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RIGHT TO ABORTION: AN ETHICAL DIMENSION

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One of the most difficult and divisive socio-legal problems in the globe has been the right to abortion. The liberty of people to make decisions about their own bodies and the social repercussions of such decisions are at the center of this discussion. This article examines the many facets of the right to an abortion while also discussing its ethical, social, and legal elements. The conflict between personal autonomy, reproductive choice, and the moral standing of the foetus, as well as more general social worries about public health and gender equality, are at the center of the abortion debate.

Abortion regulation has a long history, with varied degrees of acceptability and outright ban in different cultures and historical times. The historic *Roe v. Wade* (1973)² ruling in the US established the constitutional right to an abortion, which was based on the right to privacy. Contrarily, several nations continue to struggle with tight abortion regulations, which frequently result in unauthorized and dangerous treatments. Based on cultural, religious, and moral convictions, civilizations have controlled and limited abortion practices throughout history. A global movement for reproductive rights, including access to safe and legal abortion, has emerged in the contemporary age. However, due to the many ethical stances that shape this topic, abortion laws and views differ greatly amongst nations.

Gender equality and freedom in reproductive choice go hand in hand with the right to an abortion. The ability of women to make informed decisions about their reproductive lives is fundamentally linked to their empowerment and equality. Women's options for education, career, and personal growth may be restricted if they are denied access to safe and legal

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² *Roe v. Wade*, 410 U.S. 113 (1973).

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abortion procedures. The gender equality movement and the right to an abortion are closely related. Women have always encountered societal, economic, and legal obstacles that restrict their options for having children. It acknowledges that people have the autonomy to choose whether to have children, when to have them, and how many. Access to a variety of contraception options and thorough sexual education are also essential components of reproductive freedom because they allow people to make responsible reproductive decisions. Women may take charge of their bodies and reproductive futures by claiming their right to abortion, which promotes female empowerment and gender equality. Women who have access to safe and legal abortions may pursue their educational, professional, and personal goals, ensuring they have the same opportunity as men to participate in society fully.

The moral standing of the foetus is a key topic of discussion in the ethical debate over abortion. Abortion advocates contend that a foetus does not have the same moral rights as an adult human being until a certain stage in pregnancy because it does not yet have the qualities that define complete personhood. Opponents, however, contend that since life begins at conception, abortion is the murder of an unborn child. The moral conundrum of weighing the rights and interests of the pregnant person against those of the unborn child in the womb is still open for debate. The difficult task of balancing competing rights while protecting individual freedoms and society's interests falls on ethicists and lawmakers. The moral standing of the foetus and the harmony of rights and interests are the main ethical issues underlying the right to abortion. Abortion supporters contend that up to a certain stage in pregnancy, the foetus lacks the mental and physical characteristics required to meet the criteria for being considered a person with full moral rights. They stress that a pregnant person's autonomy comes before the unborn child's potential life. Opponents, however, contend that abortion is the same as killing an innocent human life since life begins at conception. Finding a moral middle ground between these viewpoints continues to be a difficult task for society.

Abortion is permitted in many different nations across the world, ranging from those with complete access to those with tight restrictions, with the exception of situations when the mother's life is in danger. Access to safe procedures, reproductive healthcare, and maternal mortality rates can all be severely impacted by abortion regulations. Governments frequently state that doing so is in the public's best interest and will ensure the welfare of future

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generations. However restrictive abortion laws can result in illegal abortions that put the lives and health of women and marginalized groups at peril.

Restrictive abortion regulations disproportionately harm marginalized and vulnerable groups, such as low-income people, members of racial or ethnic minorities, and those living in rural regions. Access to crucial reproductive healthcare treatments is hampered by this, which exacerbates already-existing health inequities.

Criminalizing abortion is a divisive socio-legal strategy with broad ramifications for personal freedom, gender equality, public health, and moral principles. It is critical to engage in productive discussions that take into account the various points of view involved as societies continue to struggle with the complexity of this subject. Developing comprehensive and equitable reproductive healthcare policy requires striking a balance between the rights of the person, the interests of the public health, and social values. Criminalizing abortion helps to stigmatize both the women who seek abortions and the medical professionals who perform them. For people who are impacted, stigma can have negative psychological and societal effects. Access to safe and legal abortion services is severely constrained in nations where the procedure is illegal. People who are pregnant could turn to illegal and risky methods, endangering their lives. There may be legal ramifications for healthcare practitioners who conduct abortions, which will reduce the number of competent individuals ready to give these services. Criminalizing abortion may violate a person's right to privacy and to an unrestricted reproductive cycle. A basic human right is the ability to make choices regarding one's own body and reproductive health. This value is undermined by restricting access to abortion, which also denies people the freedom to make decisions that are best for their specific situations. Abortion is a topic that frequently brings up the right to privacy since people have the freedom to make their own medical decisions in private and without intervention from the government. This right may be infringed upon through criminalization, which can result in invasions of personal freedom. The right to abortion is fundamentally based on the idea of autonomy. Advocates contend that people should be allowed to make their own private decisions regarding their reproductive health without the government interfering. As a fundamental human right, reproductive freedom gives people the ability to take charge of their own bodies and reproductive futures, empowering women and advancing gender

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equality. Limiting women's options for education, work, and personal growth can contribute to the perpetuation of gender-based inequities.

Access to safe and legal abortion services is acknowledged as a fundamental human right from a global human rights viewpoint. The promotion of gender equality and public health is emphasized by international human rights organizations as being largely dependent on reproductive healthcare. The prevalence of unwanted pregnancies and the need for abortion can be considerably decreased by promoting comprehensive reproductive healthcare, which includes access to contraception, family planning, and thorough sex education.

Reproductive justice is a theory that supports more thorough responses to reproductive concerns. To guarantee that everyone can make an educated choice about their reproductive lives, it places a strong emphasis on eliminating structural disparities and social determinants of health. Reproductive rights have been acknowledged as essential human rights by international human rights organizations, including the United Nations and regional human rights organizations. These organizations emphasize the value of reproductive healthcare in advancing gender equality and public health while advocating for easy access to safe and legal abortion services. To create intelligent and comprehensive policies that protect individual rights while taking into account the larger consequences for society, it is crucial to strike a balance between these conflicting interests.

As a result, it may be said that the right to an abortion is a complicated and divisive socio-legal problem that takes into account several ethical, judicial, and societal factors. The conflict between personal autonomy, reproductive choice, and the moral standing of the fetus, as well as more general social worries about public health and gender equality, are at the center of the abortion debate. To create intelligent and comprehensive policies that protect individual rights while taking into account the larger consequences for society, it is crucial to strike a balance between these conflicting interests. Given the variety of viewpoints involved, society must participate in productive and compassionate debates. Developing comprehensive and equitable reproductive healthcare policy requires a balanced strategy that protects individual liberties while addressing public health concerns and advancing gender equality. In the end, promoting a setting that encourages informed choices and respects the autonomy of expectant women is crucial to establishing a fair and inclusive society for all. The socio-legal problem of the right to an abortion is extremely complicated and polarising; it touches on

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issues of personal autonomy, gender equality, morality, and public policy. It is crucial to approach the discussion with empathy, compassion, and a commitment to upholding individual rights while taking into account the larger consequences for public health and social justice as nations continue to wrestle with this issue. For both legislators and campaigners, finding a balance that respects both social interests and individual autonomy continues to be the greatest issue.



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