



United Nations Human Rights Council, 23rd Session (27 May – 14 June 2013)

Item 3 General Debate

Monday 3 June 2013

Speaker: BHA, IHEU and CFI representative, Hannah Bock

Women's rights, contraception and abortion

Thank you, sir.

Mr President, one out of every five American women has been the victim of an attempted or actual rape in her lifetime,¹ that's more than a million women every year, 44% under the age of 18. Many such rapes lead to conception. But in many states, including North Dakota² and Mississippi³, women are facing ever more severe obstacles that will effectively make abortion impossible. Yet it is now well established that restricting abortion doesn't save babies, it kills mothers through clandestine abortion, and demonstrates an appalling lack of compassion for the women involved.⁴

In San Salvador, a court refused an abortion to a woman whose fetus had no chance of survival, and even though the woman will probably die if the pregnancy comes to term.⁵

In Malta, a woman has absolutely no right to an abortion under any circumstances.⁶

In Nicaragua, women are denied abortions even in the case of ectopic pregnancies, which, if allowed to proceed to term, kill both mother and child.⁷

Why do many states that outlaw abortion also restrict access to contraception when contraceptive use is such an effective means of reducing abortion demand? And why have so many states outlawed the sale of post-coital contraceptives, which are not abortifacients?

The answer lies in the extraordinarily successful anti-abortion campaigns run by the Catholic Church and religious fundamentalists. But the facts demonstrate that they are actually more interested in punishing women than in saving the unborn.

We urge the Council to make it clear that legal and administrative obstacles that restrict access to contraception, and deny a woman's right to an abortion, especially after being raped or when her life is at risk, are utterly abhorrent to this Council.

Thank you, Sir.

¹ www.feminist.com/antiviolence/facts.html

² http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/04/16/north-dakota-fetal-pain_n_3097026.html

³ <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/news/mississippi-abortion-law>

⁴ <http://www.gutmacher.org/media/inthenews/2009/05/14/Mexico.html>

⁵ <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/05/30/world/americas/el-salvador-abortion>

⁶ <http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20130319/local/-Blanket-abortion-ban-risks-women-s-right-to-life-462135>

⁷ <http://global.christianpost.com/news/abortion-ban-in-nicaragua-needlessly-endangering-womens-lives-say-activists-60425/>