

Abortion

By abortion we mean direct abortion, which is the deliberate termination of a human life.

Our Position

We are opposed to the deliberate ending of any innocent human life from the first moment of its existence, conception. It is scientifically established that from the moment of conception when a single-cell embryo is created, a new human being or organism exists. To terminate the life of this individual is fundamentally unjust and discriminatory. To deprive an entity of his/her life on the basis of qualities such as size or level of development is to contend that it is these qualities which give the entity the right to life. We take the position that every human being has an inherent right to life by virtue of being human: no-one has the right deliberately to bring about the death of an innocent human being.

We campaign for the repeal of the Abortion Act 1967, which allows abortion up to 24 weeks and up to birth where the unborn child is thought to be disabled.

We also support the “Alive and Kicking” campaign, which seeks to make abortion rare by a variety of measures www.aliveandkickingcampaign.org

The Morning After Pill is Abortive

The morning after pill is advertised as “non-abortive” because it does not terminate a pregnancy - or so it is claimed. The dispute lies in the definition of pregnancy, as opposed to the start of human life. Pregnancy is often defined as implantation (when an embryo implants in the mother’s uterus) whereas the beginning of human life is defined as conception (when sperm meets egg).

The term “pregnancy” is being exploited by abortion advocates. While the morning after pill will not terminate the life of an implanted embryo, it will terminate the life of an embryo who has not yet attached to the mother’s womb. It will prevent the embryo from implanting in the uterus, thus destroying a human life.

It is extremely misleading to advertise this pill as “non-abortive”, since it performs the same task as surgical abortion, namely the deliberate destruction of an unborn child. Women considering use of the morning after pill may be deceived by this misrepresentation. Unbeknownst to them, they could be active participants in the destruction of human life.

Eugenics and Disability

The eugenic practice of aborting babies with a disability is a particularly horrifying act of discrimination. What message are we sending to children and adults living with disability if we exterminate pre-born babies as “sub-standard”? And if this discriminatory practice

is indeed logical and ethical (as advocates of the practice contend), why do we recognise a right to life in born disabled people? Disability groups are rightly offended by the provision of abortion up to birth for disabled babies. Moreover, some procedures aimed at discovering disabilities carry a serious risk of causing a miscarriage.

What About Rape?

Abortion is often recommended in cases of rape. But abortion does not undo the rape; instead it compounds violence with violence. It is an indefensible response to a complex situation. Putting aside the injustice of an innocent child being killed for her father's crime, there is evidence that abortion only deepens the trauma of the rape victim as well as taking the innocent life of her child. A rape victim requires special emotional care regardless of whether or not she obtains an abortion. By recommending abortion as a quick and easy way to "lessen the impact", a disservice is done to raped women.

By promoting abortion specifically in the case of rape one implicitly argues that the means of conception determines the value of a human life. This line of reasoning fails to acknowledge that, biologically speaking, there is no difference between a human being conceived by a loving couple and a human being conceived by rape. Are we to deem born children conceived by rape as having no right to life?

It is also worth noting that statistically speaking, violent rape is extraordinarily unlikely to result in pregnancy; moreover, women tend to love their babies even if they hate the father. Rape cases make up a very small proportion of the hundreds of thousands of abortions every year in the U.K.

What About Backstreet Abortions?

At the time of the 1967 Abortion Act much play was made of the prevalence of backstreet abortions and the dangers they posed. In fact the legalisation of abortion had no significant impact on the maternal death rate. This applies to other countries in the developed world, regardless of when they made abortion easier (or even in four cases harder) to obtain. It was better medicine, particularly the use of antibiotics, that brought down the maternal death rate. In contrast, legalising abortion has certainly resulted in countless deaths of unborn children who would not otherwise have died. If direct abortion is the taking of an innocent human life, should we really respond by making it easier and safer to obtain?

With all the concern about backstreet abortions harming women, it is important to note that legal abortions are not as safe as many believe. Many women who have legal abortions have complications needing treatment in hospital, many more go to the doctor for physical or psychiatric help, and the increased risk of suicide after abortion compared with giving birth means that more, not fewer, women die.

What If the Life of the Mother is Threatened?

Very rarely, the baby's death is brought about indirectly, for example, as a side effect of medical treatment to save the life of the mother, such as removal of a cancerous womb, or a damaged fallopian tube in the case of ectopic pregnancy. This is very sad, but it is not an abortion. It is not the deliberate ending of a life. It has never been illegal, and no one is against it. In other, still rare, cases, doctors may be able to save mother and baby by letting the pregnancy continue until the baby can survive outside the womb.

Abortion Harms Women

Abortion is also harmful to women, many of whom suffer psychologically and sometimes physically as a result of their decision. We do not judge, blame or condemn women who have had an abortion. We understand the pressures, the lack of accurate information, support and time to think clearly, which may have led to a rushed and often bitterly regretted decision. Positive practical assistance is crucial in helping to prevent this painful outcome.

Pro-Women and Pro-Life

We are totally in favour of a woman's rights over her own body, including her right to give or refuse consent to sexual intercourse. We are against a woman's "right" to choose to abort her baby for the same reason that we are against a man's "right" to beat his wife, or anyone's "right" to keep a slave - namely, that this infringes the rights of another human being.

The Abortion Law in England and Wales

The Offences Against The Person Act 1861

In 1861 Parliament passed the Offences Against The Persons Act. The 1861 Act Section 58 made abortion a criminal offence, punishable by imprisonment from 3 years to life even when performed for medical reasons. No further legal changes occurred in England until 1929. The following two laws provide the exceptions to this 1861 Act.

The Infant Life Preservation Act 1929

In 1929 the Infant Life Preservation Act amended the law stating it would no longer be regarded as a felony if abortion was carried out in good faith for the sole purpose of preserving the life of the mother. The Act made it illegal to kill a child 'capable of being born live', and enshrined 28 weeks as the age at which a fetus must be presumed to be viable. Importantly the Act vested doctors with the power to decide when abortion is legal in certain cases when the life of the mother is threatened. (NB. It is a criminal offence to abort a viable fetus of whatever age.)

The Abortion Act 1967

The Abortion Act of 1967 came into effect on the 27 April 1968 and permits termination of pregnancy by a registered practitioner subject to certain conditions. Regulations under the Act mean that abortions must be performed by a registered medical practitioner in a National Health Service Hospital or in a Department of Health approved location. An abortion may be approved for the following reasons:

- A The continuance of the pregnancy would involve risk to the life of the pregnant woman greater than if the pregnancy were terminated.
 - B The termination is necessary to prevent grave permanent injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman.
 - C The continuance of the pregnancy would involve risk, greater than if the pregnancy were terminated, of injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman.
 - D The continuance of the pregnancy would involve risk, greater than if the pregnancy were terminated, of injury to the physical or mental health of any existing children of the family of the pregnant woman.
 - E There is a substantial risk that if the child were born it would suffer from physical or mental abnormalities as to be seriously handicapped, or in emergency, certified by the operating practitioners as immediately necessary
- Or in an emergency
- F To save the life of the pregnant woman; or
 - G To prevent grave permanent injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman.

In 1990, amendments to the 1967 Abortion Act came into force through the Human Fertilisation & Embryology Act.

Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990 (HFEA).

Section 37 of the HFEA later made changes to the 1967 Abortion Act in making the time limit of abortion 24 weeks under statutory grounds C and D. Statutory grounds A, B, E, F and G are without time limit which means that these abortions can be carried out up to the moment of birth.