

Universal Periodic Review, June 2015

Shadow (Parallel) Report: Føroya Pro Vita, Faroe Islands

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the European Convention on Human Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and other human rights documents state clearly that, everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person and that no one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. Likewise, these documents state that everyone has the right to freedom of conscience and freedom of information. They also guarantee basic rights such as water, food, shelter, medicine and education. On the other hand, these documents do not recognize any right to abortion. To date, every attempt to introduce such a right has been rejected and voted down at international level, leaving the issue of abortion to the jurisdiction of each state.

1. Our primary Concerns: Føroya Pro Vita is particularly concerned with the implementation of the rights to life, security of person and freedom from torture and degrading treatment, the right to competent and accessible healthcare and the right to freedom of information and freedom of conscience, particularly with regard to abortion. We are also concerned with the aims and content of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. The articles of the CEDAW convention include issues such as medical care, family planning, protection from violence, education and basic human rights. We reaffirm the San José Articles (UN, 2011).¹

2. CEDAW and the Faroese Abortion Law: In March 2015, the CEDAW report recommended that Denmark review its position with regard to the Faroese abortion law and questioned the quality of medical care available to women. The recommendation for abortion-on-demand (as in Denmark) is outside the remit of the CEDAW committee given that there is no internationally recognized right to abortion. The CEDAW committee also displays some ignorance with regard to the Faroe Islands.

2.1. The Faroe Islands is self-governing with regard to health care. There is an existing abortion law which permits abortion up to 16 weeks, 4 weeks later than Denmark. This criteria is loosely interpreted and in reality, abortion is available almost on demand.

2.2. There are three hospitals throughout the islands which provide pre and post-natal care and maternal care for women and a team of well qualified medical professionals. There is also a well developed infrastructure system and public transport services.

¹http://www.sanjosearticles.com/?page_id=2

- *Føroya Pro Vita is concerned at the poorly informed and misleading presentation of the medical care for Faroese citizens being presented in the CEDAW committee's recommendation, 2015.*

3. Abortion is not family planning: Abortion is not reproduction, it is destruction. It is the "failure" of family planning, and as such involves the deliberate elimination of developing human beings, most of whom are perfectly healthy. It engages discrimination in that defenseless unborn children are deliberately targeted because of size and location, for having a handicap, for being "inconvenient", "unwanted" or all too often, for being female.

- *Føroya Pro Vita is concerned by the easy availability of "emergency contraception" on the Faroe Islands without prescription, adequate supervision or follow-up, considering that this medication is 25 % stronger than the average contraceptive pill, provokes early abortion and may have longterm effects for women which are as yet unknown. There is also reason to be concerned that it is on sale to anyone over 15 years of age and that it is used quite frequently by some young women despite warnings to the contrary.*

4. Abortion is not health care: Many medical professionals have publicly declared that direct abortion – the purposeful targeting and destruction of the unborn child – is not medically necessary to save the life of a woman.²³ Good medical practise recognizes and allows for life-saving interventions even if this risks the life of the unborn child. In such cases, the aim is always to save both lives if possible.

4.1. Abortion compromises and corrupts the practise of medicine by killing instead of healing, and as such goes directly against the Hippocratic Oath.⁴ It is an inherent act of violence and an attack on the right to life of a developing human being at his/her most vulnerable stage of development.

- *Føroya Pro Vita protests the availability of abortion up to 16 weeks under a range of loosely interpreted criteria, and with no due regard for the rights of the unborn child.*

5. Abortion is a serious danger to women's health: Research carried out in several countries (Finland, Denmark, USA, New Zealand, India, China, Norway...) reveals that women who have abortions are at serious risk of both physical and psychological complications.⁵⁶⁷⁸⁹

²<http://www.dublindeclaration.com/>

³<http://www.aaplog.org/about-2/our-mission-statement/>

⁴<http://www.euthanasia.com/oathtext.html>

⁵<http://afterabortion.org/1999/more-research-on-post-abortion-issues/>

⁶<http://prolife.org.uk/2011/12/abortion-most-certainly-does-affect-women%E2%80%99s-mental-health-%E2%80%A6/>

5.1. Physical complications include a higher death rate when compared with women who did not have abortions, a 4-6 times higher suicide rate, a 40-60% greater breast cancer risk, haemorrhage, infection, ectopic pregnancies, infertility, higher rates of cervical cancer, perforation of the womb, subsequent miscarriages and premature births.

5.2. Psychological complications include severe depression, sleep disturbances, alcohol and drug abuse, eating disorders, sexual dysfunction, child neglect or abuse, post-abortion stress trauma, chronic relationship problems, repeat abortions and suicide. These dangers are often not conveyed to women seeking abortion, and are sometimes even denied or dismissed out of hand.

- *Føroya Pro Vita is deeply concerned at the fact that abortion is sometimes presented as health care on the Faroe Islands and elsewhere, despite the evidence to the contrary.*

6. Abortion is discriminatory: Women who receive a diagnosis during pregnancy pointing to health issues and handicaps often come under a lot of pressure to abort their unborn children. Parents are sometimes given little positive support or information, and even made to feel that they would be a burden on society if they do not choose abortion.

- *Føroya Pro Vita is concerned about the experiences of some women who report that they do not receive adequate information from professionals in this regard.*
- *Føroya Pro Vita is also concerned that women sometimes experience immense pressure to abort their unborn children because of possible health issues here on the Faroe Islands. We consider that eliminating unborn children because of size, location, gender, handicap, social background, economics or inconvenience to be a discriminatory act. Advocating abortion in these circumstances also sends a deeply offensive message to people with handicaps living amongst us. We consider that putting mothers and fathers under psychological and emotional pressure to abort their children, providing inadequate information and any lack of constructive medical care and support to be breaches of human rights.*

7. Abortion is associated with coercion: Available research reveals that up to 64% of women say they were rushed or coerced into abortion by partners, parents, professionals, employers and friends. Post-abortion trauma is an issue which is becoming widely recognized. Women who have abortions because of

⁷<http://www.lifenews.com/2015/06/01/more-than-100-studies-show-abortion-is-linked-to-premature-births/>

⁸<http://www.amazon.com/Complications-Abortions-Impact-Angela-Lanfranchi/dp/0920453368>

⁹<http://www.amazon.com/Forbidden-Grief-Unspoken-Pain-Abortion/dp/0964895781>

pressure or lack of information, support and resources are particularly vulnerable.¹⁰

- *Føroya Pro Vita is concerned about women on the Faroe Islands who report that they were psychologically pressured, threatened, abused and/or abandoned by their partners into having abortions. We are concerned about the post-abortive women and men amongst us, about the lack of up-to-date information available with regard to post-abortion trauma and the inadequate care provided for those who are sufferings. Lack of access to information or withholding of same is a breach of human rights, as is coercion to abort.*
- *Føroya Pro Vita is concerned about the recent statistics for attempted suicide amongst women on the Faroe Islands which were made publicly available in June 2015, given that there is a strong association between suicide and abortion amongst women.¹¹ Current research reveals that the female rate is double that of the male rate on the Faroe Islands (2009-2013: 110 females ; 57 males).*

8. Abortion compromises freedom of conscience: Abortion providers, doctors and nurses sometimes find themselves compromised because of their ethical stance with regard to abortion. Decisions about public health practices can be adversely affected when the professional competence of medical professionals is compromised and they find themselves pressured or obliged to either accept the practice of abortion or abandon their chosen field of work.

- *Føroya Pro Vita is concerned by the lack of clear guidelines and information with regard to freedom of conscience on the Faroe Islands. We have reason to fear that some professionals may come under pressure to engage directly or indirectly in abortions or that they may not find work because of their ethical convictions. We consider that there is need for clear guidelines and protection in this regard, in line with the right to freedom of conscience and Council of Europe Resolution 1763 (2010).¹²*

9. Our Recommendations: In light of our concerns, we find it incomprehensible that the CEDAW, other UN bodies, NGO 's and some medical professionals are advocating abortion as health care and even suggesting that resistance to abortion is cruel and degrading "institutionalized violence" and "religious extremism".

¹⁰<http://www.theunchoice.com/pdf/FactSheets/PortraitsOfCoercion.pdf>

¹¹<http://www.in.fo/news-detail/news/167-foeroyingar-innlagdir-fyri-at-royna-sjalvmord/>

¹²<http://assembly.coe.int/main.asp?Link=%2Fdocuments%2Fadoptedtext%2Fta10%2Feres1763.htm>

- (a) *Føroya Pro Vita* recommends that “emergency contraception” only be made available by prescription and that information be made publicly available regarding how often the drug is sold and under which circumstances.
- (b) We recommend that the age for selling contraceptives be set at 18 years of age, the same legal limit established for buying cigarettes and alcohol, prescription medicines, driving, voting and joining the army.
- (c) We further recommend that the Faroese authorities invest in providing accurate information about abortion methods and the psychological and physical aftermath of abortion.
- (d) We call on the relevant government and health authorities to invest in after-abortion-care for women and men suffering on the Faroe Islands.
- (e) We encourage the recent initiative by the Faroese government in setting up a helpline and making funds available to help women in crisis pregnancies. We encourage this development in so far as it provides positive alternatives to abortion and life-affirming support for women in crisis. We call on the relevant authorities to make adoption and fostering more accessible.
- (f) *Føroya Pro Vita* recommends that the relevant government and health authorities urgently research the primary reasons why women “choose” abortion on the Faroe Islands as identifying the reasons will help to address the needs of women in a life-affirming way.
- (g) We advocate that women and their unborn children be protected from every form of violence and coercion in accordance with internationally recognized rights to life, security of person and freedom from torture and degrading treatment.
- (h) We desire to see abortion eliminated on the Faroe Islands, or at the very least reduced. We recommend that the current limit of 16 weeks be reviewed.
- (j) We call for guidelines to be drawn up and implemented by the relevant authorities for the protection of the internationally recognized right to freedom of conscience of all professionals, particularly medical professionals.
- (k) *Føroya Pro Vita* recommends that those who abuse and exploit women by withholding important information, applying any form of coercion, failing to supervise and provide safe pre and post-natal medical care or putting women's lives at risk through negligence, incompetence and the corruption of medicine, be prosecuted in a court of law.

- *(I) We also recommend that a representative body be established for victims of such abuses where they may make their complaints and receive adequate legal protection and justice.*

Føroya Pro Vita, Faroe Islands, 19th. June 2015

Tlf: +298 771700 - E-mail: provita@provita.fo - Website: www.provita.fo