
Abortion rights are human rights

This leaflet is based on the premise that sexual rights are a part of human rights and that sexual rights help build the freedom, equality and dignity of all people.

In October 2008, International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) published *Sexual rights: an IPPF declaration*, which adds to IPPF's *Charter on sexual and reproductive rights*. The *Declaration* was developed to ensure that sexual rights as human rights are respected and fulfilled so that all individuals can exercise control, freedom and choice in their sexual and reproductive lives. It is grounded in core international human rights instruments and standards and supports the value that sexual and reproductive freedom is central to a satisfying and fulfilling life. Depriving individuals of their sexual and reproductive freedom denies them the capacity to live their lives according to their own internal values and belief systems.

While the *Declaration* addresses sexual and reproductive rights in the broadest sense, this leaflet – using the ten articles enshrined in the *Declaration* – focuses on the denial of women's human rights to safe and legal abortion services in Northern Ireland. It sets out clearly what human rights women in Northern Ireland should have. **For too long the sexual rights of women in Northern Ireland have been neglected and denied. It is time to respect them. It is time to demand them.**

Article 1: Right to equality, equal protection of the law and freedom from all forms of discrimination based on sex, sexuality or gender

Everyone, without exception, must be able to make choices and decisions about their own lives. They have the right to health facilities, services and conditions which enable them to make those choices and decisions.

All women in Northern Ireland should have the **right** to the protection of the law to enable equal access to safe and legal abortion services, without discrimination.

Article 2: The right to participation for all persons, regardless of sex, sexuality or gender

Everyone is entitled to influence decisions concerning matters that directly affect their health and wellbeing.

All women in Northern Ireland should have the **right** to participate in the development and implementation of policies that determine their sexual and reproductive health, without barriers or conditions.

Article 3: The rights to life, liberty, security of the person and bodily integrity

The medical care of women should never be based on any consideration other than ensuring her wellbeing and no woman should be compelled to have children.

In Northern Ireland:

- No woman's life or health should be put at risk as a consequence of being denied medical treatment when faced with an unplanned pregnancy.
- No woman should be forced to continue a pregnancy against her will.
- No woman's health or life should be put at risk by unsafe abortion practices.
- No woman should be deterred from seeking medical care for fear of being reported to the police by medical professionals who suspect unlawful behaviour.

Article 4: Right to privacy

Everyone has the right not to be the victim of subjective interference of their privacy including accessing reproductive healthcare services.

All women in Northern Ireland should have the **right** to:

- Decide, without interference, whether or not to have an abortion.
- Make the decision whether or not to have an abortion without the threat of legal prosecution.
- Patient confidentiality with regards to an abortion or post-abortion after care services.

Article 5: Right to personal autonomy and recognition before the law

Everyone has the right to be recognised before the law and make decisions about their lives in an environment free of discrimination, violence or abuse.

All women in Northern Ireland should have the **right** to control their own fertility, including choosing to have an abortion. They should be enabled to do so by the law – free from discrimination, harassment or abuse.

Article 6: Right to freedom of thought, opinion and expression; right to association

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion without interference. Conversely, everyone also has the right to access reproductive healthcare services without interference from personal conscience and religion.

All women in Northern Ireland should have the **right** to abortion services based on need, rather than personal conscience and religion.

Article 7: Right to health and to the benefits of scientific progress

Everyone has the right to the highest possible quality in healthcare, including all care related to their sexual and reproductive health, and to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress.

All women in Northern Ireland should have the **right** to:

- Access new medical technology and medication that is effective and safe for abortions and post-abortion after care.
- Not be subjected to invasive post-abortion after care procedures, such as curettage, when other methods can be used effectively.

Article 8: Right to education and information

Everyone has the right to education and information presented in an objective, critical and pluralistic manner.

All women in Northern Ireland should have the **right** to equal access to unbiased and correct information and education about abortion.

Article 9: Right to choose whether or not to marry and to found and plan a family, and to decide whether or not how and when, to have children

Everyone has the right to freely and responsibly choose whether or not to marry and to decide if and when to have children.

All women in Northern Ireland should have the **right** to access services that provide safe and effective means of controlling the size of their family, including abortion as part of a full range of safe sexual and reproductive healthcare services.

Article 10: Right to accountability and redress

Everyone has the right to effective, adequate, accessible and appropriate educative, legislative, judicial and other measures to ensure and demand that those who are duty bound to uphold sexual rights are fully accountable to them.

All women in Northern Ireland should have the **right** to demand that politicians establish effective, adequate and accessible mechanisms for accountability and redress to ensure that their sexual rights are protected and realised.

For a more comprehensive breakdown of each article of the Declaration see: IPPF, *Sexual Rights: an IPPF Declaration* (London: IPPF, 2008) and IPPF, *IPPF Charter on Sexual and Reproductive Rights* (London: IPPF, 2006).

fpa, 3rd Floor, Ascot House, 24–31 Shaftesbury Square, Belfast BT2 7DB
Tel: 0845 122 8687
www.fpa.org.uk

The Family Planning Association is a registered charity, number 250187, and a limited liability company registered in England, number 887632.