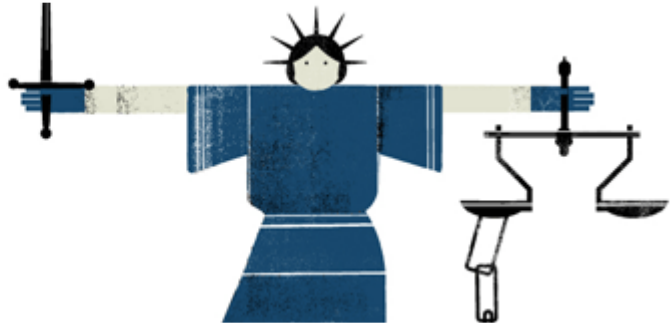


Thursday, February 2

Law Central



Top QCs in protest to Obama over "no abortion" rule on women raped in war

Frances Gibb Yesterday, 5:32PM

Nearly 50 of the UK's most prominent Queen's Counsel have urged Barack Obama to lift the "no abortion" clause that affects US humanitarian aid for girls and women raped in conflict.

In a letter to the US President today they say that the "no abortion" clause violates the rights of girls and women impregnated by rape in armed conflict who are "wounded and sick" persons entitled to non-discriminatory and comprehensive medical care under international humanitarian law.

That, they say, includes abortion. Yet despite clear mandates under the Geneva Conventions against torture and international law, "girls and women impregnated by rape in armed conflict are routinely denied abortions in humanitarian medical settings, largely due to the global effect of the US prohibitions," the QCs say.

Their letter adds: "They are the only category of war victims who are systemically denied their right to complete medical care"

It goes on: The failure to provide abortions to rape victims, who are also considered torture victims, can itself constitute torture and/or cruel and inhumane treatment." It could also have serious consequences for them, such as forcing continued pregnancy, dangerous child bearing, suicide or unsafe abortions.

The letter adds: "The US prohibition on abortion contains neither rape nor life-endangering exceptions.

The letter is headed by Amanda Pinto, QC, director of international affairs of the Criminal Bar Association and vice chairman of the international committee of the Bar Council.

Other signatories include: Max Hill, QC, chairman of the Criminal Bar Association; Lord Goldsmith, former Attorney-General; Lord Macdonald, QC former Director of Public Prosecutions; Vera Baird, QC, former Solicitor-General; Geoffrey Robertston, QC; Sally O'Neill, QC, former chairman of the Criminal Bar Association; Professor John Cooper, QC; Peter Lodder, QC, former Bar chairman; Paul Mendelle, QC, former Criminal Bar Association chairman, Kim Hollis, QC; David Green, QC, director-designate of the Serious Fraud Office and Jonathan Laidlaw, QC.