

WORKING TOWARDS A PLURALISTIC FUTURE

NEWSLETTER BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE SIKH HUMAN RIGHTS GROUP
NGO WITH SPECIAL CONSULTATIVE STATUS AT THE UNITED NATIONS



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WELCOME TO OUR JUNE 2022 NEWSLETTER

DIRECTORS NOTE

BY DR JASDEV SINGH RAI (SHRG DIRECTOR) (LONDON OFFICE)

In June, the United Nations Human Rights Council is in full swing. It concentrates on several specialist issues and there is usually competition amongst NGOs to speak. For example, some of the Regular Sessions only permit two NGOs to speak whilst others can go up to ten. The June Regular Session is shorter with a heavy agenda packed in three and a half weeks. The Sikh Human Rights Group (SHRG) was fortunate to be able to speak on a few of these topics - some of the speeches are reproduced in this newsletter.

The Sikh Human Rights Group now has nearly 20 different projects running concurrently. We try and offer our position and suggestions at the United Nations in the hope that we can influence the debate. The SHRG also tries to introduce a Sikh perspective.

Our interests include climate change, diversity, neurodiversity, gender, artificial intelligence, transnational corporations and human rights amongst various others topics.

The SHRG has joined with several organisations to push for greater support during menstruation for young women around the world. It is quite painful to know that many young girls grow up unaware and unsupported of why a period occurs. They are frightened. In many countries, women cannot afford products to manage menstruation. They end up staying at home during this time to avoid embarrassment and some are forced to use unhygienic clothes or products. This can result in infections.

Consequently, the SHRG is lobbying for an end to VAT and other taxes placed upon products that are used to manage menstruation. It considers this to be gender discrimination particularly as health products used by men are not taxed.

The SHRG is also campaigning for further education for young girls on what is a natural aspect of their growing up or development. The SHRG also wants some countries to provide free tampons, etc... for menstruating women who cannot afford them. Thirdly, it is lobbying for environmentally friendly products. These issues were raised in a statement made at the United Nations Human Rights Council. Many experts agreed with the SHRGs position.

A major blow to women in the USA has been the Supreme Court's decision to reverse **Roe v Wade**. This ruling from 1973 had given women control over their bodies and their lives. It made the right to abortion a fundamental right. Recently the US Supreme Court has reversed this.

In this newsletter, two of our interns have written well-researched articles on how and why it was done and what impact it will have.

This reversal raises some important issues. Most religions are against any form of abortion. However, in the realm of the State, there are people of different beliefs and no belief. Everyone lives in the State with the hope that their approach to life will be respected without being forced to accept the doctrines of others. There is also freedom for people following different religions to pursue their beliefs without their actions being commanded by a secular State. This is the separation of Church and State. All agree on some fundamental human rights.

The reversal of **Roe v Wade** appears to have broken the arrangement between State and Church. It has given the Church power to impose its position on the whole population within a State.

There are other important issues that the US judgement also intervenes on such as who decides for a woman. For centuries in the west, male-dominated societies decided what scope females had with their lives. Thankfully a lot of this has changed in law. The US decision appears to be reversing this advance. It appears to be going backwards in time.

The decision has been cleverly made concentrating on the separation of powers between the Federal legislature and regional (state) legislatures. However, the consequences and the reasons are obvious to most. The decision could give confidence to other countries around the world to push back on women's freedoms.

We look forward to your continuing interest and we hope you will also support the work of the Sikh Human Rights Group. Please visit our website for updates by clicking [here](#).

Yours sincerely,

Dr Jasdev Singh Rai

WELCOME TO OUR JUNE 2022 NEWSLETTER

EDITORS NOTE

BY MR CARLOS ARBUTHNOTT (LONDON OFFICE)

(HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICER & PROJECT COORDINATOR AT THE SHRG)

Welcome to the June 2022 edition of the Sikh Human Rights Group's monthly newsletter informing you of our ongoing work. Unfortunately, we are not able to cover everything that we do in this brief newsletter. Nevertheless, and as you will see we are engaged in a wide variety of international human rights issues to promote our founding doctrine of Pluralism.

We have also taken on a number of interns and volunteers who take up research, take notes during United Nations conferences and events and write reports. Consequently, we always try to encourage them to contribute to our newsletter.

If you would like to get involved in any of our ongoing projects or for anything else then please contact me via email at carlos.arbuthnott@shrg.ngo

I very much hope that you enjoy the contents of this month's edition.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Carlos Arbuthnott



(Mr Carlos Arbuthnott)



Art Workshop

17 AUGUST 2022
(WEDNESDAY)
16:00 TO 17:30

GURDWARA SRI GURU SINGH SABHA SOUTHALL
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THIS EVENT IS FOR FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN OR ADULTS
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FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:

CARLOS.ARBUTHNOTT@SHRG.NGO

See you there!



GURDWARA SRI GURU
SINGH SABHA
SOUTHALL

shrg
SIKH HUMAN
RIGHTS GROUP

SEND After School Club

Special Educational Needs & Disabilities

Every Wednesday from 4:00pm to 5:30pm

At Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha (Upstairs Hall)

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LET'S LEARN ABOUT ...

GURDWARA SAHIB

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SENSORY PLAY

KIRTAN

STORIES - SAKHIES

SIKH RHYMES

MUCH MORE



PLAY. LEARN. GROW.

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL 50TH REGULAR SESSION

BY MR CARLOS ARBUTHNOTT (LONDON OFFICE)



To watch the full video please click [here](#)

On Tuesday the 21st of June 2022, Ms Bethan Walters our Human Rights, Communications and Media Officer spoke on behalf of the SHRG at the very first Panel on Menstrual Hygiene, Human Rights and Gender Equality. We were one of two NGOs to speak.

'This was such an incredible experience and liberating to hear all of the panellists and country delegates discussing how important menstrual health, dignity, education and empowerment is.

One of the main points we made was that while Menstrual Hygiene Day is an incredible and empowering day, the language and term hygiene is part of the stigma and taboo attached to menstruation. We recommend that we change the name to Menstrual Health or Menstruation Day.

This creates the opportunity for us to broaden the discussion on menstruation and allows us to tackle gendered-based tax discrimination; health, ethical and environmental impacts of menstrual products; the right to education; the rights of the child and the prevention of child marriage; the right to dignity; the right to health, both physical and mental; the right to work as well as access to adequate water and sanitation, all of which are linked to menstruation.

*We also believe that if we celebrate Menstrual Health Day then we will be advancing the debate that menstrual products are health items and not luxury items. This will help so many around the world who are petitioning against the tampon tax that is still prevalent in most countries. The existence of the tampon tax is a clear example of gendered-based tax discrimination. Eliminating taxes on menstrual products, both sustainable and disposal, is consistent with the human right to be free from discrimination as enshrined in the **Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action 1993** and the **Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women**.*

It was so reassuring to hear so many agree with this position including the representative of the World Health Organisation and Spain. We are excited about this well overdue discussion and to be a part of this from the beginning and we look forward to next year's resolution.'

- Ms Bethan Walters

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL 50TH REGULAR SESSION

BY MR CARLOS ARBUTHNOTT (LONDON OFFICE)



To watch the full video please click [here](#)

On Tuesday the 21st of June 2022 Mr Carlos Arbuthnott, our Human Rights Officer and Project Coordinator, made the following oral submission at the United Nations Human Rights Council's 50th Regular Session in Geneva. Specifically, regarding the fact that to meet their duty to protect human rights under Pillar I of the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs), Member State Governments should put the needs of their people at the heart of pandemic responses and recovery efforts involving business by using a smart mix of legal and policy measures to require and enable business enterprises to respect human rights but in particular regarding the fact that the particulars of this intended smart mix still remain unclear.

Why is this important?

Clarifying the particulars of this intended smart mix would not only increase transparency, engagement and accountability between stakeholders but would also provide civil society organisations and UN Treaty Bodies with the opportunity to pre-empt the major areas of contention or difference between stakeholders. This in turn would allow international human rights organisations, State Governments, legislatures, national judicial bodies and civil society organisations to strategize accordingly as we move into the next decade of action.



UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL 50TH REGULAR SESSION

BY MR CARLOS ARBUTHNOTT (LONDON OFFICE)

Full Text

*'Thank you very much... as stated at paragraph 13 of this working groups report **A/HRC/50/40**, to meet their duty to protect human rights under Pillar I of the Guiding Principles, States should put the needs of their people at the heart of pandemic responses and recovery efforts involving business by using a smart mix of legal and policy measures to require and enable business enterprises to respect human rights. However, the particulars of this intended smart mix still remain unclear.*

Therefore, the SHRG would like to take this opportunity to request that this working group undertakes consultations with relevant stakeholders and then releases a substantive report on but not limited to the following matters:

- The extent to which stakeholders believe that the Binding Legal Instrument will enhance civil societies' access to appropriate remedies; and*
- To what extent do they understand the forthcoming practical operation of the UNGPs and the Binding Legal Instrument? In other words, do they believe that the Binding Legal Instrument will serve to enhance the current matrix derived from the UNGPs or whether it will operate as an unconnected instrument of international human rights law?*

For not only would this increase transparency, engagement and accountability between stakeholders but it would also provide civil society organisations and UN Treaty Bodies with the opportunity to pre-empt the major areas of contention or difference between stakeholders. This in turn would allow international human rights organisations, State Governments, legislatures, national judicial bodies and civil society organisations to strategize accordingly as we move into the next decade of action.'



UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL 50TH REGULAR SESSION

BY MR CARLOS ARBUTHNOTT (LONDON OFFICE)



To watch the full video please click [here](#)

On Thursday the 23rd of June 2022 our Human Rights Officer and Project Coordinator, Mr Carlos Arbuthnott, made the following oral submission at the 50th Regular Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council.

Specifically, regarding the fact that the 8th of October 2021 marked a turning point in the evolution of human rights as the United Nations Human Rights Council adopted a historic resolution recognising the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment (**Resolution 48/13**) but also regarding the fact that the multiple challenges, issues and threats of climate change and other forms of environmental degradation demand recovery efforts that prioritise disempowered and marginalised communities.

Why is this important?

Member State Governments and other relevant stakeholders when implementing or upholding the new resolution must continue to act upon the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Developments recommendation, contained within his report **A/HRC/48/56**, that opportunities must be provided for equal and meaningful participation in all relevant planning and decision-making processes, including persons with disabilities, women, young people, minorities and members of other disempowered and marginalised groups.

In other words, the United Nations and other large international organisations, Member State Governments, NGOs and civil society actors must continue to encourage different civilisations and cultures to codify and promote their own ethical values to achieve the goals of **Resolution 48/13**. Whether through a regime of rights or responsibilities is very much a cultural preference.



UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL 50TH REGULAR SESSION

BY MR CARLOS ARBUTHNOTT (LONDON OFFICE)

Full Text

'Thank you very much... In furtherance to our report, the 8th of October 2021 marked a turning point in the evolution of human rights as the Human Rights Council adopted a historic resolution recognising the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment - **Resolution 48/13**.

Whilst this right is already recognised in law by more than 80% of Member States the new resolution should be the catalyst for universal recognition in constitutions, legislation and regional human rights treaties, as well as for accelerated action to address the global environmental crisis.

The multiple challenges, issues and threats of climate change and other forms of environmental degradation also demand recovery efforts that prioritise disempowered and marginalised communities.

Therefore, in the Sikh Human Right Group's opinion Governments and other relevant stakeholders when implementing or upholding the new resolution should act upon the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Developments recommendation, contained within his report **A/HRC/48/56**, that opportunities must be provided for equal and meaningful participation in all relevant planning and decision-making processes, including persons with disabilities, women, young people, minorities and members of other disempowered and marginalised groups.

Accordingly, SHRG would like to suggest that the United Nations and other large international organisations, Member State Governments, NGOs and civil society actors encourage different civilisations and cultures to codify and promote their own ethical values to achieve the goals of **Resolution 48/13**. Whether through a regime of rights or responsibilities is very much a cultural preference'.



UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL 50TH REGULAR SESSION

BY MR CARLOS ARBUTHNOTT (LONDON OFFICE)



To watch the full video please click [here](#)

On Monday the 27th of June 2022 our Human Rights Officer, Mr Yaku Fernández Landa, made the following oral submission at the 50th Regular Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council.

Specifically, at the Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights. Promoting the idea that 'to design social programs, we must recognise informal institution and millenary practices that are already in place...'

Full Text

'Mister President, in the Sikh Human Rights Group, we believe that all forms of material instability and precarity are inherently extreme. While poverty varies widely across countries, it is usually intertwined with social and cultural exclusion. In this situation, there are often informal institutions that are built among people who suffer from marginalisation.

Within excluded communities, we can find many examples of collective and consistent efforts that, based on reciprocity, can ensure a certain level of predictability, reducing the impact of dramatic events. For example, institutions such as rotating savings and credit associations are set up to overcome some aspects of social exclusion.

To fight off poverty, we must acknowledge that poverty is not caused by the inaction of people suffering from socially disadvantaged conditions. In fact, poverty is caused by the lack of a consistent endeavour from national authorities to make excluded people the leading actor when designing social programs.

In developing countries with a long-lasting history of social and ethnic exclusion, informal institutions and millenary practices are already in place. These practices and institutions must be contemplated in the design of social protection programs with the active participation of the target people.

This is how we can ensure social dialogue and build confidence with populations who do not feel listened to in their home countries. This is also how we can design tailored programs that consider social and cultural particularities so these programs can effectively impede the reproduction of poverty.

Failing to do this may reduce the marvellous goal of eradicating poverty to a bureaucratic work that perpetuates exclusion through other means. Thank you...'

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

50TH REGULAR SESSION

BY MR CARLOS ARBUTHNOTT (LONDON OFFICE)

SHRGs Written Statement Re: ID with the SR on Climate Change

The 8th of October 2021 marked a turning point in the evolution of human rights as the United Nations Human Rights Council adopted a historic resolution recognising, for the first time at a global level, the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment - **Resolution 48/13**. Whilst this right is already recognised in law by more than 80 per cent of the United Nations Member States the new resolution should be, in the United Nations Human Rights Councils and the Sikh Human Rights Groups (SHRG) opinion, the catalyst for universal recognition in constitutions, legislation and regional human rights treaties, as well as for accelerated action to address the global environmental crisis.

However, it is extremely important to remember that the multiple challenges, issues and threats of climate change and other forms of environmental degradation demand recovery efforts that prioritise women, young people and other disempowered and marginalised communities. Therefore, in SHRGs opinion it is a human rights imperative that State Governments and other relevant stakeholders when enacting, implementing or upholding **Resolution 48/13** act upon the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Developments recommendation, in paragraph 6 of his report entitled **A/HRC/48/56**, that Governments and by association their electorate should consistently promote open channels for participation at all stages of the planning, implementation and monitoring of climate-related policies and programmes for all relevant stakeholders. Opportunities should be provided for equal and meaningful participation in all relevant planning and decision-making processes of the most disadvantaged sectors of society, including persons with disabilities, women, children and young people, minorities, Indigenous peoples, peasants, persons of African descent and members of other disempowered and marginalised groups.

For example, as stated by the Special Rapporteur on the issue of human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment in his report entitled **A/HRC/49/5**, while all humans are exposed to pollution and toxic chemicals, there is compelling evidence that the burden of contamination falls disproportionately upon the shoulders of individuals, groups and communities that are already enduring poverty, discrimination and systemic marginalisation. Women, children, minorities, migrants, Indigenous peoples, older persons and persons with disabilities are potentially vulnerable, for a variety of economic, social, cultural and biological reasons. Workers, especially in low and middle-income nations, are at risk because of elevated exposures on the job, poor working conditions, limited knowledge about chemical risks and lack of access to health care. Millions of children are employed in potentially hazardous sectors including agriculture, mining and tanning. This is important as the disturbing phenomenon of poor and marginalised communities being more heavily affected by pollution is a form of environmental injustice. Environmental injustices related to pollution and the production, export, use and disposal of toxic substances are rooted in racism, discrimination, colonialism, patriarchy, impunity and political systems that systematically ignore human rights.

In pursuit of achieving the goal of clean air and ensuring marginalised and minority groups are considered in policies and action plans by Member State Governments, we wish to suggest the Sikh Human Rights Group (SHRG) position or that a plural approach is taken to the aforementioned matters. The SHRG firmly believes that there is a tendency, amongst the international environmental protection community and prominent international environmental organisations and agencies, such as the United Nations, toward universalising ethical values and attempting to form environmental protection Conventions, Treaties and regulations based on a mythical assumption that there is one universal set of collective values. This type of so-called universalism is the idea that one size fits all or that one universal ideology of ethics can justifiably permeate all international agreements and can therefore be directly applicable to all categories of persons around the world. That this universalistic outlook is the key to solving all of the environmental issues that currently persist around the globe. However, what the above model fails to appreciate is the fact that different people, cultures, civilisations and countries have different concepts and approaches, which also change over time, to political, economic, and social...

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL 50TH REGULAR SESSION

BY MR CARLOS ARBUTHNOTT (LONDON OFFICE)

SHRGs Written Statement Re: ID with the SR on Climate Change

policies based on historical and cultural influences that determine their governance or their individual approaches when it comes to tackling the myriad of environmental issues and threats that are currently persisting around the world as well as making marginalised and minority communities inclusive within wider society.

Almost all cultures, civilizations and community belief systems have some concepts, rules and taboos that can inform us about the human relationship with the environment and with each other. This deep understanding, reverence and experience, reflects the consciousness of our evolving place in the environment. Through our affiliates' [Repository of World Views of Nature](#) project, we can see how all Indigenous peoples have sophisticated environmental protection concepts that date back to prehistory.

However, what has occurred through a universalist approach is many environmental organisations and agencies marginalise the pearls of wisdom that cultures and community beliefs carry about human relationships with nature, and which were embedded in traditions, customs, festivals and outlooks.

The SHRG respectfully submits that it is only when communities from different cultures, civilisations and nations along with minorities and persons with disabilities, women, children and young people, older persons, minorities, Indigenous peoples, peasants, persons of African descent and members of other disempowered and marginalised groups rediscover the reverence for nature, biodiversity, and other life forms in their own way, through their own customs, beliefs and cultures that the human population as a whole will act with greater passion for the protection of our environment, take ownership of their development and move away from what is currently found under the prevailing utilitarian, legalistic and rationalistic approach.

Consequently, the SHRG would like to suggest that the United Nations and other large international organisations, Member State Governments, NGOs and civil society actors agree on goals such as what precisely is desirably clean air or how much to reduce pollution by and at the same time encourage different civilisations and cultures to codify and promote their own ethical values to achieve these goals. Whether this is through a regime of rights or responsibilities is very much a cultural preference. Let us concentrate on achieving a clean, healthy and sustainable environment - **Resolution 48/13** for all and promote a plurality of approaches to reach those goals.



ROE -V- WADE

BY MS APRIL HAMILTON (INTERN AT THE SHRG) (NEW YORK OFFICE)

Decided on the 23rd of January 1973, **Roe v Wade** was a landmark decision made by the Supreme Court of the United States. That ruled that abortion was a constitutional right, spurring a decades-long debate on the conflicting ideologies. The decision was subsequently reinforced by the Supreme Court decision in **Planned Parenthood v Cassey 1993**, which reaffirmed the right to abortion.

Over the years there have been attempts by states to tighten restrictions on abortion. A prime example of this is Texas, where policies such as the '**Women's Right to Know Act 2003**' were passed, which consequently but indirectly led medical professionals to give misleading information on abortion procedures to pregnant women. Another Texan policy passed in 2017 requires companies to only cover abortion costs in a separate plan. The anti-abortion policies in Texas reached their peak in 2021 when the state legislature passed **Senate Bill 8** or the '**Texas Heartbeat Act**', which permitted civil legal action to sue individuals or providers who assisted or participated in abortion practices after 6 weeks of pregnancy. This Bill sparked an outcry amongst pro-abortion supporters whilst being applauded by anti-abortion supporters and encouraged other more conservative states to enact similar policies.

Many people are wondering why and how such a policy like **Roe v Wade** was overturned, and this lies in both the United States Constitution and individual state constitutions. The primary argument of those in favour of overturning **Roe v Wade** is that the ruling was unclear and held no true constitutional justification. At the forefront of the argument was Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito who deemed the ruling "*egregiously wrong from the start*", asserting that the Federal Government should "*heed the Constitution and return the issue of abortion to people's elected representatives*". This presents an entirely new issue. Before **Roe v Wade**, several states still had explicit anti-abortion laws, making it clear that while the United States Constitution could enforce new policies, it was limited in its ability to dictate pre-existing ones. On a state level, the discussion surrounding **Roe v Wade** appears to be ideological in both a religious and political party sense.

For many anti-abortion organisations, the primary argument against the procedure is the belief that it is both against their God's will and that it is murder. The side most vocal about their anti-abortion stance is the state's republican party, which dominates Texas in every part of the state legislature and is heavily supported by Evangelical Protestants. The official platform of the Texas Republican Party asserts a belief in "*The laws and nature of God*" and in its principles lists several policies influenced by the religious beliefs of its party members. While the United States Constitution does not mention God at any point, the word "God" or anything relating to the divine is said at least once in every state constitution, being mentioned roughly 200 times nationwide.

The overturning of **Roe v Wade** and the previous anti-abortion policies within the state of Texas has not only exposed the inconsistencies within the federal and state constitutions, but the various social and partisan powers at play with every policy made. Now Supreme Court Justices contemplate overturning other long-standing landmark rulings. As this happens it is important to recognise the many forces dictating policy-making in the United States and what it means for the country's future.



R -V- WADE

THE WIDER IMPLICATIONS

BY MS HANNA BAJWA (INTERN AT THE SHRG) (LONDON OFFICE)

In the April SHRG Monthly Bulletin, Ms Sukhmani Mandair warned of the possibility of an era in which the women's right to have an abortion in the United States without Governmental restriction would be reversed. Two months later, this possibility has now become a reality as the US Supreme Court has struck down **Roe v Wade** ending forty-nine years of the constitutionally protected right to abortion. Interestingly, both the 'pro-life' movement, arguing in favour of restricting abortion access and the 'pro-choice' position, contending it's a woman's right to choose what's happening to her body, use human rights language to justify their positions. The question about abortion is, fundamentally, a question about the 'right to life' - but whose right to life?

This ruling comes at a time when the majority of the US population supports abortion rights. For instance, a recent survey by the Pew Research Centre found that 61 per cent of US adults believe that abortion should be legal in all or most instances. Even the AP-NORC poll found that 68 per cent of 'born again or evangelical Christians' thought that a woman should be able to access legal abortion if she is pregnant as a result of rape or incest, and 28 per cent if she 'Does not want to be pregnant for any reason'. In the other poll, 24 per cent of practising Catholics said that the Supreme Court should 'Allow abortion to be legal without restriction at any time' and only 33 per cent stated that the courts should 'Make abortion illegal'. There has been a heavy backlash with almost 400 large protests organised nationwide. Despite this, some states already had highly restrictive abortion access measures regarding abortion access even before **Roe v Wade** was overturned last week. Some of these measures could be described as somewhat devious even before the court overturned **Roe v Wade**. Loopholes and uncertainty surrounding the legality of the procedure, effectively outlawed it before the courts weighed in. In many states that were referred to as 'trigger' states, as soon as the ruling was announced, the procedure to criminalise and legalise abortion was put into action, leaving many pregnant women stranded who were about to undergo the procedure. While judges in Louisiana, Texas, and Utah temporarily blocked their bans, allowing some abortions to resume, in nine states abortions have ceased completely.

There is no way to predict what the true impact of this ruling will be. However, what seems clear is that it is a violation of health care rights. That is a frightening notion in a country as big and powerful as the United States. By imposing prison terms of up to ten years on health care professionals who perform abortions as well as the suspension of their medical licenses, it acts as a major deterrent to medical professionals who perform abortions. Criminalising abortion and those who conduct them are in addition to other instances in which women are criminalised and prosecuted for pregnancy outcomes, such as charges under manslaughter laws, homicide laws, and chemical endangerment laws.

Experts predict that despite this crackdown on safe and legal abortions, women will still seek them out which will lead to a spike in unsafe and potentially life-threatening procedures. Every year, about 25 million or 45% of all abortions worldwide are performed in a hazardous environment that directly leads to 50,000 deaths or to the temporary or permanent disability of 5 million women. The toll of the reversal of the **Roe v Wade** decision will be borne by women on low incomes and women from ethnic minorities. Estimates on the impact of an abortion ban suggest that there could be a 21% increase in mortality overall and a 33% increase for Black women. The US already has the highest maternal mortality rate in the developed world. Therefore, the criminalisation of abortion not only exacerbates health outcomes for many women, but also contributes to the structural discrimination experienced by ethnic minority communities in the United States due to overcriminalisation, over-policing, and mass incarceration. Another heavy burden falls upon low-income women whose poor access to health care makes unintended pregnancies more likely. In many instances, they will now be forced to travel many hundreds of miles to neighbouring states where they can obtain an abortion. All of this at much greater expense. Organising an abortion will become more difficult and time-consuming. On the other hand, several major companies, including Amazon, Citigroup, Apple and Levi Strauss, have announced that they will cover abortion-related travel expenses.

R -V- WADE

THE WIDER IMPLICATIONS

BY MS HANNA BAJWA (INTERN AT THE SHRG) (LONDON OFFICE)

It is not only women in the United States that will be affected by this ruling. Furthermore, **Roe v Wade** has been influential in court rulings that have gained significant gains in reproductive freedom in other countries. For example, in Kenya, the High Court of Malindi expressly mentions and considers specific points from **Roe v Wade** in confirming that abortion care is a fundamental right under the Kenyan constitution. Thus, the decision hinders efforts to protect reproductive health and justice in the US and makes it easier for abortion access to be restricted internationally by limiting the constitutional right to abortion.

In the current political discourse, it appears that the right to life of women and unborn children are viewed symmetrically. Yet upon examination of human rights law, it is clear this is not the case. In reality, international human rights law provides very little protection for the unborn. Comparatively, the rights to life, health, physical and mental integrity, non-discrimination, and equality of women are well established and fairly well defined. In order to prevent a breach of human rights, interventions made on behalf of future persons must not violate the rights of the present adult, namely the pregnant woman whose womb results in a pregnancy. The rights of a born person trump the rights of the unborn person. Yet seemingly not so in the United States.



United Nations Engagement Opportunities 2022

A large, faint watermark of the United Nations logo is centered in the background. It features a world map with latitude and longitude lines, surrounded by a laurel wreath.

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