

PRESS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Stop Gendercide - UK parliamentarians to present sex-selective abortion bill on 4th November, campaign seeks international support

A cross-party group of UK MPs led by Fiona Bruce MP, is bringing forward a Bill to clarify that abortion for foetal sex is illegal.

The Bill makes clear that nothing in the Abortion Act 1967 permits termination of pregnancy on grounds of the sex of the unborn child.

By the time they hit 40, one third of UK women have had an abortion. Though UK law seems moderate on paper, it has been interpreted very liberally to enable free access to abortion up to 24 weeks pregnancy, and up to birth where there is a “substantial risk” or “serious handicap”.

Recently, it has emerged that the terms of the Abortion Act have been so widely interpreted that they may even permit an abortion on ground of fetal sex.

The three biggest institutions representing those who regulate and perform the majority of abortions in the UK all disagree on sex-selective abortion.

The Government argues that “*abortion on the grounds of gender alone is illegal*” [2]. However, the British Medical Association disagrees, arguing that there are sometimes mental health grounds for a sex-selective abortion.[3]The British Pregnancy Advisory (BPAS) disagrees with both the Government’s and BMA’s interpretations of the law. In their literature, still available on their website, they pose the question ‘*Is abortion for reasons of fetal sex illegal under the Abortion Act?*’ They answer ‘*No. The law is silent on the matter*’.[4]

At the moment, nothing can be done to ensure that these organisations toe the Government line.

Now a cross party group of MPs are sponsoring a new Bill designed to remove all doubt and to offer Parliament a chance to help women who are under pressure to have sex-selective abortions.

Fiona Bruce MP for Congleton said,

“Whatever you think about abortion, most agree that the sex of the baby should not justify a termination. I have many concerns about abortion practice more generally, but it’s very good to collaborate on this important project with colleagues who do not normally share my views. The law needs to be clarified, and women who are under pressure to terminate on the grounds of sex need to be offered alternatives.”

International support

In order to raise the international profile of the campaign, Stop Gendercide are appealing for support from outside the UK.

They are encouraging people to visit the Facebook page (www.facebook.com/stopgendercide), to LIKE the page and share one of the memes promoting the campaign on their Facebook page and other social media with the hash tag #stopgendercide.

For supporters from abroad, the more likes and visits this campaign manages to accrue, the harder it will be for the Government to ignore.

They also encouraging people to contact their friends in the UK and urge them to use the campaign website (www.stopgendercide.org) which has been set up with a feature that enables people to lobby their Members of Parliament on this important issue.

Background

Because of the way the law works in the UK, the legal status of sex-selective abortion is ambiguous. Although the sex of the child is not given as a ground for termination in the Abortion Act 1967, some argue that an abortion on mental health grounds could fall within the scope of the Act.

Gender abortion is a global problem. In countries where there is a strong preference for sons, tens of millions of girls have been selectively aborted – a conservative estimate given at a United Nations Population Fund presentation put the figure at 40 million in Asia and Europe alone[1]

There is no consensus on the incidence of gender abortion in the UK.

A recent Government report found no statistically significant discrepancy in gender ratios in the UK even when the data is broken down by ethnicity (the problem is thought to be worse in some ethnic minority communities).

However, studies carried out by Oxford and Imperial College academics found evidence of gender ratio skewing which they thought may be attributable to gender abortion.

Although the academics differ on the scale of the problem, there is an increasing body of first-hand testimony from UK resident women who say that they have obtained gender abortions in the UK, and are campaigning for Parliament to listen to them.

[ENDS]

Media Kit

A full media kit with images and calls to action to encourage people to support the campaign is available here - <http://www.stopgendercide.org/uk-parliamentarians-present-sex-selective-abortion-bill/>

Sources

[1] Christophe Z Guilmoto, *Sex imbalances at birth Trends, consequences and policy implications*, United Nations Population Fund, Hanoi (October 2011) https://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/Guilmoto_Revised_presentation_Hanoi_Oct2011.pdf,

[2] Prime Minister, Oral Answers to Questions 19 March 2014, c780 (Official Report)

[3] *'We recognise that in some cases doctors may come to the conclusion that the effects of having a child of a particular gender are so severe to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman as to provide legal and ethical justification for an abortion'* British Medical Association Press Release Abortion guidance Ignores Gender Complexity, Say BMA 27th May, 2014 <http://bma.org.uk/news-views-analysis/news/2014/may/abortion-guidance-ignores-gender-complexity-says-bma>

[4] British Pregnancy Advisory Service *Britain's Abortion Law What it says and Why* (British Pregnancy Advisory Service publishers, 2012), page 8.