



**Limerick Feminist Network submission to the Citizens
Assembly on Article 40.3.3**

The 8th Amendment and Reproductive Rights in Ireland

16th/12th/2016

Who we are

The Limerick Feminist Network is a grass roots feminist group based in Limerick city, Ireland. We hold regular meetings and events to help grow and strengthen the feminist community in Limerick. Anyone who identifies as a feminist is welcome to get involved.

The Limerick Feminist Network practices feminism that is inclusive and intersectional and as such the language we use when speaking about the 8th amendment reflects that.

One of our fundamental policies is the belief that everyone has a right to full bodily autonomy. We believe that denying people access to free, safe and legal abortions is dehumanising, insulting and wrong. We are not vessels or incubators. Everyone should have the right to unbiased information about contraception, abortion and maternity care. We should have the right to access whatever contraception we believe will work for us without any conditions or limitations. The 8th amendment not only puts restrictions on the choices pregnant people can make about the care they receive, such as having difficulty refusing certain tests, procedures and treatments but it also prevents them from ending a pregnancy, for whatever reason. We believe that pregnant people should have a full say in the type of care they receive and have the right to make whatever medical and life choices are best for them, without government interference or threats of court or prison. We want the 8th amendment in our constitution to be deleted to allow everyone the right to choose how, when or if they want a child.

Website: <http://limerickfeministnetwork.com/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/LimerickFeministNetwork/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/LmkFeminist>

Dear Citizen's Assembly,

You are undertaking an incredibly important task on behalf of our country. For millions of women, girls, trans and gender non-conforming people you have been chosen to decide whether they have the right to control their own bodies.

We at the Limerick Feminist Network know that for many of you, abortion is a very difficult thing to think about and so it is easier to dismiss as wrong and not think on it any further. But you no longer have the luxury of that option, as the fate of millions depends on you. We ask you to remember that those millions are not merely abstract numbers, they are real people with families and loved ones, hopes and dreams, annoying habits and charming quirks. They are your sister, mother, relative and friend. They are human.

To choose to give the gift of life is the most selfless and caring act, but it means nothing if there is no choice: to force someone to give life is the most dehumanising and heinous of acts. To strap someone down and take their blood is a crime no matter how many lives it saves; to knock someone out and remove a kidney is the stuff of horror stories even if 2 people live as a result. Yet our government has locked up a pregnant person, forced her to continue a pregnancy she did not want, then without her consent performed an operation on her. Ms Y may not have woken up in a bathtub full of ice, but this does not make her experience any less horrific.

We understand that life is precious, but no one has the right to demand someone sacrifices their body for another. This is recognised as an obvious and taken for granted freedom for everyone except pregnant people.

When the Irish Blood Transfusion services were running low on supplies, they made a plea for more donations. They did not try to legally compel people to give blood against their will or make it unconstitutional to refuse to give blood. Such extreme measures may save more lives, but no one even thought of this because we understand that forcing people to make such a sacrifice would be going too far.

Women, girls and anyone with the potential to become pregnant are simply asking to be treated with the same respect, for people to understand that it is not right to demand them to sacrifice their bodies for the life of another.

The 8th amendment and healthcare issues such as this one have no place in the constitution. No-one should have the threat of court or prison held over their head when making medical decisions. This law has killed and tortured women, it has made international headlines and faced criticisms from human rights groups.

We understand that a huge task has been asked of you and we know that you will take the task seriously. We ask that you remember that a complete Repeal of the 8th will only help give pregnant people the same rights as everyone else and that you approach this task from a place of empathy and humanity.

People of childbearing age in this country have never had the opportunity to have a say on the 8th amendment. There should never be a case in this country where you have people genuinely fearing pregnancy due to the restrictions of the 8th amendment. Maternity care and abortion should be regulated not legislated.

If you do not trust a woman or person with the ability to get pregnant to choose when or if they want to become a parent how can you possibly trust them with the responsibility of raising a child?

Thank you.

Remembering

Anne Lovett

Sheila Hodgers

Miss D

Miss X

Bimbo Onanuga

Sally Rowlette

Savita Halappanavar

Dhara Kivlehan

Ms Y

The clinically brain-dead pregnant woman kept on life support against the wishes of her family

And the countless other women, girls, couples and people who have gotten pregnant and have been negatively affected by the 8th amendment