

**A.R.A.G. NATIONAL***- the abortion reform movement*

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The Secretary,  
Technical Committee on Fundamental Rights  
World Trade Center  
1619 KEMPTON PARK FAX: 011 - 397-2211**ARAG'S COMMITMENT:**

ARAG works towards a law that provides for choice for women faced with unplanned unwanted pregnancy. Early safe abortion should be available, free of charge if required.

**STATEMENT BY THE ABORTION REFORM ACTION GROUP ON THE NEED FOR ABORTION RIGHTS IN ANY BILL OF RIGHTS:**

Draft bills of rights so far proposed for South Africa do not entrench women's right to autonomy in decisions affecting their own reproduction, specifically the right to abortion.

It has been stated in some of the drafts that the present restrictive Abortion &amp; Sterilisation Act of 1975 may in future be challenged before a constitutional court. Postponement to a court not yet in existence merely serves to accumulate more misery through backstreet abortion - unsafe abortion defined by the International Planned Parenthood Federation as the interruption of pregnancy with less than optimal technology, counselling, emotional support, aftercare and freedom of decision-making. Economic pressures today are particularly hard and the responsibilities of child-bearing onerous. The need for individuals to be able to direct their own lives in the search for quality has never been more obvious. In all our hospitals the large number of admissions for "repairs" after backstreet abortion testify to the impelling need for safe termination of unwanted pregnancy.

ARAG NATIONAL supports the following clause for a future bill of rights passed by a large majority at a Human Rights Conference in Port Elizabeth in June 1992: "Any right to life clause in a bill of rights must be qualified by a proviso that this must not be interpreted to deny a woman the right to choose to have an abortion", and the more detailed resolution adopted by the Black Sash at their National Confer- 676

page on 24/4/93.

This calls for :

- 1) A clause in a Bill of Rights : The right to life should not derogate from a man's right to choose an abortion should she wish to do so.
- 2) A Freedom of Choice Bill as follows:
  - i) The state shall not restrict the right of a woman to choose to terminate a pregnancy a) during the first trimester, or b) at any time, if such termination is necessary to protect the life or health of the woman.
  - ii) The decision for termination of pregnancy shall be made by the woman. The state shall provide or facilitate the provision of adequate information and non-directive counselling for women considering termination.
  - iii) The state shall protect the freedom of conscience of any medical practitioner or health worker who declines to perform or assist in such termination, provided that such practitioner or health worker shall refer the woman to the relevant statutory service
  - iv) The passage of the above Bill shall repeal conflicting clauses of the Abortion & Sterilisation Act No. 2 of 1975.

We commend this resolution to you for urgent implementation.



D.M. Maister  
Hon. Secretary ARAG NATIONAL