

## **The Catholic Nurses Association (UK)**

### **Comment on Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), on the right to life.**

We welcome the opportunity to respond to the Draft proposals on Human Rights by the UN Geneva Committee. Human rights, including the rights of the child, must be interpreted in the light of the **Charter of the United Nations**, set up following the Second World War in an attempt perhaps to highlight to all nations the barbarity of the anti-life ideology tragically revealed during this war. This, it appears is what is heralded by this set of potentially catastrophic recommendations regarding the precious gift of life and the inherent inviolability of the human right to it, whether born or unborn.

The Preamble of the Statute of the Council of Europe describe spiritual and moral values as the common heritage of European peoples and the true source of individual freedom, political liberty and the rule of law, principles which form the basis of all genuine democracy.

This Charter of the United Nations has committed Member States under Article 55 to promote the “universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for **all** without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion. This brought human rights within the domain of international law: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 (UDHR) (1948),<sup>1</sup> the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948),<sup>2</sup> **the Declaration of the Rights of the Child (DRC)** 1959 and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights 1966 (ICCPR). The UN Human Rights Committee in Geneva appears, however, to be now guaranteeing a "Right to Kill " by attempting to impose on the whole world the legalisation of abortion and of assisted suicide.

#### **Abortion**

The suppression of any reference to human life before birth, in the Draft proposals, deprives it of any protection. The majority of the UN proposing committee by removing any reference to the child, appear to believe that all human life starts only at birth. New technology illustrates clearly the humanity of the unborn child from his or her early days, post conception. The Draft document says little or nothing about the protection of women who wish to give birth to their children, nor on infant health and even less on the obligation made to States to prevent the recourse to abortion. The recognised studies exposing the detrimental effects, both physical and mental on women post abortion need acknowledgement. The reasons for abortion, often reflected in abusive relationships and circumstances where women feel coerced are not addressed as a threat to the safety of women and their unborn child.

#### **Assisted Suicide and Euthanasia**

The right to life is one of the greatest struggles of our time. If expectations and interpretations of possibly new perceptions of Universal **human rights were to prevail to include the right to kill**, apart from the obvious contradiction and dereliction of States' duties to protect its citizens, the respect of human life would only be guaranteed to those persons **born** and in **good health**. The right to life would become a “right to life and to kill” The contradiction between advocating the right to life yet allowing death on demand for the most vulnerable (born or unborn) is an extraordinary incorporation of an anti-life ideology into supposed Universal Human Rights to life. The UN Draft must recognise the need for effective Palliative Care in this era of recognised advances in knowledge and skill in this field of care, pioneered by Britain through the work of Dame Cicely Saunders.

#### **Conclusion**

It is important to remember the well-known dictum of George Santayana: those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it. This draft appears to propose a revolutionary, new, official and universal interpretation of the “right to life” by introducing a “right to kill” by forcing States to legalise abortion on demand and euthanasia. States opposed to this revolutionary change to the true concepts of human rights would, thereby, be exposed to judgement for refusing to accept such a new and dangerous ideology. Revolutions that give an individual, absolute power, end as brutal dictatorships. These proposed changes are against the will of States/Parties, against the letter of the text and in contradiction of the UN mandate. Inclusion of the right to kill as part of the UN Committee's proposals is to abandon the life of the frailest to the power of the fittest, opening the way to eugenics, unfettered abortion, assisted suicide and euthanasia.

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