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ABORTION LAWS: ETHICAL AND PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Induced abortion, which is usually referred to simply as abortion is the termination of a pregnancy before the fetus is viable outside the confines of the uterus. For purposes of this study, late-term abortion (which is termination of pregnancy after the fetus is viable i.e. after 22 weeks of gestation) is not included in the definition of abortion.

Abortion remains to be a topic of widespread debate and contention. Different countries have varying laws that regulate abortion, and the rationale behind those laws also vary depending on the country's culture, religion, economic state, political will etc.

The purpose of this study is to compare and contrast the laws governing abortion in two countries: Belarus and Sri Lanka. The reason for selecting these two countries is primarily because there is a stark contrast in the laws. In Belarus, the law allows for abortion upon demand up till the 12th week of gestation, and under special reasons, abortion may be performed up until the 22nd week of pregnancy. Whereas in Sri Lanka, abortion is categorically deemed illegal, except if there is an imminent threat to the mother's life. This contrast in the laws makes these two countries ideal for this study. The author also has personal reasons for picking these two countries, as he is from Sri Lanka and currently resides in Belarus, and therefore has access to adequate information about both countries.

The differences between the two countries doesn't end there. In the recent years, there has been an increase in political will to change the abortion laws in both countries. In Belarus, there are movements campaigning for the increase in the regulation of abortions. A major factor that motivates these movements appears to be the decline in the population growth of Belarus. In stark contrast to this, in Sri Lanka there are many movements advocating the legalization of abortion, especially in cases such as rape, incest and severe deformities of the unborn child. Interestingly, in contrast to Belarus, Sri Lanka has an increasing problem of overpopulation.

In comparing and contrasting the abortion laws of these two countries, it will be possible to consider the various ethical and practical questions surrounding abortion laws, and possibly arrive at answers.

The method used for this study will be two-fold. Firstly, a questionnaire will be circulated among a selected group of people from both countries, in order to gauge the public opinion on these questions. Secondly, an in-depth research of the abortion laws of both countries will be carried out.