



A Practical Guide to Discussing the Right to Life



ADF UK

INTRODUCTION

Three facts about the right to life

International law protects unborn life, and it is the right and responsibility of every government to uphold the right to life for all by imposing restrictions on abortion. No society can say it authentically protects human rights if the most vulnerable are in danger in their mother's womb.

The UK faces significant pressure as some MPs want to change our abortion law for the first time in over 50 years. An amendment was put forward within the last parliamentary term to decriminalise abortion, for any reason, all the way up to birth. An election was called before the amendment was debated, but the politicians responsible are very likely to attempt to "decriminalise" abortion under the new government.

ADF UK seeks to safeguard the right to life through the following advocacy efforts:

#1 Supporting our colleagues at international institutions to hold governments accountable for safeguarding the right to life.

#2 Advocating against the decriminalisation of abortion up to birth in the UK, and instead call for better support for mothers and babies.

#3 Defending those, including medical staff, who suffer violations of their right to freedom of conscience for upholding the right to life.

#4 Defending those who suffer violations of their freedom of expression, including university students, for standing up for the most vulnerable.

MYTH #1

“Most of the UK support abortion ‘on demand.’”

When we look at headlines across the news, it can seem like everyone around us supports abortion at every stage of pregnancy. Is it really true?

FACT #1

Less than 1% of Brits actually support abortion up to birth. According to ComRes polling¹, vanishingly few Brits actually support abortion up to birth. In fact, more than 70% of UK women would like to see our abortion time limit – currently at 24 weeks - reduced to something earlier in pregnancy.

This is hardly surprising. The UK is an outlier in the global context. While most of the world protects unborn life, the average abortion time limit in the EU is 12-15 weeks. By allowing abortion for almost any reason as late as 24 weeks, the UK's laws are much more extreme than our neighbours'.

Sadly, our current abortion laws discriminate against babies with disabilities. While most babies are protected from 24 weeks, babies with any form of disability – such as Down Syndrome, cleft lip, or clubbed foot – can be aborted at any point until birth.

In light of medical advances, it is increasingly clear that our laws are outdated. Babies can now survive outside the womb – with medical support – from as early as 22 weeks. This means that in a UK hospital on the same day, a 22-week baby may be fighting for her life in a NICU – while her peer, at the same stage of development, may be facing an abortion.

1 ComRes polling for “Where do they stand”, 2017 from <https://righttolife.org.uk/polling>

MYTH #2

“Decriminalising abortion would help women.”

Abortion campaigners claim “decriminalising” abortion would simply prevent vulnerable women from going to jail. Would this be a compassionate response?

FACT #2

Decriminalising abortion would put women’s health at serious risk. Currently, a late-term abortion is permitted only if a woman’s life or health is at grave risk, or if the child has a disability. Removing laws which prevent all other abortions from taking place after 24 weeks would not only put the lives of viable babies at risk – it would also likely see an increase in women performing dangerous late-term abortions on themselves, at home.

It is already possible for women to self-perform an abortion at home at 0-10 weeks gestation by ordering pills over the phone without an in-person examination. Unfortunately, cases have arisen where women have lied about the stage of their pregnancies to receive the pills by post after the 24-week legal deadline. The results have been devastating.

Carla Foster is one example. After receiving abortion pills under false pretenses, she aborted her daughter – whom she later named Lily – at 32-34 weeks of pregnancy. Fully developed, Lily knew her mother’s voice; could feel pain; and could have survived outside the womb.

The experience wasn’t only devastating for Lily – but also for her mum, Carla, who later spoke of being “haunted” by what happened. Performing a late-stage abortion with no medical supervision put Carla’s life and health at serious risk. Laws criminalising late-stage abortion aren’t just there to punish – they are there to protect women like Carla, and babies like Lily, from being harmed in this horrifying way. Instead of removing these protections, we must push for policies offering better support for both lives in every pregnancy.

MYTH #3

“The baby in the womb has no rights.”

“My body, my choice” is one of the most well-known slogans of abortion advocates. Wouldn't the unlimited self-determination of women restrict the rights of the unborn child? What about its right to life?

FACT #3

Every pregnancy involves different rights and freedoms: those of the mother, those of the father, and those of the unborn child. Instead of pitting mothers and babies against each other, we believe that in every pregnancy, both lives matter. That's why we advocate for solutions which empower mothers and babies to thrive together. The child has its own right to life, which must be respected.

The right to life is protected in all major international human rights treaties. The *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* guarantees the right to life of every child (CRC Art. 6-1). This right must be read with particular attention to the preamble of the *Declaration of the Rights of the Child*. It states that “the child, by reason of his physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth” (*Declaration of the Rights of the Child, 1959, Preamble*).

CONCLUSION

Far from being a “human right”, abortion is intensely damaging to mothers, fathers, and babies. The fact that 250,000 are taking place in the UK every year indicates that something is going very wrong. That's why we must advocate for laws and policies which support everyone involved in a pregnancy – from empowering women as mothers, to protecting the most vulnerable lives in the womb.



**Thank you for standing with us to
protect life at every stage.**



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