



29th session of the Universal Periodic Review – Barbados

Introduction

1. Barbados should continue to affirm the sanctity of life on the part of all human beings, including the unborn, and resist calls to liberalize access to abortion. The Bahamas should also address the issue of high levels of maternal mortality and morbidity in the Bahamas, as well as the proliferation of potentially problematic sex education curricula.

Abortion, Maternal Health, Sexual Education and Parental Rights

2. With the adoption of the 1983 Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, abortion has been legalized on fairly broad grounds, including with regard to the life or physical or mental health of the mother, and fetal abnormalities that would render the child seriously handicapped.
3. Frequent calls from abortion advocates to increase legal abortion access as a necessary precondition to solving the issue of maternal mortality and morbidity are misguided. Indeed, legalizing abortion does not guarantee that pregnancy and childbirth will become safer when the real problems with Barbados' health-care system do not involve lack of access to abortion.
4. The government provides school outreach programmes for adolescents in an effort to reduce teenage pregnancy. Adolescent pregnancy rates are nevertheless still very high in Barbados, with 40 per cent of pregnancies occurring in women under the age of 20. Barbados must ensure cooperation with parents and community and religious leaders, and respect their religious values when providing sex education programs, including by affording parents their right to opt their children out from such programs.

Recommendations

5. ADF International suggests the following recommendations be made to Barbados:
 - a. Affirm that there is no international human right to abortion and that the right to life applies from conception until natural death, and as such that the unborn child has the right to protection of his or her life at all points;
 - b. Resist calls to further liberalise abortion, and instead implement laws aimed at protecting the right to life of the unborn;
 - c. Recognize that the full legalisation of abortion, in a country with high levels of maternal mortality and morbidity and with severe problems with access to proper health-care, will not make pregnancy and childbirth any safer;
 - d. Improve health care infrastructure, access to emergency obstetric care, midwife training, and resources devoted to maternal health;

- e. Focus on safely getting mothers and babies through pregnancy and childbirth, with special attention paid to improving health-care access for women from poor and/or rural backgrounds;
- f. Review sex education programs to ensure that they are age-appropriate and support traditional family values in accordance with the values of the people of Barbados; and
- g. Ensure that students and their parents are able to opt out of sex education programs which violate their religious or moral convictions.