

PRESS RELEASE

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A blow against individual conscience by an overreaching Supreme Court

The national pro-life charity LIFE has strongly criticised the Supreme Court for denying the right to conscientious objection to the Scottish midwives Mary Doogan and Connie Wood, who have been told that they must be directly involved in supporting, supervising and delegating staff who are carrying out abortions, contrary to Ms Doogan and Ms Wood's reasonable and sincerely held objections to abortion. The ruling also appears to undermine the conscience rights of many other medical professionals by redefining the previously accepted understanding of conscientious objection.

LIFE spokeswoman, Michaela Aston, said: "The Abortion Act contains strong protections for the significant numbers of health professionals who do not wish to be involved in the ending of human lives, as is fair and just. The right to conscientious objection is intended to offer broad and comprehensive rights to such professionals. Lady Justice Dorrian of the Scottish Court of Appeal said last year that the right is given because it is recognised that the process of abortion is felt by many people to be morally repugnant. It is in keeping with the reason for the exemption that the wide interpretation which we favour should be given to it. She also made it clear that the right of conscientious objection extends not only to the actual medical or surgical termination but to the whole process of treatment given for that purpose."

The Supreme Court, on the other hand, has accepted a narrow, weak and incoherent idea of what conscientious objection means. The judgment imposes excessive restrictions on the consciences of pro-life doctors and nurses, which go far beyond the intentions of the Abortion Act's original framers, and are in some cases more extreme than guidelines and policy statements issued by pro-abortion organisations such as the GMC and the Department of Health.

The Supreme Court has placed a huge amount of power in the hands of hospital administrators and bureaucrats, many of whom will be deeply committed to pro-abortion ideology, and will be able to force health professionals into being part of abortion procedures despite their deep opposition to the practice. It's difficult to see how this is compatible with the idea of Britain as a nation that respects pluralism and individual conscience.

END

For further media comment please call the LIFE Media Hotline on 07867 744502

LIFE is a pro-life charity that supports anyone facing a crisis pregnancy, pregnancy loss or after an abortion, and strives to engage, inspire and inform the next generation.