

Abortion in the Philippines

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In our country, where the church is in its supremacy, child-bearing is a sacred duty and a blessing. No matter the manner of conception, regardless whether it is planned or unwanted, still, it is a blessing—according to religious sects. As remarkable and mighty it is to be a mother, this should not be forced upon a woman under any circumstance. Albeit the belief that child-bearing is a gift, there are some instances where what was supposed to be a new fruit of bliss, it wreaks havoc instead.

According to NDHS or National Demographic and Health Survey of 2008, one in three births or 36% in the Philippines is either unwanted (16%) or mistimed (20%). Abortion in the Philippines is illegal and is considered a crime under all circumstances with no explicit exceptions. The abortion law in the Philippines is also among the strictest in the world and yet, Philippines has one of the highest abortion rates in the Southeast Asia. 70% of unwanted pregnancies result to abortion and majority of this number is induced in highly risky and unsafe methods.

Due to the strict law that criminalizes abortion, and women, parents, and providers who engaged or induced abortion, most of the procedures are unsafe as it is usually carried out by providers lacking the right apparatus and skills to perform. As a result, the number of women dying of complications during and after abortion is high. Not only are they highly at risk in terms of morality, they are also risking their freedom as according to The Revised Penal Code of the Philippines, Act. No. 3815 of December 8, 1930, Articles 256 - 259, any person who imposed or caused or is involved in abortion whether intentional or not shall be penalized.

Often, women who have had abortion are relentlessly criticized and shamed for their choice regardless of their situation. Most of these women are poor and only had a high school level of education, thus resorting to them opting for unsafe methods as they are incapable of raising a child. In other cases, the financial aspect of child-bearing is not the concern but the manner of conception.

Some rape victims are impregnated by their perpetrators and are unwilling to carry out the pregnancy as they are already traumatized by the rape alone. Imagine having to raise and care for a child that would be a constant reminder of a very dark and traumatic past—the day you had been violated and robbed of your power; a seed of a horrid, heinous and inhumane being has been planted on you. Another instance that abortion is the best decision is when a mother's life is at risk. Some pregnancies are highly risky for the mother due to some pre-existing medical conditions or prenatal complications that may threaten their life. There are also scenarios where the baby is the one that is in a compromising situation and may inadvertently affect the mother's health. Would you rather save the mother or the unborn life? And are you willing to go through an emotional rollercoaster and trauma? Abortion is not an easy decision and does not make us criminal. A woman's decision to opt for abortion does not make her a murderer, undignified nor shameful.

The legalization of abortion do not mean the extinction of the human raise. Abortion is not murder; abortion is actually mercy. It is about time that abortion is decriminalized in the Philippines and become a right of women as it should have always been. Women should have the right and freedom to make choices for their own good. It is the woman's body therefore it should be her decisions that matter more. Decriminalizing abortion would save more women from mortality and provide safer options. The Anti-abortion law in the Philippines seems more anti-woman. If the church's hypocrisy by deeming abortion as a sinful crime, and the law of the state lets the church affect their decisions then where does the separation of church and state stands? Maybe to some it is a sin to sacrifice a life for a life, but the right to judge never befalls any simply because others sin differently. What makes the life of the unborn child much more important than the life of the mother?