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The Abortion Rights Campaign (ARC) is a broad-based grassroots movement for choice and change in Ireland. In the face of State inaction on the provision of abortion on the island of Ireland, we are building broad national support

- for a referendum to repeal Article 40.3.3° of the Irish Constitution;
- to push for the introduction of extensive abortion legislation by the Northern Ireland Assembly;
- to highlight and reduce the effects of stigma and shame on people exercising reproductive choice;
- to ensure the health and rights of women in pregnancy are protected in line with international human rights standards.

Irish abortion law and human rights

Article 40.3.3°: Introduced in 1983, Article 40.3.3° of the Irish Constitution equates the right to life of a pregnant woman with that of an embryo from the point of implantation. As a result, abortion is illegal in Ireland in almost all circumstances - except when a pregnant woman's life is at risk, including the risk of suicide. A dangerous and unworkable distinction between a pregnant woman's life and her health exists.

Article 40.3.3° in its actuality and through the State's rigid interpretation, prevents women in Ireland from accessing abortion and exercising the full spectrum of human and reproductive rights. In effect, the article assures that from the moment a woman becomes pregnant, in fact from her very capability of becoming pregnant, she loses her rights, including the right to health - a loss not experienced by men. Women in Ireland are actively discriminated against. ARC is preparing for a referendum for the Article's repeal; however such a referendum must be called by the Government, who have stated they will not deal with abortion again after passing the Protection of Life During Pregnancy Act 2013 (PLDPA).

Criminalisation: The recent re-criminalisation of abortion in almost all circumstances in the PLDPA is archaic, unnecessary, and contravenes human rights norms. The State should remove the chilling and unenforceable criminalisation of any abortion which takes place outside the narrow confines of the 2013 Act.

Guidelines: In order for any life-saving abortions to be performed in Ireland under the 2013 Act, the legal and procedural guidelines need to be made significantly clearer to the public by providing clear information for medical practitioners as to what constitutes a real and substantial risk to a pregnant woman's life and detailed information about pathways to access for abortion-seekers.

Travel and Discrimination: In order to end the discrimination against women with an inability to travel due to terms of residency, health, poverty or legal status, safe and legal abortion services must be accessible within the State, which the Thirteenth Amendment to the Irish Constitution ostensibly provides and acknowledges as a right to those women who are able to travel outside of the State.

Stigma and Silence: With over 160,000 women accessing abortion abroad since the 1980s and more still, risking imprisonment, by seeking secret re-criminalised abortions within the country, the real stories and real health demands of women are nearly impossible to bring to the attention of the public and the State, particularly with inflexible practices around "balance" keeping abortion a legally risky subject for media outlets to cover for fear of suit by anti-abortion legal groups. The State's lack of action and imposition of legal and other barriers has perpetuated decades of silence and secrecy.