

Overview of Atheist Ireland

- Founded in **2008**
- **Voluntary**, no paid staff, no Government funding or grants
- Member of Coalition to **Repeal 8th Amendment**
- **Pro-choice** human rights based stance on abortion
- Addressed **Oireachtas Health Committee** on abortion

Faith-based morality no more authority than secular morality

- **Faith** is only one way people form ethics and morality
- Irish people have **different moral values** about abortion
- State has duty to protect **individual moral conscience**
- State has duty to formulate **evidence-based legislation**

8th Amendment is religiously-inspired

- Religiously-inspired view is **opinion-based not evidence-based**
- In a secular, pluralist democracy, people are free to **hold religious beliefs**, but **not to impose them** on others

Religious and atheists both have freedom of conscience

- Right to **freedom of religion** protects conscience of religious
- Right to *Freedom of Thought, **Conscience** and Religion* also protects conscience of atheists & non-religious
- Irish abortion law does not respect **freedom of conscience**

Morality does not require a religious value system.

Secular morality is:

- **Evidence-based**, involves critical thought
- Focused on **reduction of harm**
- Focused on **increase of well-being**
- Grounded in **human rights**

A, B & C Case: Irish State claims '*profound moral values*'

- Different Irish people have **different moral values** on abortion
- **For many**, abortion is against their moral conscience
- **For others**, denying women access to abortion is against our moral conscience, as it **denies women bodily autonomy**

Irish State talks as if abortion was a settled moral value

- **No settled consensus** that abortion is morally **wrong**
- **Even less support** for idea that it should be **illegal**
- To protect supposed '*profound moral values*', State denies abortion to women who have **different moral values**

Three Assertions based on religious moral argument

1. Catholic Bishops Conference

Claims that, despite diagnosis of **fatal foetal abnormality**,
a woman must carry pregnancy to natural conclusion
(miscarriage or birth)

- **Choice to proceed** is right decision for some women
- **Choice to terminate** is right decision for other women

Three Assertions based on religious moral argument

2. Church of Ireland General Synod

Recognises that **Constitution not place** to address healthcare

Abortion only in cases of '*undeniable medical necessity*'

- This highlights **lack of consensus** even between different religious moral approaches to abortion

Three Assertions based on religious moral argument

3. Iona Institute

Claims pro-choice argument ignores **humanity of foetus**

- But unlike a foetus, a pregnant woman is a human **person**
- Difference is between **biology** and **biography**
- **A foetus** is biologically human, but has no biography
- **A woman** has biography

Summary of our 5 key points

1. The State should not impose laws **on all citizens** based on the conscience of **some mostly religious citizens**
2. **Constitution not the place** to deal with healthcare matters
3. The 8th Amendment should be **repealed, not replaced**

Summary of our 5 key points

4. Only a full repeal of the 8th Amendment will **allow Oireachtas** to properly **formulate legislation** on abortion
5. **Anything less** than full repeal will result in us **having to return** to this issue over and over — **typically after tragedies**