1. Founded in 2008, the Christian Legal Centre is an organisation engaged in legal support and advocacy based in London. It is dedicated to issues fundamental to Christians within the United Kingdom and abroad, including the right to life from conception. This Inquiry into Abortion Law represents a wholly inappropriate incursion into the legislative sovereignty of Northern Ireland. Legislative competency over the issue of abortion is neither an accepted nor a reserved matter pursuant to Schedules 2 and 3 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.
2. The following submission will look primarily at the growing corpus of international law on the subject of human life and the protections it should be afforded prior to birth. To this end, three submissions will be made: (1) an emerging consensus is developing which recognises life as commencing from the moment of conception; (2) no competing right to abortion has ever been recognised in international law; and (3) intergovernmental institutions, without legal justification, have become increasingly aggressive in undermining state sovereignty over the issue of life and abortion.
3. The submission therefore concludes that Northern Ireland is in compliance with national and international legal obligations relating to the unborn child. Statements to the contrary from non-binding United Nations compliance committees, non-binding dicta from the Supreme Court, and efforts to undermine Northern Ireland's legislative sovereignty over abortion by this Committee amount to a malapropos form of political lobbying disrespectful of the people of Northern Ireland and their beliefs in particular and to the sanctity of life in general.

Right to Life in International Law

(i) The Law

3. No right exists under the law which is more foundational than the right to life. The right to life is a precondition for the enjoyment of all other rights. This fact is clearly recognised by the pre-eminence given to the right to life in international treaty law:

- i. European Convention of Human Rights art. 2.1: *“Everybody’s right to life shall be protected by law. No one shall be deprived of his life intentionally save the execution of a sentence of a court following his conviction of a crime for which the penalty is provided by law.”*¹
- ii. Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union art. 2.1: *“Everyone has the right to life.”*²
- iii. Universal Declaration of Human Rights art. 3: *“Everyone has the right to life.”*³
- iv. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights art. 6.1: *“Every human being has the inherent right to life. This right shall be protected by law. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his life.”*⁴
- v. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights art. 6.5: *“Sentence of death shall not be imposed for crimes committed by people below eighteen years of age and shall not be carried out on pregnant women.”*⁵
- vi. United Nations’ Convention on the Rights of the Child art. 6: *“Every child has the inherent right to life...State parties shall ensure...the survival and development of the child.”*⁶

¹ Council of Europe, *European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, as amended by Protocols Nos. 11 and 14*, 4 November 1950, ETS 5, art. 2.1.

² European Union, *Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union*, 26 October 2012, 2012/C 326/02, art. 2.1.

³ UN General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, 10 December 1948, 217 A (III), art. 3.

⁴ UN General Assembly, *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, 16 December 1966, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 999, p. 171, art. 6.1.

⁵ *Id.*, art. 6.5. The prohibition of capital punishment specifically against pregnant women in the ICCPR is a *de facto* recognition of the right to life of the unborn child and his separate and autonomous legal existence from their mother.

⁶ UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, 20 November 1989, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 1577, p. 3, art. 6(1) and (2). Art. 6 of the Convention must be read through the interpretive lens of the Convention’s preamble which explicitly recites the need of a child for: “special safeguard and care, including appropriate legal protection, **before** as well as after birth.” [emphasis added].

4. The legislative history of the European Convention of Human Rights indicates that its drafters modelled Article 2 from the right to life draft article of the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights, which at that time declared: “*Every human being from the moment of conception has the inherent right to life.*”⁷ The ICCPR also holds this right to be non-derogable.⁸
5. Through the *Doha Declaration*, the United Nations again reaffirmed the necessity of enforcing positive obligations by Member States to ensure adequate safeguards for unborn children before birth: “*We recognize the inherent dignity of the human person and note that the child, by reason of his physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care before as well as after birth...Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.*”⁹
6. In October 2011, the Grand Chamber of the Court of Justice of the European Union in the case of *Brüstle v. Greenpeace* ruled that in the context of patent law, life must be seen as beginning from the moment of conception.¹⁰ The importance of the *Brüstle* decision is two-fold. Fundamentally, it is the first intergovernmental court judgment stating that life must be protected from conception, even if the context is only within the sphere of patent law. This is vital because no other intergovernmental court has ruled otherwise. As such, *Brüstle* stands alone as the sole authoritative case on the issue of at what point life begins and the appropriate protections that arise from that deduction.
7. Second, the judgment helps inform how the European Community is to define human dignity within Article 1 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.¹¹ To this extent, we must also look to the Oviedo Convention on Human Rights and Bio-medicine.¹² Article 1 of the Oviedo Convention calls for the

⁷ See, e.g., Marc J. Bossuyt, *Guide to the “Travaux Préparatoires” of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1987, p. 121; UN Commission on Human Rights, 6th Session, E/CN.4/L.365, p.24.

⁸ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Articles 42(2) and (6).

⁹ Conference to Celebrate the Tenth Anniversary of the International Year of the Family, Doha, Qatar, Nov. 29-30, 2004, Report on the Doha International Conference for the Family, U.N. Doc. A/59/599 (Dec. 7, 2004), §15.2.

¹⁰ *Oliver Brüstle v. Greenpeace e.V.* [Grand Chamber], Case C-34/10, 18 October 2011, § 35.

¹¹ European Union, *Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union*, 26 October 2012, 2012/C 326/02. Article 1 states: “Human dignity is inviolable. It must be respected and protected.”

¹² Council of Europe, *Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Dignity of the Human Being with regard to the Application of Biology and Medicine: Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine*, 4 April 1997, ETS No. 164. [Hereafter “*Oviedo Convention*”].

protection of human dignity, and guarantees respect for each individuals' physical integrity within the context of biology and medicine.¹³

8. The *Brüstle* judgment was not drafted in a vacuum. Rather, the guidelines of the European Patent Office were amended several years prior, having identical protections in place to protect the unborn human embryo as well as prohibiting the commoditisation of components of the human body.¹⁴ The Oviedo Convention, in a similar vein, prohibits the commoditization of the human embryo and forbids the creation of embryos for research purposes.¹⁵
9. What we are therefore seeing in the development of law for the scientific and medical research community is an ever-increasing and robust protection of the unborn child from conception, and an extremely conservative definition of human dignity.
10. The case law of the European Court of Human Rights in areas dealing with procreation has likewise been conservative. In October 2011, the Grand Chamber took a complimentary position to that of the Luxembourg Court in *Brüstle*, in finding that Austria did not violate the Convention by prohibiting the use of sperm from a donor for in vitro fertilization and ova donation in general. Its reasoning, in part, was that the best interests of the unborn child were compelling enough to prohibit these two forms of artificial procreation.¹⁶

¹³ *Id.*, Article 1 reads: "Parties to this Convention shall protect the dignity and identity of all human beings and guarantee everyone, without discrimination, respect for their integrity and other rights and fundamental freedoms with regard to the application of biology and medicine. Each Party shall take in its internal law the necessary measures to give effect to the provisions of this Convention."

¹⁴ European Patent Office, *Guidelines for Examination in the European Patent Office*, 11 November 2015, Rule 28(c), which reads in relevant part: "A claim directed to a product, which at the filing date of the application could be exclusively obtained by a method which necessarily involved the destruction of human embryos from which the said product is derived is excluded from patentability under Rule 28(c), even if said method is not part of the claim (see G 2/06). The point in time at which such destruction takes place is irrelevant (T 2221/10)." The Guidelines are practice notes interpreting the *European Patent Convention*, 16th Edition, June 2016. Article 53(a) of the Convention states in relevant part: "inventions the commercial exploitation of which would be contrary to "*ordre public*" or morality; such exploitation shall not be deemed to be so contrary merely because it is prohibited by law or regulation in some or all of the Contracting States..."

¹⁵ *Oviedo Convention*, Art. 18, "1. Where the law allows research on embryos *in vitro*, it shall ensure adequate protection of the embryo. 2 The creation of human embryos for research purposes is prohibited." and Art. 21, "The human body and its parts shall not, as such, give rise to financial gain."

¹⁶ ECHR, *S.H. and Others v. Austria* [GC], application no. 57813/00, judgment of 3 November 2011, § 113-114.

11. When these decisions from two of the most authoritative courts in Europe are viewed together, we see a major paradigm shift in how we define human life and human dignity and the legal protections stemming therefrom.
12. The European Court of Human Rights' refusal to confer a right to abortion under the Convention is also significant. In *Vo v France*¹⁷, the Grand Chamber considered the issue of the applicability of *Article 2* to the unborn foetus in the absence of criminal penalties for accidentally ending the 'life' of the foetus. In paragraph 80 of the Court's decision, it held that Convention institutions, under certain circumstances, may require extending safeguards to the unborn child. The Grand Chamber thereafter importantly held that: "*the issue of when the right to life begins comes within the margin of appreciation which the Court generally considers that States should enjoy in this sphere.*"¹⁸ Furthermore, it continued: "*at the European level, the Court observes that there is no consensus on the nature and status of the embryo and/or foetus, although they are beginning to receive some protection in the light of scientific progress ... At best, it may be common ground between States that the embryo/foetus belongs to the human race. The potentiality of that being and its capacity to become a person require protection in the name of human dignity....*"¹⁹
13. Northern Ireland's robust protections for the unborn child are certainly not unique. The Centre for Reproductive Rights' own research states that 68 countries around the world either fully ban abortion, or have an exception only to save the mother's life. An additional 35 countries limit abortion only to cases where the protection of the mother's life and health are compromised.²⁰
14. In June 2009, the Slovak Republic passed amendments to its abortion laws creating requirements for mandatory counselling, a 3-day waiting period and mandatory consent requirements for minors.²¹

¹⁷ Appl. No. 53924/00; (2005) 40 EHRR 12

¹⁸ *Id.*, §82.

¹⁹ *Id.*, § 84.

²⁰ See http://reproductiverights.org/sites/crr.civicactions.net/files/pub_fac_abortionlaws2008.pdf.

²¹ Act No. 345/2009 Coll. of Laws Amending Act No. 576/2004 Coll. on Healthcare, Healthcare-related Services and Amending and Supplementing Certain Acts, as amended.

15. In 2010, the Dominican Republic enacted a new Constitution creating a total prohibition on abortion. Article 37 of the Constitution states: *“The right to life is inviolable from conception to death.”*²²
16. In 2011, Hungary enacted a new Constitution which provides the framework to ban abortion in its basic law. Article 2 of the Hungarian Constitution states: *“Human dignity shall be inviolable. Every human being shall have the right to life and human dignity; the life of the foetus shall be protected from the moment of conception.”*²³
17. Courts have historically protected life from conception. In striking down a law permitting abortion, the Polish Supreme Court used language applicable to the instant submission: *“There are no satisfactorily precise and proved criteria for such differentiation depending on the particular stage of human life. From conception, however, human life is a value constitutionally protected. It concerns the pre-natal stage as well.”*²⁴ The German Constitutional Court upheld the primacy of the right to life by declaring that *“human life even before birth is worthy of protection and which requires protection,”* and that *“every individual life enjoys the protection of the fundamental right [to life] but even more decisively that violations of the fundamental right with respect to (biological) life lead to the total annihilation of the basis of human existence.”*²⁵ Spain’s Constitutional Court correctly held that the life of the unborn child is a reality distinct from the mother from conception and therefore the one to be born must be considered a *“legal good”* worthy of Constitutional protection.²⁶

(ii) **Personhood**

18. Fundamentally, the unborn child is deserving of protection from conception because the fertilisation of the egg by the sperm is indeed the commencement of personhood. The first cell created at the moment of conception is known as a zygote. Further earlier

²² Dominican Republic 2010.

²³ Hungary 2011 (rev. 2013).

²⁴ Decision of the Constitutional court of the Polish Republic sp.zn. K 26/96, published in OTK ZU from year 1997, Nr 2, cmt. 19.

²⁵ BVerfGE 39, 1 (1975), § IA6, II 2.

²⁶ Spanish Abortion Case, Constitutional Court of Spain, Judgment of 11 April 1985.

development of the human person are the morula and blastocyst stages.²⁷ That initial zygote already contains human DNA and other human molecules unique to that human being.²⁸ Within the DNA of the zygote, that first human cell, is the complete and unique design of that individual including hereditary traits in childhood and adulthood such as eye and hair colour.²⁹ Conception is merely the first stage of human growth, beginning a complex sequence of events allowing that person's continued growth and development. Just as being a baby, then a toddler, early childhood, through adolescence and so forth are parts of human development; so too are the prenatal process' which lead to life are necessary and inherent part of personhood. The San Jose Articles rightly hold: "*Each human life is a continuum that begins at conception and advances in stages until death. Science gives different names to these stages, including zygote, blastocyst, embryo, foetus, infant, child, adolescent and adult. This does not change the scientific consensus that at all points of development each individual is a living member of the human species.*"³⁰

No Competing Right to Abortion in International Law

19. Advocates of abortion have created a false narrative that the termination of a pregnancy is a right. Internationally, this is not true. The European Court of Human Rights has itself stated unequivocally that there exists no right to abortion in the European Convention of Human Rights: "*Article 8 cannot, accordingly, be interpreted as conferring a right to abortion.*"³¹ Furthermore, no binding international treaty recognises either a human right to abortion specifically, nor a right to abortion generally. No United Nations or European treaty mentions abortion either explicitly, or by implication. Only a single regional treaty in Africa mentions abortion. The African Union Convention on the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, known as the "Maputo Protocol," at art. 14(2)(c) holds that "*States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to: . . . protect the reproductive rights of women by authorizing medical abortion in cases of sexual assault, rape, incest, and where the*

²⁷ Marjorie A. England, "What Is An Embryo?" in *Life Before Birth*, Marjorie A. England (London: Mosby-Wolfe, 1996).

²⁸ Keith L. Moore and T.V.N. Persaud, *The Developing Human: Clinically Oriented Embryology* (Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders Co., 1998): 77, 350.

²⁹ *Id.*

³⁰ San Jose Articles, Art. 2, *infra fn.* 46.

³¹ ECHR, *A., B., and C. v. Ireland [GC]*, application no. 25579/05, judgment of 16 December 2010, § 214.

continued pregnancy endangers the mental and physical health of the mother or the life of the mother or the foetus.” However more than half of the state parties that signed the Protocol have not ratified it, which brings its legitimacy into question. Furthermore, many of those states which signed the Protocol have full criminal bans on abortions in their nations.

20. In fact, international law has always strived to limit or eliminate abortion. In the mid-1990’s, which was arguably the zenith of the abortion lobby, efforts to create an international right to abortion failed both at the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo and at the Fourth World Conference on Women that took place the following year in Beijing. On this issue, the Cairo document states: *“Governments should take appropriate steps to help women avoid abortion, which in no case should be promoted as a method of family planning.”*³² The ICPD Programme of Action says that where abortion is legal, it should be safe.³³ However, two complimentary premises temper this. The first is that the call for safe abortions exist only where abortion is legal in a country. The underlying assumption is clear that member states are free to criminalise abortions and no right to abortion is meant to be inferred into the text of the document. Second, the document continues, and explicitly recognises, that the legislation of abortion belongs exclusively at the member state level.³⁴

21. As Piero Tozzi, referencing Mary Ann Glendon, has rightly analysed: *“rather than treating abortion as a “right” that should be cherished and protected, like freedom of speech or freedom of religion, the Cairo outcome document says that government should seek to “reduce the recourse to abortion,” “eliminate the need for abortion” and strive to help women “avoid repeat abortions.”* Presumably, if abortion were a “right” similar to freedom of speech, the drafters of the Cairo outcome document would not have called on governments to *“reduce”* and *“eliminate”* it.”³⁵ The Beijing concluding document echoes the language used in the Cairo Programme of

³² ICPD Programme of Action § 7.24.

³³ ICPD Programme of Action § 8.25.

³⁴ *Id.*

³⁵ Piero Tozzi, *International Law and the Right to Abortion*, Legal Studies Series, No. 1, International Law Group Organizations, 2010, p. 10. Quoting Mary Ann Glendon, *“What Happened at Beijing,”* First Things (Jan. 1996).

action, and reaffirms the sovereign right of states to legislate on protections it wishes to provide the unborn child.³⁶

22. The United Nations Charter itself states that: *“Nothing contained in the present Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state or shall require the Members to submit such matters to settlement under the present Charter.”*³⁷
23. It can be clearly seen therefore that European intergovernmental law, including its case-law, has been overwhelmingly in favour of recognising the personhood of the unborn child from conception; and no competing right to abortion has ever been developed in international law. The premise underlying this Inquiry, by focussing exclusively on the red herring of women’s rights, has failed to take into consideration the rights of the unborn child. Lest we forget, among the more than 9 million babies which have been aborted in the United Kingdom in the last 51 years have been millions of girls; some of whom have been aborted simply for being female or having a disability.

National Sovereignty and the Principal of Subsidiarity

(i) United Nations

24. In recent years, intergovernmental bodies, including most notoriously the United Nations and the European Court of Human Rights, have tried to create a right to abortion by stealth. This agenda based approach directly injures national sovereignty and does violence to genuine human rights dialogue.
25. Examples of U.N. compliance committees exceeding their remit by trying to bully nations into liberalising their abortion laws abound. For example, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, charged with implementing the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, has taken Chile to task for constitutionally protecting life from conception³⁸. In 2004 the Committee

³⁶ Beijing Platform § 106(k).

³⁷ U.N. Charter Article 2(7).

³⁸ Chile 1980, 19(1).

was so bold as to call for the decriminalisation of abortion in Chile.³⁹ Two years later the committee charged with monitoring the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women also called for the legalization of abortion in Chile.⁴⁰ The Human Rights Committee then, in 2007, labelled Chile's abortion laws as "unduly restrictive" and called for them to be liberalised.⁴¹

26. Similar fates have befallen many other nations including El Salvador⁴², Poland⁴³, Peru⁴⁴ and others. So strong has this artificially created pressure been, that the Colombian Supreme Court legalised abortion premised in part on the findings of treaty monitoring bodies.⁴⁵

27. In recognition of the existential threat posed both to national sovereignty and to the unborn child by United Nations treaty monitoring bodies, a group of experts drafted and adopted the San Jose Articles to clarify the international position on abortion and the right to life.⁴⁶ Importantly, the Articles make clear the lack of authority of so-called United Nations "expert groups" and monitoring bodies. Article 6 states: *"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 treaties."* Article 6 continues: *"Accordingly, any such body that interprets a treaty to include a right to abortion acts beyond its authority and contrary to its mandate. Such ultra vires acts do not create any legal obligations for states parties to the treaty, nor should state accept them as contributing to the formation of customary or international law."*

28. Article 7 of the San Jose Articles addresses the attempted redefinition of sexual and reproductive rights to include a right to abortion by stating: *"Assertions by international agencies or non-governmental actors that abortion is a human right*

³⁹ CESCR 33rd session; UN document E/C.12/1/Add.105; review on 18-19 & 26 November 2004 at § 53.

⁴⁰ CEDAW Committee Report (Chile), §§ 19-20 (2006).

⁴¹ HRC 89th session; UN document CCPR/C/CHL/CO/5; review on 14-15 & 26 March 2007 at § 8.

⁴² CESCR 37th session; UN document E/C.12/SLV/CO/2; review on 8-9 & 21 November 2006 at §§ 25 & 44.

⁴³ HRC 82nd session; UN doc. CCPR/CO/82/POL/Rev.1; review on 27-28 October & 4 November 2004 at § 8.

⁴⁴ Karen Noelia Llontoy Huamán v. Peru, Comm. No. 1153/2003, Oct. 24, 2005, U.N. document CCPR/C/85/D/1153/2003 (dated 22 November 2005).

⁴⁵ Tribunal Constitucional de Colombia, Sentencia C-355/2006.

⁴⁶ <http://www.sanjosearticles.com>

are false and should be rejected. There is no international legal obligation to provide access to abortion based on any ground, including but not limited to health, privacy or sexual autonomy, or non-discrimination.”

(ii) European Court of Human Rights

29. On four occasions, three times against Poland and once against Ireland, the European Court of Human Rights have found violations of the Convention with relation to failures to obtain abortions. It is important to note, as mentioned above, that the Court has stated unequivocally that no right to abortion exists in the Convention.⁴⁷ However, it has stated that where abortion has been adopted into a nation’s domestic laws, it thereafter has supervisory authority to ensure compliance with Convention norms.⁴⁸ In *Tysiack*, the Court overruled the expert advice of practitioners in ophthalmology, gynaecology and forensic medicine, as well as numerous other physicians, on the basis of the medical opinion of a single general practitioner to determine that Poland was in violation of the Convention for not providing the applicant, who suffered from myopia, an abortion.⁴⁹ In *R.R. v. Poland*, the Court found against the Polish government where an applicant claimed that she was not provided genetic testing in a timely manner, and therefore was unable to secure an abortion when she eventually discovered that her daughter would be born with Turner Syndrome.⁵⁰ In *P. and S. v. Poland*, the Court again found against Poland for allegedly not having in place a proper framework for a teenage girl who had been raped to receive an abortion.⁵¹ While the facts in these collective cases are indeed lamentable, the overreach of the Court into areas of national sovereignty cannot be ignored. On three occasions, in the timeframe of five years, the Court scrutinised Poland’s abortion laws in what can only be viewed as an attempt to liberalise them.

30. This agenda became far more clear in *A., B. and C. v. Ireland*⁵², where the Court found a violation of the Convention for an applicant when no evidence existed that the complainant had ever even tried to obtain an abortion in Ireland or even sought

⁴⁷ *Supra fn.* 31.

⁴⁸ ECHR, *Tysiack v. Poland*, application no. 5410/03, judgment of 20 March 2007, §§103, 113.

⁴⁹ *Id.*, §§ 9-31.

⁵⁰ ECHR, *R.R. v. Poland*, application no. 27617/04, judgment of 26 June 2011.

⁵¹ ECHR, *P. and S. v. Poland*, application no. 57375/08, judgment of 30 October 2012.

⁵² *Supra fn.* 31.

local medical advice. Furthermore, there was no exhaustion of domestic remedies despite the same Court holding, just two years prior, that Ireland's courts were expedient and robust enough to answer questions pertaining to abortion in a timely manner.⁵³ What is perhaps most startling about *A., B., and C.* is the European Court's creation of an imagined right to abortion in Ireland's domestic law despite there being no statutory exemptions allowing for abortions in the country, and a constitutional prohibition of abortion all together.⁵⁴ The end result of the Court's decision was the eventual adoption of a statutory exemption for abortion in Irish law to protect the life of the mother.⁵⁵ While it has become evident therefore, that since 2007, some judges at the Strasbourg Court have had an agenda to undermine national sovereignty in this area, what is important is that its jurisprudence that no right to abortion exists under the Convention remains intact. Northern Ireland, as such, continues to be within the Convention framework in affording the unborn child greater protections than do other jurisdictions in the United Kingdom.

(iii) Summary

31. In summation, United Nations agencies and treaty monitoring bodies have been trying to undermine the treaty process by redefining treaty language and obligations to include abortion. The European Court of Human Rights has also, on several occasions, infringed the national sovereignty of Poland and Ireland by attempting to liberalise their respective abortion laws. None of these incursions have any bearing on Northern Ireland's legislative right to protect pre-born life. The binding law, as opposed to soft law or court dicta, is clear that no right to abortion exists in law. This Inquiry therefore is looking at the fern seed of international law, and failing to see the elephant clearly embedded within it which clearly rejects that abortion is a right or legal obligation.

Conclusion

32. An international consensus is beginning to emerge regarding the unborn child and their protection from conception. More states are amending their basic law or

⁵³ ECHR, *D. v. Ireland*, application no. 26499/02, inadmissibility decision of 05 July 2006.

⁵⁴ Eighth Amendment of the Constitution Act, 1983.

⁵⁵ For a full discussion on *A., B., and C.* and its political impact, see: Carlo Casini, Marina Casini, and Roger Kiska, *The Irish Law on Abortion a Year after its Approval*, 4 Ave Maria Int'l L.J. 44 (2015).

constitutional law to reflect this consensus. Intergovernmental courts, led by the Court of Justice of the European Union, have become far bolder in defining the commencement of life from the fertilisation of the egg. No competing right to abortion can be found either in European or international law.

33. While immense merit exists in protecting life from conception without justification by secondary argumentation, a handful of international and domestic actors, and now this Committee, pose a serious existential threat to Northern Ireland's sovereignty over the issue of defining protections for the unborn child. On 07 June 2018, the Supreme Court issued a judgment whereby they dismissed a claim seeking to challenge Northern Ireland's abortion law for lack of standing. They nonetheless took the highly unusual step of issuing a 143-page non-binding opinion seeking to add political pressure on Northern Ireland to amend its legislation on abortion.⁵⁶ The judgment amounts to judicial activism of the worst kind. Similarly, for this Committee to issue a formal Inquiry into a matter with which the House of Commons has no legislative competency, is both bad form and political deception. It is a naked attempt to put moral pressure on Northern Ireland to change its law where the Committee otherwise has no mandate to do so. In memoriam of the 9 million children which have been aborted in this nation, we can and must do better than this form of political lobbying.

Respectfully submitted,

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⁵⁶ *Reference by the Court of Appeal in Northern Ireland pursuant to Paragraph 33 of Schedule 10 to the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (Abortion)*, [2018] UKSC 27.