

Forum:*Special Committee*

Issue: *The Questions of Protecting Women’s Rights to Abortion and the Use of Contraception*

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1. **Introduction**

All over the world, women’s rights are being disregarded and neglected by men and women alike. Basic rights such as equality in workplaces are developing slowly, but still could use some work. One of the most important women rights abuses is the lack of representation in terms of contraception (birth control) and abortion.

Abortion, as well as contraception are both highly significant rights that women have always deserved, this right protects their quality of life, yet it continues to be ignored. During debates, women are being regarded as simple containers for fetuses and not as humans themselves. Decisions are being taken on behalf of women and their voices aren't being taken into consideration when legislation for abortion and contraception. Abortion is an important factor in the debate of women's rights because abortion has a big impact on women's health. In the US Supreme Court case of Roe vs. Wade, Sarah Weddington said that, “a pregnancy to a woman is perhaps one of the most determinative aspects of her life.”

An unwanted pregnancy, which can be prevented through contraception, and terminated through abortion will disrupt a woman’s body, it will interrupt her education, it will put her employment and her potential career at high risk and it can disturb her entire family life." There are many reasons as to why a woman should have the right to decide what happens to her body, and by preventing women from their rights, they are being placed in danger. Their mental, physical, social, and emotional health is severely impacted by this issue. There must be framework placed to protect these rights, so that women can gain their justice.

1. **Definition of Key Terms**

Abortion:

Denotation: The process of terminating a human pregnancy, through means of removing the fetus from the body before it’s capable of independent survival. Abortions are usually done prior to the end of the first 28 weeks of pregnancy.

Connotation: Legalizing abortion will give women many more rights and will allow to live freely.

Contraception:

Denotation: Techniques and methods that are used mostly by women in order to prevent pregnancy as a result of sexual intercourse. Such techniques include hormonal pill, as well as sterilization (for both men and women).

Connotation: Women are denied the right to use contraception in order to prevent unwanted pregnancies.

Fetus:

Denotation: An undeveloped baby present in the woman’s womb.

Connotation: The rights of the unborn fetuses are being regarded before the rights of the women.

Legislation:

Denotation: The creation and enforcement of the law.

Connotation: The outcome of the legislation on abortion in the Alabama state was a complete on abortion, in exception to if the women’s life is at risk.

US Supreme Court:

Denotation: The highest federal court in the USA where all important legislations are put to place

Connotation: The famous Roe v. Wade case which was set in the US Supreme Court in 1973 decriminalized the act of abortion.

**Intended Pregnancy:**

Denotation: A pregnancy that has been planned or expected at the current time or any time in the near future, in which the woman decides to keep.

Connotation: The experience of intended pregnancies for a woman is very different from a pregnant woman who does not want children.

**Unintended Pregnancy:**

Denotation: A pregnancy that was not expected nor planned for anytime soon.

Connotation: A high percentage of women who fall in unintended pregnancies seek the option of abortion.

**Gestational Limit:**

Denotation: The limit set in regards to the progression of a fetus’s growth, which a women seeking abortion can no longer have one.

Connotation: In some social cases, gestational limits in Russia can go up to 22 weeks of pregnancy.

1. **General Overview – Background information**

**General Information:**

A considerable percentage of women that are trapped in unwanted pregnancies consider abortion as their choice. Whether the woman carrying is a teenager with an underdeveloped body or an adult woman, she should have all the rights that would support her decision, as adult women are at risk too throughout an unintended pregnancy. According to an NCBI demographic from 1993, adult women (aged 18-29 in specific) stand at a higher risk when in an unintended pregnancy than any other age group (around 70% risk), including teenage girls. When abortion is illegalized, women will instead seek physicians who are willing to help in exchange for bribes or money, or possibly even seek unsafe abortions performed by people with minimum to no training at all, or done by the woman herself. Such unsafe abortions put women’s lives on the line and pose many threats towards them.

Ever since the availability of proper health care facilities (which are only available when abortion is legal in the state/country), abortion-related deaths have dropped by 42%. Before considering abortions, most women seek contraceptive techniques and methods which help in prevention of an unintended pregnancy, in order to avoid going through abortions. However, contraception, including pills, devices, and surgical procedures (woman sterilization) are illegalized as well in many countries around the world. This simply puts women in situations where their chances of pregnancy are increased.

**Abortion Laws in Northern America:**

Abortion in Canada was completely illegal by 1969, however through major pro-choice movements throughout the 20th century in the country, Canada’s supreme court by 1988, abortion was completely legalized and its restrictive was taken down, as it was thought that it was unfair to women and unequal them. In 1990, a bill was passed which stated that a woman could only have access to an abortion if her physician found that her physical, mental, and psychological health was threatened. This bill was taken down later and defeated, and today abortion remains legal and accessible to any woman.

The topic of abortion has become a very discussed and highly controversial topic in regard to its laws in the US. Throughout the 20th century in the United States, (since 1900), abortion laws have been highly debated on whether this right can or cannot be practiced, up until the famous ‘Roe v. Wade’ case in the US Supreme Court of 1973, which decriminalized and permitted abortion laws across the nation, with different regulations in each state. Recently, multiple states across the country began restricting such rights, and limiting their freedom. Alabama passed a ‘near-total ban’ on May 2019. This constricting ban disallows abortion with no exceptions to rape nor incest whatsoever, and it is only possible if the woman’s is in threat. Other state, on the line for banning abortion include Missouri, as well as Kentucky. These conservative and outdates laws sparked major protests across the US. According to BBC, a new proposed legislation states that employers in the state of Missouri have the right to fire women (employees) and discriminate against them if they take contraception.

**Abortion Ban with no exceptions**

Restrictions on the right to abortion across the globe considerably differ across the globe. While some countries have so much control over women’s reproductive rights, to where abortion is completely prohibited or to save a woman’s a life, such as third world and undeveloped countries which include some African countries like Nigeria, Mali, Sudan, Somalia, Uganda and more, and Latin American countries, for instance Brazil, Chile, and Venezuela. The illegalization of abortion is present in many other regions too, like Philippines, Indonesia, and Iran in Asia, as well as Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, and UAE as arab countries (there are many more). What makes these laws even more restrictive are the legal consequences that women and physicians (which preform the abortion on the woman) face when caught in an illegal abortion. Some of the repercussions include very high jail time, especially for the physician.

**Access to Abortion to Preserve a Woman’s Health**

Although some countries are not completely open to Abortion, however they are not full close-minded towards it. Such nations have laws where a woman can seek abortion in order to preserve her overall health, meaning that her abortion does not necessarily have to save her life. Many countries from various regions, mostly second and third world countries, hold their abortion laws to an extent where the woman can have access to preserve her health. Such countries include Argentina, Algeria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Poland, Kenya, and even some first world countries like New Zealand, and South Korea. Despite the very partial open-mindedness, it is still believed that abortion is too restrictive even when it’s accessible to preserve health, as some women seek it preserve other aspects of their lives as well. Illegal and unsafe, abortions have been proven to highly threaten a woman’s life, and despite that women continue to terminate their pregnancies as they choose to practice their reproductive rights which are not given to them, unless in case like this, her health is at risk, which is definitely not enough. Such countries that care for the preservation of a women’s health usually legalize abortions as well if the woman had been raped, is pregnant as a result of sexual intercourse with a family member (incest), and in a few cases fetal deformation.

**Abortion to Preserve a Woman’s Mental and Psychological Health**

All nations that allow a woman to undergo an abortion in order to keep her mental health to a high extent, are the same ones that legalize abortion to preserve a woman’s health or if she was raped, if it incest, etc. These countries are regarded as countries that abortion fully accessible, however the key difference between such countries and between countries that have no restriction and require no justification as to why a woman wants an abortion, is that such countries actually do require proper acceptable reasons and fully reasonable justifications in order to allow women to access abortions. Despite, such major access to one of women’s most vital reproductive rights is a huge step for humanity and for the world, women should never be in a situation where they are explaining why they their terminating their pregnancies, as at the end, it is their privacy and their not anyone else’s.

**Full Access and Permission to Abortion Rights**

Finally, the most open-minded, and non-conservative ideology on woman’s rights, the right to have abortions without the need to justify why and without the need for any reason whatsoever. However, some countries, allow abortion to a specific number of weeks (as a way to indicate the fetus’s growth progression), also known as gestational limits. While some countries have gestational limits of only 8 weeks, some nations permit abortion for up to 22 weeks, such as the Russian Federation (for social reasons).

1. **Major Parties Involved and Their Views**

United States of America:

As previously mentioned, ever since the start of the 20th century (the year 1900), abortion laws have been constantly fought over and debated through the decades, and for over half the century there was unfortunately almost no progress whatsoever. However, by the year 1973, the famous and well-recognized Roe v. Wade case of the US Supreme Court completely decriminalized and endorsed abortion across the entire country. Although prior to this case, some states in the country permitted abortion to a certain degree, the Roe v. Wade case was able to bring fairness and granted all women their reproductive rights, which included birth control, also known with the name of contraception, and their right to use it to prevent pregnancies. Unfortunately, though, the mentality and overall beliefs on women’s rights to abortion have significantly retrogressed and deteriorated over the years, and restriction on this important right. Resulting from that close-mindedness, multiple states across the US began to illegalize abortion, such as Alabama, whilst others are on the verge to, like Missouri.

Russian Federation:

Decades and centuries of fighting against restriction and close-mindedness against women in Russia, effect was eventually thankfully after the Prime Minister Vladimir Putin agreed to the laws placed supporting women on their choice of whether they want or they don’t want to terminate their pregnancies. The prime reason Russia is known as a pro-choice inspiration is that it actually has the highest number of abortions per year, mostly due to the enormous population, but also due to the supportive rights. According to the Federal Law of 21 November 2011, women have the full independency and the choice to choose whether they are in favor of pursuing motherhood or even pregnancy, or if they simply choose to terminate through abortion. In most cases, the gestational limit for women to have access to abortion is between 11 and 12 weeks, however for special social reasons and cases, the gestational limit can reach up to 22 weeks. This simply proves how Russia is a major inspirational source for fighting towards women’s reproductive rights of abortion and contraception as well.

NARAL (National Association for the Repeal of Abortion Laws):

The NARAL (National Association for the Repeal of Abortion Laws) organization is a strongly pro-choice movement and organization based in the United States which focuses on combatting and fighting against restrictive rights on abortion. NARAL also focuses women’s access have abortions done in safe clinics with fully trained and capable physicians that work there. Founded in 1969, this organization’s main purpose and vision was always to protect women’s reproductive rights (the right to abortion). The organization is found today as an online platform, where it provides information and facts on the current restriction and the law on abortion of all US states as well as the availability of abortion clinics.

El Salvador:

El Salvador is known to be one of the world’s most restrictive countries on abortion. El Salvador is known to be nothing but unforgiving when women perform abortions, due to the extremely cruel consequences of having one illegally (not that it can be done legally in that country). There have been 2 alleged cases when two women from El Salvador, were imprisoned for 30 years for simply suffering a miscarriage, (a death of a baby that they not even responsible for). This simply proves how strict the laws are and how oppressed women are in the country. El Salvador is one of the very few countries that put complete bans on abortion which jail women for up to 40 years, in some cases, life sentences, and even alleged prosecutions of girls.

Republic of Ireland:

The republic of Ireland is a country well-involved as well in the abortion controversy as it is well-known for its varying stance on this law. According to the eighth amendment of 1983 (Article 40.3.3), it is stated that the life of an ‘unborn child’ is acknowledged and is equal to the life of a woman carrying it, consequently making inaccessible and not legal. However, there was unidentified case known as case ‘X’, in which a young girl who was pregnant as a result of rape, was allowed an abortion in the UK (where abortion laws are far less restrictive and abortion clinics are more available) due to her difficult situation.

1. **Timeline of Events**

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| **Date** | **Description of event** |
| 1600s  1800s  1821  1857    1873  1920  1930s  1936  1965  1973  1990  2010  May 2019 | One of the most common and used forms of contraception were discovered; condoms, which also protected against STDs other than unintended pregnancy.  During the 19th century (1800s), there were multiple pro-life as well as pro-choice events that occurred. In regard to pro-life, maternity homes were made for women to raise their babies that were results as unintended pregnancies to counteract abortion. However, contraceptive pills were advertised to prevent unwanted pregnancy, however women used as abortive methods too.  The beginning of restrictive reproductive laws in the United States began when Connecticut passed a law which considered abortion a criminal act. At that time, women used lethal drugs such as poison to miscarry, as it was a prominent abortive technique.  The American Medical Association considered all abortions illegal, and midwives who worked in clinics/medical centers where abortion could be accessed, were accused.  Women lost one of their most important rights when the Comstock law was passed, which criminalized and completely illegalized both contraception and abortion.  The Soviet Union (USSR) legalizes abortion for women in any circumstances  By the 30s, the number of abortions in 1 year was constantly increasing by around 681,000 per year.  The USSR bans abortion completely once again.  Contraceptive rights (the right to legally consume pills or other types of methods to prevent pregnancy) were granted to married couples only and were illegal to unmarried women.  The Roe v. Wade case which was passed granted all women across the state to terminate their pregnancies legally and safely, it was a huge step forward.  Canada legalizes abortion across the entire country after the restrictive laws against it are taken down  According to the UN, China has the highest amount of abortions per year, however it is believed that Russia has the highest rate.  Alabama passes a law that criminalizes abortion in exception to if the women’s life is at risk. States like Missouri and Kentucky are close to illegalizing it as well. |

1. UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events:

A United Nations event which was held late 2018, it was conclusively established that the UN was all for women and girls having a choice of whether they want or they don’t want to terminate their pregnancies. The UN stated how the government of countries “must provide safe, legal and effective access to abortion” in the case that the pregnancy would potentially cause the woman pain or suffering.” (an extract from the General Comment No. 36, a document further explaining Article 6 of [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](https://treaties.un.org/doc/publication/unts/volume%20999/volume-999-i-14668-english.pdf).).

In 2018, a UN human rights expert expressed their belief, as to where an “International Safe Abortion” day should be held as a guarantee to worldwide safe abortions that are also legal. The expert further elaborated on this belief as it was believed by the human rights expert that all governments must access women independency, and support (through higher access of safe clinics) to abortion. Other experts implied that pro-lifers are ‘misleading’ and deceptive.

"We are very concerned that several U.S. states have passed laws severely restricting access to safe abortion for women, including by imposing criminal penalties on the women themselves and on abortion service providers," are the words of Ravina Shamdasani, the UNHR spokesperson, while speaking about the 2019 restrictive laws with special focus on Alabama on television in Geneva. The UN also US authorities expressing the thoughts that banning abortion completely endangers a woman’s life as she will simply be forced into ‘underground’ abortions, which are highly unsafe and they are life threatening.

1. Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

In regards to the United Nations event, many governments ignored the words and advice of the UN document (General Comment No. 36). Furthermore, pro-lifers who stand against abortion were furious and claimed that the United Nations were contradicting their own words as they ‘value the lives of the human beings but not the unborn’. Conclusively, the UN late 2018 conference brought little effect and a lot of controversy.

For the UNHR experts speaking about the importance of putting restrictions to abortion, it was clear that also little effect was a result due to the multiple laws placed in 2019 against abortion, despite their strong argument and beliefs. The beliefs of these experts sparked minimal controversy and furiousness as their expression of belief was not widely spoken about.

When the UN office contacted US authorities due to their concerns on the overly restrictive May 2019 Alabama Laws, as well as the further pro-life laws overall in the US, the Gov. Mike Parson, further restricted Missouri laws. This proved that this concern they shared with the US authorities scarcely brought effect into bringing justice into women’s reproductive rights in some of the US’s states.

1. Possible Solutions
2. In order to ensure that women’s rights are protected to the full extent when needing an abortion or contraception, it would be highly effective to significantly lower the prices of abortions as well as contraceptive techniques. This is directly related to the protection of women’s rights since women who happen to be financially challenged (from the low class) who need an immediate abortion or need to prevent a pregnancy through contraception cannot practice their rights in any way as they cannot afford it whatsoever. Making contraception more affordable can be making birth control pills much cheaper, or to make women’s sterilization surgeries more inexpensive so that they are able to avoid the issue of unwanted pregnancy completely. On the other hand, the cost of a safe abortion done by qualified physicians/abortionists should have a lower overall cost so that women can be able to practice one of their most important rights without worry. If a woman continues to carry, birth, and raise a child that she does not want due to her financial instability, not only will physical state will be threatened, but also her metal state.
3. Women’s right to safely abort can be protected considerably and notably by creating Pro-Choice organizations which ensure that women having abortions across the world, especially in conservative areas where women are looked down upon and oppressed, have their abortions done safely in clinics and are performed by fully trained doctors (OB/GYNs). Although similar organizations have already done such actions, such as NARAL, these organizations have put focus mostly into one country, and since most Pro-choice organizations are American (US) based, they put focus into the country and the states. There is minimal focus on other countries around the world, especially developing countries, where women are very commonly treated cruelly and treated as nothing but objects, unlike first world developed nations. When more focus is put, by looking at the abortion clinic/medical center overall quality and the general quality of the doctors that perform abortions, women’s access to practice their reproductive rights is more protected.
4. Guiding Questions
5. Why are full bans on abortions highly unfair and unjust towards women?
6. What are the physical negative effects on women who are denied abortions?
7. What are the mental and psychlogal negative effects on women who are are not accesed abortions?
8. What are the consequences on being rejected and disallowed to use contraception (birth control) to prevent future unwanted pregnancies?
9. What are the key reasons behind the criminalization of women’s reproductve rights?
10. Where exactly is this issue and topic a concern currently?
11. How does financial insuffiency relate to the topic of abortion?
12. What is each country’s government stance on the issue?
13. What is the stance of the people of the country on the issue?
14. What current organizations have adressed and put spotlight into this issue?
15. Was the UN involved in the resolution of this concern? Why or why not, and if yes to what extent?
16. Appendices and useful links
17. <http://www.worldabortionlaws.com/map/> (Interactive map on countries abortion laws)
18. <https://www.4000yearsforchoice.com/pages/timeline> (Timeline on abortion laws and rights)
19. <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/countries-where-abortion-is-illegal/> (Information on countries with different restrictions on abortions)
20. <https://www.guttmacher.org/state-policy/explore/overview-abortion-laws> (Helpful Website to further understand abortion laws in the US)
21. <https://www.dailynews.com/2015/03/09/here-are-some-of-the-countries-with-the-strictest-abortion-laws/> (Countries where abortion is completely banned)
22. <https://www.prochoiceamerica.org/> (NARAL Pro-Choice American Organization
23. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/tarahaelle/2016/06/27/5-reasons-supreme-court-abortion-decision-benefits-womens-health/#88dc9217339a> (Benefits of abortion)
24. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/alabama-abortion-law-abortion-is-still-legal-in-alabama-and-georgia-despite-abortion-bans-2019-05-17/> (Useful Information on Alabama’s 2019 abortion law)
25. <https://humandefense.com/un-declares-abortion-a-human-right/> (Explanation on 2018 UN event regarding protecting the right to abortion)
26. <https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/policy/AbortionPoliciesReproductiveHealth.pdf> (UN publication with information on world-wide abortion laws)
27. <https://www.pop.org/un-human-rights-experts-demand-legalized-abortion-worldwide/> (2018 UNHR expert belief on abortion)
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