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**STATUS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE KINGDOM OF DENMARK
FOR THE 52ND SESSION OF THE
UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW**

www.ECLJ.org
4, quai Koch
67000 Strasbourg, France
Phone: +33 (0)3.88.24.94.40

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Introduction

1. The European Centre for Law and Justice (ECLJ) is a non-governmental organization dedicated to promoting and protecting human rights around the world. The ECLJ also holds Special Consultative status before the United Nations Economic and Social Council. This report discusses the status of human rights in the Kingdom of Denmark (Denmark) for the 52nd session of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR).

Background.

2. Denmark is a country located in western Europe and has a population of approximately 5.9 million people.¹ The majority of the population (81.1%) is Christian, with 12.8% of the population identifying as non-religious, and 5.3% as Muslim.²

3. Denmark's last review was held on May 6, 2021.³ As a result of the review, Denmark received 288 recommendations, 202 of which it accepted.⁴ While there were no recommendations made regarding abortion, the government expanded the abortion limit from twelve weeks to eighteen weeks.⁵ Further, the new law also allows girls between the ages of fifteen and seventeen to have an abortion without parental consent.⁶ No recommendations were made regarding religious freedom.

Legal Framework

4. On April 24, 2025, Denmark adopted a proposal that would further strip away the right to life for preborn babies.⁷ Under this new law, preborn babies may be aborted on demand up until the 18th week of pregnancy.⁸ In addition to stripping away the rights of preborn babies, this law also strips away the rights of parents who may not consent to their children undergoing a dangerous and invasive medical procedure. Under this law, girls as young as fifteen are permitted to have an abortion without parental consent.⁹

¹ Hans Folke, *Denmark*, BRITANNICA (July 22, 2025), <https://www.britannica.com/place/Denmark>.

² *Denmark: Major World Religions (1900 – 2050) (World Religion Database 2020)*, THE ASS. OF RELIGION DATA ARCHIVES, <https://www.thearda.com/world-religion/national-profiles?u=66c>.

³ *Universal Periodic Review*, OHCHR, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/dk-index>.

⁴ *Infographic Denmark*, OHCHR, <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/UPR38-Infographic-DENMARK.pdf>.

⁵ Claudia Chiappa, *Denmark Relaxes Abortion Law*, POLITICO (May 3, 2024), <https://www.politico.eu/article/denmark-relaxes-50-year-old-abortion-laws/>.

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ *DENMARK – Denmark's Parliament has Raised the Abortion Upper Time Limit from 12 to 18 Weeks:50+ Years Later*, INT'L CAMPAIGN FOR WOMEN'S RIGHT TO SAFE ABORTION (May 2, 2025), <https://www.safeabortionwomensright.org/news/denmark-denmarks-parliament-has-raised-the-abortion-upper-time-limit-from-12-to-18-weeks-50-years-later/>.

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ Jan M. Olsen, *Denmark to Liberalize its Abortion Law to Allow the Procedure Until 18th Week of Pregnancy*, AP (May 3, 2024), <https://apnews.com/article/denmark-abortion-18th-week-teenagers-5e7d096182dff514c1ed409b2d2e1e39>.

5. Denmark is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).¹⁰ Under Article 6 of the ICCPR, “[e]very human being has the inherent right to life. This right shall be protected by law. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his life.”¹¹

6. Additionally, Denmark is a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).¹² Under Article 5 of the CRC, “States Parties shall respect the responsibilities, rights and duties of parents.”¹³ Additionally, under Article 6 of the CRC, “States Parties recognize that every child has the inherent right to life. States Parties shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child.”¹⁴

7. Denmark also has a responsibility to protect the lives of preborn babies under other international agreements such as the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), and the 1994 Cairo Conference on Population and Development.

Abortion

8. Under the 1994 Cairo Conference on Population and Development, U.N. Member States have an affirmative commitment to “reduce the recourse to abortion” and to take “appropriate steps to help women avoid abortion.”¹⁵ Unfortunately, since Denmark’s last UPR, it has taken steps to further undermine this commitment and has increased the availability of abortion, which will only harm women and result in an increase in the unnecessary deaths of thousands of preborn babies every year.

9. Since 1973, Denmark has permitted abortion up until the 12th week of pregnancy.¹⁶ This policy has led to the deaths of between 14,000 and 15,000 preborn babies every year.¹⁷ Even if we take the conservative estimate of 14,000 abortions annually, this means that an estimated 70,000 preborn babies have been unnecessarily stripped of their right to life and have been killed since Denmark’s last UPR. That is one percent of Denmark’s population...murdered. Tragically, with Denmark further expanding abortion, only more preborn babies will be killed.

10. Denmark’s law concerning abortion contravenes numerous fundamental human rights instruments such as the ICCPR and the UDHR. Again, the ICCPR states that “[e]very human being has the inherent right to life. This right shall be protected by law. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his life.”¹⁸ Likewise, the UDHR states that “[e]veryone has the right

¹⁰ *Ratification Status for Denmark*, OHCHR,

https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=49&Lang=EN.

¹¹ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights art. 6, *adopted* Dec. 16, 1966, 999 U.N.T.S. 171, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights> [hereinafter ICCPR].

¹² *Ratification Status for Denmark*, *supra* note 10.

¹³ Convention on the Rights of the Child art. 5, *adopted* Nov. 20, 1989, 1577 U.N.T.S. 3, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>.

¹⁴ *Id.* art. 6.

¹⁵ Rep’ of the Int’l Conf. on Population & Dev., ¶ 8.25, U.N. Doc. A/CONF/F.171/Rev. 1 (Sept. 5-13, 1994).

¹⁶ Jan M. Olsen, *Denmark to Liberalize its Abortion Law to Allow the Procedure Until 18th Week of Pregnancy*, AP (May 3, 2024), <https://apnews.com/article/denmark-abortion-18th-week-teenagers-5e7d096182dff514c1ed409b2d2e1e39>.

¹⁷ *Danish Health Authority Does not Expect More Abortions if Limit Raised*, THE LOCAL (Sept. 27, 2023), <https://www.thelocal.dk/20230927/danish-health-authority-does-not-expect-more-abortions-if-limit-raised>.

¹⁸ ICCPR art. 6, *supra* note 11.

to life”¹⁹ and requires the “recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family [as] the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.”²⁰ A majority of U.N. Member States have affirmed these rights and have taken a stance to protect the lives of preborn babies through either prohibiting abortion altogether or only permitting it in cases to save the life or health of the mother.²¹

11. Denmark’s law regarding abortion is extreme when compared to legislation in other U.N. Member States. Even out of the sixty-nine countries that have varying gestational limits for on-demand abortion, forty-nine of them have a gestational limit of twelve weeks or less.²² This goes to show two things. First, there is no international consensus that there is any so called “right” to abortion. Second, U.N. Member States tend to take their obligation to protect life seriously and thus follow a more conservative approach when it comes to legalizing any abortion. Denmark’s expansion of abortion to eighteen weeks is an extreme outlier among U.N. Member States.

12. In addition to protecting the right to life for preborn babies, Denmark also has a responsibility to protect the health and lives of mothers. Across the world, approximately five million women are hospitalized every year due to abortion related complications like hemorrhage and sepsis.²³ Additionally, the World Health Organization’s Abortion Care Guideline notes that abortions can result in infections and hemorrhage.²⁴ Further, a study found that hemorrhage and infection were associated with a majority of abortion-related deaths even in the United States of America between 1998 and 2010, where good healthcare is easily available.²⁵

13. In addition to the adverse physical side effects, abortion has also been shown to have an adverse impact on the psychological and mental health of the mother. A New Zealand study found that women who have had an abortion experienced higher rates of suicidal behavior, depression, substance abuse, and other mental health problems. These factors demonstrate why abortion is not healthcare. Any procedure that deliberately kills an innocent human life and causes numerous adverse health effects to the mother cannot be called health care.

14. We are also concerned about the new provision that allows girls as young as fifteen to undergo this harmful procedure without parental consent.²⁶ This is particularly

¹⁹ G.A. Res. 217 (III) A, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, art. 3 (Dec. 10, 1948).

²⁰ *Id.* pmb1.

²¹ See *The World’s Abortion Laws*, CTR. FOR REPROD. RTS. (June 9, 2023), https://reproductiverights.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/WALM_2023-v3-Updated_12-20-23.pdf.

²² *Id.*

²³ Lisa B. Haddad et. al., *Unsafe Abortion: Unnecessary Maternal Mortality*, OBSTET GYNECOL, Spring; 2(2): 122-126 (2009), <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC2709326/>.

²⁴ *Abortion Care Guideline*, WORLD HEALTH ORG.,

<https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/349316/9789240039483-eng.pdf?sequence=1>

²⁵ Suzanne Zane et. al., *Abortion Related Mortality in the United States 1998-2010*, OBSTET GYNECOL.Aug; 126 (2): 258-265 (2010),

<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4554338/#:~:text=A%20majority%20of%20abortion%2Drelated,pregnancy%20threatened%20the%20woman's%20life>.

²⁶ Jan M. Olsen, *Denmark to Liberalize its Abortion Law to Allow the Procedure Until 18th Week of Pregnancy*, AP (May 3, 2024), <https://apnews.com/article/denmark-abortion-18th-week-teenagers-5e7d096182dff514c1ed409b2d2e1e39>.

concerning given the increased risk of adverse side effects for teenagers who undergo an abortion. For example, teenage girls are ten times more likely to attempt suicide in the six months following an abortion than teenage girls who have not.²⁷ Additionally, teenage girls who have had an abortion are three times more likely to be admitted to a mental health hospital than other teens.²⁸ These reasons, coupled with the adverse health effects discussed above, demonstrate why this medical procedure should not be performed on teenage girls, especially without parental consent. Furthermore, parental rights are fundamental human rights that do not get trumped by a fabricated “right” to an abortion. Denmark’s provision infringing on this right contravenes the CRC, among other human rights instruments. Again, the CRC states that “States Parties shall respect the responsibilities, rights and duties of parents.”²⁹ It is unconscionable that Denmark would deny parents the right to have a say in such a harmful procedure.

Recommendations

15. Denmark must reform its laws to protect the lives of preborn babies. Denmark has an obligation to defend life and protect its citizens, both born and preborn, from the dangers of abortion. Further, we urge Denmark to reform its law by reinstating and acknowledging the right of parents to have a say in what happens with their children.

²⁷ *Teen Abortion Risks Fact Sheet*, JUST ASKING, <https://www.justasking.org/teen-abortion-risks-fact-sheet.html>.

²⁸ *Id.*

²⁹ CRC art. 5, *supra* note 13.