



GECMUN X

BACKGROUND GUIDE

UNHRC

*Addressing the legitimacy of Abortion Rights and
Women's Rights to Reproductive Freedom*

SDG 3,16,17

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Committee Introduction

The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) is the only body that addresses all issues regarding human rights worldwide. Formed worldwide by the General Assembly (GA) in 2006 by its resolution 60/251, the UNHRC serves as the place of international cooperation of 47 member states.

Although it has only been 15 years since the UNHRC was created, it had applaudable impacts on nations. The most notable achievement of the UNHRC is its adoption of a resolution recognizing access to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment as a human right. Starting with its landmark decision, it allowed the least-developed nations to actively participate in the UNHRC meetings by providing SIDS/LDC monetary assistance. It also established mandates to ensure the protection of human rights in regions including Sri Lanka, Belarus, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and Afghanistan.

Regarding the agenda of abortion, the UNHRC has declared that it views “restrictive abortion laws” as “discrimination against women.” More information on how the UNHRC views abortion can be found [here](#).

Agenda Introduction

Which human right must come first - women's right to the body or embryos' right to life? Are embryos' right to life entirely subjected to their mothers? Do embryos have the right to live in the first place? Since when should the embryos be considered babies?

Such questions are undeniably difficult to answer, and so is whether the abortion right must be implemented. Although women's right to the body is fundamental and inalienable, different countries maintain different stances regarding the issue due to various ethical, religious, and legal considerations.

For instance, Canada - well-known for valuing women's reproductive freedom - allows abortions at any time within the gestational limit set by each province. On the other hand, Congo - well-known for valuing family farming - strictly prohibits abortions. The United States (US) had once established the abortion right as a constitutional right through the Roe v. Wade case (1973) but recently overturned the decision to allow individual states to legislate individually. While the US's decision made in the Roe v. Wade case in 1973 encouraged other nations to permit abortion, the recent overruling of the decision has made other nations consider banning abortion. Recent movements of completely banning abortions require a closer look at specific statistics.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), an estimated 73.3 million cases of abortions were reported worldwide between 2015 and 2019. Around 45% of such abortions done in 2017 (an estimated 25 million cases) were done in illegal and unsafe environments. These statistics imply that completely banning abortion is ineffective in stopping abortions - it actually encourages abortion in harsher conditions.

Then, what would be the effective solutions? How would a country possibly encourage women not to perform abortions but ensure a safe environment when women decide to perform abortions? The UNHRC can only request nations to follow its solutions. Which solutions can be made and be effectively advertised to different countries? If a nation decides to ban abortions, should it ban abortions under every circumstance? What if a woman's health is at risk? What if a woman got pregnant through rape?

With these in mind, now is the time for different nations with different perspectives to come together and discuss the constitutionality of abortion.

Letter from the Chairs

Dear Esteemed Delegates,

Greetings! We are Yujeong Ha, Dahyun Park, and Giryeon Choi, who will serve you as the Chairs of GECMUN X UNHRC. We are all from Branksome Hall Asia and are delighted to see you from different parts of the world. We will support and guide you while preparing and debating the agenda. We will try our best to make this conference memorable for you.

With that being said, here are some tips for all delegates. The agenda is a controversial issue with ongoing debates. Since many countries are updating their laws regarding abortion, we highly encourage all delegates to check their designated countries' news on abortion. We also encourage you to look closely at the countries' stances in the Chair Report. The countries' stances will give you ample information on how different nations in the conference are responding to the situation.

We sincerely hope your experience in GECMUN X UNHRC will be joyful and valuable. Please remember that we are here for you whenever you have any questions. We will be happy to answer them. Have a wonderful MUN journey!

Best Regards,

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Key Terms

Constitutionality: The quality of being allowed by the principles governed by a state.

The agenda is “Addressing the Constitutionality of Abortion Rights and Women’s Rights to Reproductive Freedom.” Hence, all delegates should consider the issue from the perspective of their own governments. Delegates must remember that UNHRC will be a medium where delegates collaborate to find solutions, not a place where they will condemn other nations for their own laws about abortions.

Right to Life: A belief that every human being’s life is guarded by law, and no one (including the government) has the authority to end one’s life. The fundamental reason abortions are criminalized is due to opinions claiming the fetus’s right to life. Active movements are taking place to protect the embryos’ right to life.

Right to Body (Reproductive Freedom): A human right that every individual has the freedom to decide on matters such as contraception, abortion, sterilization, and childbirth. There were, and still are, countries that punish women who carry abortions. This is indeed an act of infringing on a woman’s reproductive freedom. Hence, active reform movements are taking place globally.

Fetus (Embryo): An unborn young in an early stage of development inside its mother’s womb. As abortion is the act of ending a fetus’s life, there are debates on whether abortions are constitutional. Some claim that a fetus is not developed to be considered a human being with the right to life. Others argue that it is highly unethical to deprive one’s future. At the conference, each country’s definition of a baby with the right to life and ethical values will be important parts to consider.

American Medical Association (AMA): An alliance of medics founded in 1847 to improve public health and advance medical treatment. The AMA fiercely disapproved and condemned abortions of any kind during the 19th Century. The AMA was the main force that criminalized abortions.

Back Alley Abortion: Unsanitary, unsafe, and illegal abortions performed outside of proper medical facilities. According to the WHO, a back alley abortion is a leading cause of maternal deaths. Some consider that a back alley abortion is a tragic outcome of tight abortion restrictions. It is important for nations to contemplate various factors before legislating any abortion-related laws.

Historical Background

Although this Historical Background includes international content, thereby providing a holistic insight into the history of abortion, it mainly features the landmark events that occurred in the Western world. If you are the delegate of a nation in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, or Australia, please look closely at the Current State of Affairs and Country Stances. Still, it is **recommended** to look at this holistic guide to the history of abortion.

Abortion in the 19th Century

Pre-19th Century - No Interruption

Abortion was considered a legitimate, private matter before the 19th Century. Hence, there were no laws that restricted women from undergoing abortions.

Early 19th Century - First Legislation

Women were still allowed to undergo abortions in the early stages of pregnancy. However, new laws illegalized abortions carried out after women felt the first fetal movements - often called *quickenings*.

These laws were legislated because a fetus was considered an alive individual once their mother experience quickening. Religious authorities like the Roman Catholics agreed with this justification.

Theoretically, women were punished when they carried abortions after experiencing quickening. Here, the term “theoretically” is used because there was no way the judicial bodies could determine whether women experienced quickening. Women often testified that they didn’t undergo quickening and were acquitted. As shown, Laws were entirely based on women’s subjective bodily experiences.

Mid-19th Century - Increased Treatments

As laws were only based on women’s individual bodily experiences, women carried abortions in every stage of pregnancy. Herbal abortifacients, commercialized medicines, and surgeries were the major methods of abortion.

Late 19th Century - Complete Banning

Doctors asserted that women’s experience of quickening is unscientific thereby, must not be the standard of legal abortions. Most notably, the American Medical Association (AMA) led the anti-abortion movement, with religious authorities like the Roman Catholics supporting it.

Abortions were also viewed as threats to national interests. In the late 19th Century, tension between European nations soared. As a result, countries wanted high birth rates (that indicated the abundance of human resources in the near future.) Naturally, abortions that dropped birth rates were condemned.

The United States worried that widespread abortions would decrease the White population. President Roosevelt viewed abortion with hostility; he stated that women with economic stability who refused to have children were “race criminals.”

These backgrounds resulted in the **complete banning of abortions** in Western Europe and the United States by 1900.

Abortion in the 20th Century

Early 20th Century - Difference Between the United States and Europe

Despite the fact that abortions were illegalized, they were still socially accepted. Most women considered abortions as a legitimate method of protecting their bodies. The number of clinics and businesses providing surgeries soared, and the public felt sympathy for women who had no choice but to perform abortions due to their situations.

Doctors in the United States saw this social atmosphere as unacceptable. They claimed that the lack of enforcement deteriorated the situation. On the other hand, social reformers in Europe viewed this situation as an indicator that current laws are not useful in decreasing abortions. Thus, social reformers started to discuss ways to help desperate women in danger of unsanitary, unauthorized abortions.

In 1930, the Great Depression struck the world. Cases of abortion skyrocketed, causing a rapid increase in maternal deaths. The United States reacted by further enforcing abortion laws. On the other hand, Europe reacted with active movements to relegalize abortion.

Mid-20th Century - Relegalization

Unlike in the early 20th Century, the public of the United States started to aim relegalizing abortions. But why? The public of the United States became aware of “back alley” abortions, which refer to unauthorized, unsanitary, dangerous abortions. Women and physicians got furious. The reform movement also began in the United States. The reformers asserted that women must have the right to make free choices about their bodies without any interference.

Active reform movements finally relegalized abortions in Europe and the United States to a certain degree. The United Kingdom significantly lowered the barrier to legal abortions in 1967 by only requiring agreements from two medical professionals that “pregnancy endangers the life, mental or physical health of the woman or her children.”

The legalization of abortion in the United States happened with a landmark case - Roe v. Wade (1973). The 1973 Roe v. Wade decision declared that “a woman’s decision [to abortion]” should be protected nationwide under the right to privacy.

Such movements led to the legalization of abortion in many other Western countries, including New Zealand, Australia, and Canada.

Current State of Affairs

Stances of Different Continents

<Asia>

Abortion, deeply tangled with religion, culture, law, and politics, is a highly controversial issue in Asia. However, the continent as a whole can be considered quite progressive; 17 out of 50 countries permit abortion without any restrictions, and most Asian women live under liberal abortion laws. Such results could be yielded due to India and China - the two most populous Asian nations with lenient abortion laws.

Unfortunately, side effects of such lenient abortion laws exist. In India, an extremely sexist country, males are considered heirs, while females are considered nothing but financial burdens. Hence, numerous abortions took place just because an embryo was a girl. Alarmed by the prevalence of sex selection, India strictly prohibited doctors from revealing the sex of the child before he/she is born.

<Europe>

Active movements to ensure access to safe abortion have taken place for over 60 years in Europe. As a result, most European countries allow abortions during the first 12 weeks of the gestational period, and others even further. It is estimated that 95% of women of reproductive age reside in nations that permit abortions to a certain degree. Still, there are exceptions. In Poland, abortions can be held only in cases of rape or if a mother's life is in critical danger. Consequently, many women die each year after being denied emergency care. Also, many pregnant women residing in Poland travel to take abortion pills or induce abortions.

<Africa>

Africa is the worst continent in terms of safe abortions. According to the Guttmacher Institute, 77% (6 million abortions) of all abortions carried out in sub-Saharan Africa in 2020 were illegal and unsafe. Also, it was reported that 185 deaths occur per 100,000 abortions in Africa. Africa can also be considered as a continent with the tightest abortion laws. The Center for Reproductive Rights found out that abortions remain strictly illegal in eight African countries. In Madagascar, medical workers who perform abortions can be prisoned for up to 10 years.

In response, the NGOs in Africa and the WHO are working jointly to ensure women's access to safe abortions. Such efforts are inducing African nations to change their abortion laws. For instance, in 2021, Benin amended a few restrictions on women's rights to abortions to allow abortions to all pregnant women requesting one.

Pro-Life vs Pro-Choice

<Pro-Life>

“The life of the unborn is of equal value to the life of the mother, and any law that disregards this is unjust and must be opposed.” - Dr. Edmund D. Pellegrino.

The term “pro-life” was first used during the Abortion Wars, a half-a-century conflict about abortions. After that, the pro-life community thrived with those who interact with political issues with the firm stance that all human lives are valuable. The pro-life communities, therefore, stand against abortions with the idea that an embryo is a human with the right to life. The pro-life community involves a great variety of members, from feminists and medical specialists to others.

<Pro-Choice>

“We're always going to argue about abortion. It's a hard choice, and it's controversial, and that's why I'm pro-choice, because I want people to make their own choices.” - Hillary Clinton.

The term “pro-choice” refers to one’s identity as standing for safe and sanitary abortions. The pro-choice community believes that every human has the right to choose whether and when to have children.

Stances of Parties

Argentina

Pro-choice. In December 2020, abortion was legalized in Argentina with the enactment of Congress Law 27.610. Now, abortions are legal within the first 14 weeks of pregnancy under any circumstances. Before the enactment, abortions were legal only in cases of rape or when the woman's health was at severe risk. This notable change in the law brought a 40% decrease in the number of women suffering from complications of back alley abortions. The significance of the legislation is amplified since Argentina is a Latin American nation, which often has the most restrictive abortion laws internationally.

Brazil

Inclined to be pro-life. Abortion is illegal in Brazil, excluding the cases of "rape, risk to a woman's life, and a diagnosis of fetal anencephaly." However, such regulations are far from reducing the abortion rate. In fact, the strict criminalization of abortion is forcing women to undergo back-alley abortion. It has been estimated that over 500,000 women experience back-alley abortion each year, and 250,000 among them enter the Emergency Room due to complications of unsafe abortions. In an effort to curtail illegal abortions, organizations such as Anis: Institute of Bioethics, Human Rights, and Gender are supporting women in need of safe abortions. In 2017, Anis submitted a petition to the Brazilian Supreme Court, urging the approval of a safe abortion for Rebeca Mendes, who was in her early pregnancy. Though declined by the Brazilian Supreme Court, Rebeca's story could be spread globally, allowing her to receive appropriate treatment in Colombia. It is evident that abortion-related topics are still taboo in Brazil.

Canada

Pro-choice. Abortion is legal in Canada; there are no regulations on the gestational period or classifications for legal abortions. Abortion was illegal in Canada in the past, but in 1988, the Canadian abortion law became completely unconstitutional with the ruling of the Supreme Court. Since then, Canada has become one of a few countries without any restrictions on abortions. Plus, it became a country that publicly funds safe abortions. While discussions on whether Canada needs certain limits on abortion still exist, Canada holds firm in its stance that abortions are entirely permitted.

China

Pro-choice. Abortion is not only accepted but is also easily accessible in China. The nation provides facilities for abortions, including family planning programs, hospitals, as well as specialized clinics. In accordance with its population, China is one of the countries with the highest abortion rates, resulting in an annual average of 9 million. China's high abortion rate is largely due to the one-child policy, which encouraged couples to have only one child from 1980 to 2016 in an effort to control its population. However, China is now encouraging birth in response to a recent population crisis.

Cuba

Pro-choice. In Cuba, abortions are accepted and are performed for free as a public

healthcare system. Abortions were first legalized in Cuba in 1969, which was quite early for a Latin American nation. Currently, women wishing to carry abortions must receive counseling, and minors (under the age of 17) must get parental consent. In Cuba, abortions can be performed up to 12 weeks of gestation, but abortions can still be carried out after the given period when pregnancy causes health problems to the fetuses and the embryos. Many Cuban women choose abortions due to unfavorable economic situations. As of now, Cuba is considered one of the countries with the highest abortion rate, resulting in 147,000 abortions per 191,000 unintended pregnancies.

Denmark

Pro-choice. Abortion is legal in all cases during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy. A doctor who receives a patient's request to carry an abortion has a legal responsibility to perform an abortion for the patient. Abortions can be legal after 12 weeks of pregnancy, but only under special circumstances where a pregnancy was a result of rape or severe health risks are detected. In such cases, the patient must get approved by at least two doctors and one person from the local municipality. When abortions are carried through legal methods and processes, the cost is covered by the public health system. Initially, minors under 18 needed parental approvals to undergo abortions. However, Bloomberg recently reported that politicians are discussing the enactment of a law that allows those between 15 and 17 years old to undergo abortions without parental consent.

Dominican Republic

Pro-life. Abortions are banned in all circumstances in the Dominican Republic under Dominican Constitution of Article 37: "The right to life is inviolable from conception until death." In 2019, a 16-year-old girl with leukemia ("a cancer of early blood-forming cells") was denied access to abortion, with the Court prioritizing the embryo's right to life. This reflects the nation's dedication to embryo protection. Unfortunately, Dominican Republic is the country with the highest post-abortion complication rate, with 10.3 per 100 women dying due to unsafe and illegal abortion.

Egypt

Pro-life. Egypt is one of the countries with the most restrictive abortion laws. Abortion is prohibited in Egypt, even in cases of rape. A woman can undergo an abortion only if she is married and experiences severe complications of pregnancy. If a woman is unmarried, she is not allowed to carry abortions under any circumstances. When an unmarried woman goes through an illegal abortion, she is imprisoned for six months to three years. Doctors who provide abortions are punished more harshly; they are imprisoned for three to fifteen years if they get caught while operating abortions. Unfortunately, unlike Egypt's primary purpose of banning abortions, which is to promote childbirth and protect babies, Egypt experienced an increased number of women going to underground doctors or performing unsafe abortions themselves.

Ethiopia

Inclined to be pro-choice. Current abortion laws in Ethiopia are a lot more relaxed and inclined to pro-choice than those of 18 years before. Back then, abortions were only

permitted when women's health was fatal. However, new laws in 2005 legitimated abortions in all cases of "rape, incest, fetal impairment... and when the continuation of pregnancy posed great difficulty to women's mental/economic stability." Yet, it is important to note that this is not the case in all parts of the nation. Hospitals in rural Ethiopia, including Shekebedo Health Center, are prohibited from practicing abortions. This is because those hospitals are funded by the US government. Helms Law, enacted in the US in 1973, strictly bans any hospitals from "using foreign aid to pay for abortion." Currently, 60% of abortions in Ethiopia are judged unsafe.

Germany

Pro-choice. In Germany, abortions can be performed within 12 weeks of pregnancy but only after receiving mandatory counseling. Those who carry abortions after 12 weeks of pregnancy can be punished by up to three years in prison unless the mothers' health is in severe threat. Compared to other nations in Europe, abortion rates in Germany are relatively low and are steadily decreasing since 2001.

Greece

Pro-choice. Abortions are legal in Greece. Abortions were legalized in 1986, and the country is renowned for having lenient abortion laws. In Greece, abortions of any causes are allowed within 12 weeks, but abortions after 12 weeks of pregnancy can be permitted only under the following circumstances: rape (can be permitted up to 19 weeks), fatal abnormalities (can be permitted up to 24 weeks), and severe health issues (can be permitted any time). From 2015 to 2019, 34,600 abortions were carried out among 76,200 unintended pregnancies annually.

Hong Kong

Pro-choice. Hong Kong's abortion laws are looser than many other Asian nations. Abortions are permitted in Hong Kong under two circumstances: when women's health is at great risk and when an embryo to be born has severe disabilities. In Hong Kong, spousal consent is unneeded for women to undergo abortions. Currently, the abortion rate in Hong Kong is declining. Hong Kong experienced a 47% decline in the abortion rate from 1990 to 1994 and from 2015 to 2019. Such a dramatic decrease is largely due to the accompanying 41% decline in an unintended pregnancy rate.

Iran

Pro-life. As of 2021, Iran became one of the countries that punish those who undergo abortions most heavily. In November 2021, Iran's Guardian Council proclaimed the "Youthful Population and Protection of the Family" law, strictly prohibiting any kind of abortion. In further efforts to rejuvenate the Iranian population, the Guardian Council also banned national provisions of contraceptives and services related to voluntary sterilization. The Council emphasized that those who violate such laws can receive a death penalty. Shortly after Iran announced its new law, the United Nations fiercely condemned Iran, commenting that its laws are "in clear contravention of international law." In the following year, 2022, only 3% of abortions carried out in Iran were legal.

Iraq

Pro-life. Abortions are entirely prohibited in Iraq under the Iraq Penal Code Article 417. Such tight regulations are from the Islamic culture that views abortion as an interference with God's authority on life and death. The Qur'an (the sacred book of Islam) 5:32 states that "[w]hosoever killed a soul, it is as though he has murdered all kind of mankind." As shown, Iraq firmly holds the notion that embryos are considered as humans with the right to life.

Japan

Controversial. Abortions are permitted up to 22 weeks of pregnancy. However, women wishing to undergo abortion must get permission from their spouses, following the Maternal Protection Law enacted in 1948. Such laws have hindered women from receiving safe treatments at appropriate times. As shown, abortions appear more controversial and sensitive in Japan than in other nations. This is because Japan faces an issue of low birth rate. Japanese politicians and legislators often get split into pro-life and pro-choice, fiercely discussing the constitutionality of abortions. Nevertheless, Japan seems to be inclined to stand pro-choice. In 2022, the Japanese government approved women's use of abortion pills for the first time. Since the medications only cost half the cost of surgical methods, the pills are regarded as less burdensome for women.

Laos

Pro-life. The Laos Penal Code Article 85 states that abortions are illegal without lawful justification, and those violating the law can be imprisoned for up to 10 years. Abortions are permitted only when women get pregnant due to rape, or women's lives are fatal. Laos continues to have such a strict legal stance against abortions because it strives to protect the embryo's right to life over women's right to choice. Laos's strict abortion laws challenged women's accessibility to safe abortion sites, causing deadly complications. According to Mahosot Hospital, 42.6% of patients were diagnosed to receive gynecological treatments to cure complications due to unsafe abortions.

Madagascar

Pro-life. Madagascar's abortion laws prioritize the embryo's right to life. The Madagascar Penal Code 317 states: "[a]nyone who... procured... abortion of a pregnant woman, whether she consented to it or not, shall be punished by a maximum of five-year imprisonment and a fine up to 1,800,000 francs." As shown, Madagascar's legal frameworks put great emphasis on the embryo's right to life. Still, the Ministry of Public Health shows that an estimated 11.8% of women's death in 2012 resulted from complications due to unsafe and illegal abortions.

Mexico

Inclined to be pro-choice. Mexico is a federation comprising 31 states that follow distinct sets of laws. However, it is essential to note that the laws of a state have a considerable effect on those of other states. Currently, Mexico is quickly moving toward the nationwide decriminalization of abortions. In 2007, Mexico City decriminalized abortions up to 12 weeks of pregnancy. 14 years later, in 2021, Oaxaca, Hidalgo, and Veracruz

decriminalized abortions. Shortly after, a historic ruling was made in Coahuila; the Mexican Supreme Court decriminalized abortions in Coahuila. Although the ruling pertained to a single state, it had profound impacts on the neighboring states. States such as Colima, Baja California, Baja California Sur, and Guerrero legalized abortions following the historic precedent. Currently, hospitals in Mexico are providing safe abortions to women from Mexico and those from abroad.

Philippines

Pro-life but controversial. The Philippine abortion laws strongly prioritize the embryo's right to life. Under Spanish Colonial Rule, abortions were first criminalized in 1873 and continued to be illegal for centuries. However, there have been recent movements toward pro-choice, with the Philippine Commission on Human Rights (PCHR) advocating for the decriminalization of abortions for the first time in the nation's history. Statistics show that 1.1 million induced abortions are performed annually in the Philippines, with related complications influencing more than 1,000 women. Since 75% of female Filipinos are unable to support their children financially, unsafe abortions are considered the only resort.

Republic of Congo

Inclined to be pro-choice. The Penal Code Articles 165 and 166, enacted in 2004, prohibited abortions of all kinds and reasons in the Republic of Congo. However, the Matupo Protocol (2008) and the proclamation of the Ministry of Health (2018) allowed more women to have access to safe abortions. Currently, abortions are permitted in all circumstances within 14 weeks of pregnancy. Additionally, Congo added "mifepristone," one of the WHO's recommended abortion medicines, to its accessible medicines.

Russia

Pro-choice. Russia is the first country to allow abortions for any and all reasons. As of now, abortions for any reason are permitted up to 12 weeks. This period can be extended up to 22 weeks if a woman got pregnant through rape or her health is at great risk. In accordance with its population, Russia is one of the countries with the highest abortion rate. Although the abortion rate is steadily decreasing in Russia, it still remains relatively high. Currently, Russia is considering banning abortions for minors to prevent clandestine abortions carried out by minors without parental consent.

Senegal

Pro-life. Senegal prioritizes the embryo's right to life by criminalizing abortions under its Penal Code Article 305, imprisoning those who perform abortions and those who receive them. Studies estimate that the abortion rate in Senegal is 17 per 1,000 women between ages 15 and 44. Among those, 54% are done unsafely, causing more than half of women experiencing back-alley abortions to experience complications that require medical treatment. It is crucial for the nation's Ministry of Health to devise methods to prevent severe abortion complications while encouraging birth.

Thailand

Pro-choice. Abortions are legal in Thailand; Thailand originally permitted abortion requests up to 12 weeks of pregnancy. In 2021, however, the nation extended the period to 20 weeks of pregnancy. Regardless of such progressive laws, though, most women in Thailand experience difficulties accessing abortions due to the doctors' refusal. Currently, many doctors refuse to perform abortions because they are attached to their religious beliefs that abortions are immoral.

United Kingdom

Inclined to be pro-choice. Termination of pregnancy is legal in England, Wales, and Scotland for up to 24 weeks of pregnancy. Within 24 weeks, women can carry abortions when embryos are seriously handicapped and continued pregnancy harms women's physical and mental health. However, the British Judiciary strictly bans abortion after the period of 24 weeks. More specifically, the British Judiciary uses laws that were enacted during the Victorian era to punish women. On June 2023, a woman who terminated the pregnancy after the legitimate period was sentenced to 28 months of imprisonment. People were enraged. Campaigners like Katherine O'Brien of the British Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS) fiercely criticized the British abortion law as being "restrictive and draconian." Experts assert that the overruling of Roe v. Wade in the US prompted the British Judiciary to act more strictly toward abortions.

United States of America

Controversial. It is impossible to talk about abortions in the US without mentioning the Roe v. Wade case. In 1973, the US Supreme Court announced that "state regulation of abortion is unconstitutional." In other words, the Supreme Court decriminalized abortions across the nation at a federal level. This decision made by the US Supreme Court became a landmark in US abortion history. However, the Supreme Court overturned its decision in 2022, permitting individual states to criminalize abortions. As a result, 14 states immediately banned abortions. Now, women in the US are confronted with a sudden shortage of choices. The United Nations condemned the Supreme Court's overruling, asserting that it forced "millions of women... across the United Nations" to suffer from the lack of appropriate care.

Possible Solutions

<Pro-life>

Expansion of the police force to curtail back-alley abortion

Most illegal abortions involve drinking toxic fluids such as turpentine, bleach, or concoctions mixed with livestock manure. Other methods include causing direct injury to the external body. Since such methods are easily accessible, illegal medicines and sites must be monitored and curtailed through the mobilization of police forces. During pandemics, providers of illegal abortions have often performed abortions in private, untraceable residences. Hence, tight surveillance is crucial to prevent illegal abortions. Since the distribution of the police force is within the jurisdiction of individual countries, delegates must be aware that the UNHRC cannot force any nation to adopt this solution.

Provision of birth incentives

Birth incentives, the financial assistance to couples who give birth, may impact the birth and abortion rates significantly. In Spain, starting in 2007, the governmental policy of providing a €2,500 birth incentive increased birth rates by 3% while decreasing the abortion rate. Since one of the primary causes of selecting abortions is that the couple is financially unstable and unprepared to raise children, birth incentives at the federal level will reduce the pressure on couples and encourage them to give birth.

<Pro-choice>

Provision of counseling to those wishing abortions

Another reason people decide to undergo abortions is that their pregnancies were unplanned. These unintended pregnancies may result in impulsive abortions with OTC medications and illegal abortions in countries where abortions are prohibited under all circumstances. Counseling can be provided to help prevent any harm to women and to offer mental support since pregnancies can be emotionally overwhelming. The National Abortion Federation is an example of a public organization that provides detailed information and financial assistance while promoting professional care.

How can UNHRC Help?

Women's fundamental rights are not well-protected in several nations, resulting in widespread sexual violence that is not recognized as a severe issue. Abortions are banned in many countries under all circumstances, even when pregnancy results from rape. In cases where women's rights are severely breached, the UNHRC committee can officially publicize such problems through its annual report and focus the world's attention on such issues, pressuring the nation to devise solutions to them. When the US Supreme Court allowed states to restrict abortions by overturning the Roe v. Wade ruling, the UN took immediate action to condemn the decision. Although the UNHRC cannot force a certain nation to change its policies, it can surely pressure it to do so.

Questions to Consider

1. What are the economic consequences of abortions?
2. What are the social consequences of abortions?
3. What are the cultural consequences of abortions?
4. How do abortions affect the country's population? How do the fluctuations in population affect the country's stance on abortions?
5. Should access to safe abortion be considered a fundamental human right? How can a nation balance between the embryo's right to life and the woman's right to reproductive freedom?
6. How can international organizations cooperate in order to combat back-alley abortions performed by nonprofessionals?
7. What strategies can be used to address the disparities between rural and urban regions' access to safe and legal abortions?
8. What is the optimal stance between pro-choice and pro-life? How can pro-choice countries and pro-life countries come to an agreement?
9. Can member nations negotiate on the period in which abortions are accepted?

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