



The judge made his ruling at a packed Belfast High Court

Northern Ireland abortion laws not compatible with human rights, says High Court

Northern Ireland's strict abortion laws are incompatible with human rights legislation, a High Court judge has said.

Belfast Telegraph - The landmark declaration could pave the way for a relaxation of the

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prohibition on women accessing terminations in cases of rape, incest or where there is a diagnosis of fatal foetal abnormality.

While Stormont's leaders are not under any obligation to change the law following Mr Justice Horner's findings, he has increased the pressure on them to act.

Unlike other parts of the UK, the 1967 Abortion Act does not extend to Northern Ireland where abortions are illegal except where the life or mental health of the mother is in danger. Anyone who performs an illegal termination could be jailed for life.

Last month, the judge ruled that the region's near blanket ban on abortion contravened human rights legislation after a successful judicial review by the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC). On Wednesday, Justice Horner outlined the legal ramifications of November's judgment on abortion legislation in the region.

He had two options - to "read down" current legislation to include fatal foetal abnormality and pregnancies arising from a sexual crime, or to make a "declaration of incompatibility".

The judge told a packed hearing at Belfast High Court: "There is near unanimity among the parties in this judicial review, and that includes the (Northern Ireland Human Rights) Commission, that for this court to try and read the impugned provisions in a (human rights) Convention-compliant way would be a step too far.

"Having given due consideration to all submissions and the arguments raised therein, I conclude that such a view is correct.

"Accordingly, as indicated in my judgment, and for the reasons set out in that judgment and as a matter of last resort, I make a declaration of incompatibility."

The judge's declaration, which can be subject to appealed, does not immediately lift the ban but puts the onus on the Stormont Assembly to legislate.

In November's lengthy judgment, which was delivered over two hours, he said the failure to provide exceptions to the law in certain limited circumstances breached a woman's rights.

In cases of fatal foetal abnormality (FFA), the judge concluded that the mother's inability to access an abortion was a "gross interference with her personal autonomy" and where a sexual crime had occurred the judge said a disproportionate burden was placed on victims.

The NIHRC brought the challenge against Stormont's Department of Justice (DoJ) which, following a public consultation, had recommended a law change in circumstances of fatal foetal abnormality.

More at -

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/northern-ireland-abortion-laws-not-compatible-with-human-rights-says-high-court-34292281.html>

Judgement reserved in 'heathen Islam sermon' Pastor McConnell trial in Belfast

Judgement has been reserved in the landmark trial of evangelical preacher Pastor James McConnell accused of insulting Islam.

Belfast Telegraph - The retired head of Whitewell Tabernacle, one of the largest evangelical



Pastor James McConnell said he never intended to provoke or offend Muslims

congregations in Northern Ireland, took to the witness stand today on day three of the case against him.

McConnell, 78, from Shore Road, Newtownabbey, Co Antrim, is being prosecuted under the 2003 Communications Act.

Pastor McConnell is facing two charges linked to a sermon delivered at Whitewell Tabernacle in May, 2014. He branded Islam as "heathen" and "satanic" and said he did not trust Muslims.

The prosecution lay out their case on Monday, while Tuesday was dominated with complex legal

arguments as Pastor McConnell's legal team argued the case should be thrown out.

On Wednesday Pastor McConnell took to the witness stand himself and was cross questioned about his sermon, as well as comments he made to the Stephen Nolan Show.

He said: "I had never any intention whatsoever of hurting any one of them and I can say that before the judge and before the almighty God.

"It never entered my head that someone would take me up on that. I was preaching this in the confines of my own church. There are Muslims there who know me and understand me. It never entered my head."

The judge, who described the three-day trial as "interesting", is expected to give his verdict on January 5.

District Judge Liam McNally told a packed sitting of Belfast Magistrates' Court: "Obviously I am going to reserve my judgment. I want to consider all the points raised in submissions."

He said: "I should concentrate my mind by giving myself a deadline. I want to wish you all a happy and holy Christmas."

More at -

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/judgement-reserved-in-heathen-islam-sermon-pastor-mcconnell-trial-in-belfast-34293124.html>

Cork Bishops Join in Ecumenical Blessing of SHARE Crib

SHARE (Students Harness Aid for the Relief of the Elderly), the organisation for the care of Cork's older people, launched its traditional fast and fundraising campaign at the SHARE Crib, Daunt's Square, Cork, (near Grand Parade) on the wet and windy evening of Tuesday. It is the 46th year in which almost 1,800 fourth and fifth-year students from 21 Cork schools rally round yet again to raise funds for SHARE. This is the only fundraising campaign the organisation undertakes throughout the year, running in the city centre right up to and including Christmas Eve.

The Lord Mayor of Cork, Cllr. Chris O' Leary, together with Bishop John Buckley and Bishop Paul Colton, joined the young students of SHARE at the ceremony at the specially erected Christmas Crib at Daunt's Square, Cork. The Army band of the First Southern Brigade, under the baton of Captain Brian Prendergast, played a



At the Opening of the S.H.A.R.E crib at Daunt Square ,Cork, the launch of S.H.A.R.E.'s Fast and fundraising campaign for the care of the elderly which will run in Cork City and shopping centres in surrounding areas until Christmas Eve.

selection of traditional Christmas carols to mark the occasion and citizens of Cork turned out to share in the blessing.

The Brother Jerome Kelly Day Care Centre in Sheare's Street, Cork, which is open daily for residents and members of the wider older community in the city, can cater for up to 125 older people weekly, providing a range of practical services, including meals, a laundry service, and a network of support to help them

integrate into the community and meet like-minded individuals in a bright, warm place.

The 1,800 students will work hand in hand throughout the campaign, looking after one another and motivating one another as they don their bright yellow jackets and do their best for SHARE. 'They take turns in fasting for SHARE, with a dedication that is truly admirable, and do so in a quiet and unassuming way, in the true spirit of team work, just as many of their parents and brothers and sisters have done in years gone by' said Tony Cusack, a 5th year student from Presentation College.

Visit the SHARE Crib at Daunt's Square, Cork (near Grand Parade) or visit their cribs at Mahon Point, Merchant's Quay, Wilton, Blackpool, Bishopstown Court, Douglas Court, Douglas Village Shopping Centre and Riverview Shopping Centre in Bandon.

Alternatively, donations can be posted or delivered in person to SHARE, The Brother Jerome Kelly Day Care Centre, Sheare's Street, Cork where acknowledgements will be issued immediately.

'Overwhelming support' for Syrian refugees as Belfast centre welcomes first arrivals

Aid workers who prepared for the arrival of the first group of Syrian refugees to resettle in Northern Ireland say they have been overwhelmed by public offers of support.

A number of families who have been living in a makeshift camp in the Lebanon since fleeing their war-torn homeland travelled to Belfast this week as part of the UK-wide relocation scheme.

The 51 Syrians, many of them young children, are spending a number of days in one facility in the city to orientate themselves with their new surroundings.

Awaiting them were hundreds of cards and messages of welcome from local people of all ages. A room full of children's toys and even a Christmas tree were also provided.

Denise Wright from the Refugee and Asylum Forum said the public response had been amazing.



"One of the things we have seen is an overwhelming sense of people in the general community saying 'what we can we do?'," she said.

"My phone has been ringing off the hook (with people asking) 'what can we do, what can we give?'"

Ms Wright said there was now no need for any more practical donations for the arriving families.

"We've already got everything that we require," she said. "But one of the things we have asked if you want to do something is send welcome cards."

The location of the refugees' temporary accommodation is not being disclosed in order to

ensure their privacy in the first few days adjusting to their new home.

They have travelled from a refugee camp in Beirut where some of them have been living for a number of years.

During their first days in Belfast, the Syrians will receive medical, police and legal briefings about how life works in Northern Ireland.

Each family is being assigned a key worker, as well as offered translation support.

Neil McKittrick from the British Red Cross said: "The intention behind all of this is to really make it a welcoming place for the folk coming over from Syria.

"If you put yourself in their shoes they are coming from a terrible conflict in Syria, they have moved to refugee camps, this group will have been in Lebanon - they will have been there for a number of years.

"I suppose when they left they had hoped they would be back home pretty quick but that hasn't happened - they have been in refugee camps for a while.

"Coming to Northern Ireland, or coming to Europe at all, was not their number one option - it was probably one of the last things they considered.

"But such is the stage these people are at, they've really no choice but to come and get help and in Northern Ireland we are delighted we are able to support them."

Earlier this month a group calling itself the Protestant Coalition organised a protest in Belfast city centre to demonstrate against the arrival of the Syrians.

However, only around 25 turned up and participants were significantly outnumbered by a counter-demo organised by people voicing a message of welcome.

Bishops outline C of I response to the refugee crisis

The Rt Revd Ken Good, Bishop of Derry & Raphoe, and the Rt Revd Patrick Rooke, Bishop of Tuam, Killala & Achonry, have outlined the Church of Ireland's response to the refugee crisis. They chair the Church of Ireland's working

groups on refugees in Northern Ireland (Bishop Good), and the Republic of Ireland (Bishop Rooke). Bishop Rooke is also Chair of the Bishops' Appeal.

In an article published in the Church of Ireland Gazette, they state -

The Archbishop of Armagh and Archbishop of Dublin set out a three-fold response in September, which affirmed the compassion already expressed by many individuals and parishes.

Prayer must be our starting point. As bishops, we continue to encourage members of the Church of Ireland to intercede for people who have been displaced, traumatised and bereaved, and also for empathy and wisdom for European governments as they decide on their response.

Parishioners are also encouraged to write to and meet with their respective TDs and MPs, to encourage governments to offer more refuge and resettlement.

Generous giving to the Bishops' Appeal has to date provided €50,000 (£35,000) to Christian Aid and Tearfund as they respond to the needs of

refugees, of which €10,000 (£7,000) has been allocated to the response within the European Union. The crisis fund is still open for donations and information on giving and gift aid is available at <http://bishopsappeal.ireland.anglican.org/donate>

Funding from Christian Aid has helped to provide food and fresh water on the Greek islands, clothes and boots for refugees and asylum seekers in Serbia. This is in addition to the existing practical humanitarian support provided in the refugee camps of Iraq and Lebanon.

Tearfund's local partners within Syria have continued to reach thousands of people with emergency food supplies. Blankets, heating stoves and fuel subsidies will help displaced families to survive bitter winter conditions.

The Archbishops and Bishops of the Church of Ireland have recognised that the crisis presents a major challenge for governments and Churches alike – but also opens up opportunities to respond with generosity and in faith. The Church of Ireland has written to the Irish Government and the Northern Ireland Executive and Secretary of State to express our willingness to help and that offer still stands.

Two working groups – for the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland respectively – have been established to co-ordinate our response. With a network of parishes across the island, the Church can swiftly offer goodwill and practical help to arriving refugees.

The Republic of Ireland has received 100 Syrian refugees in the year to date. A further 80 are due to arrive before Christmas, followed by another 100 in the new year. A group of 51 refugees has now arrived in Northern Ireland.

Resettlement is an option to care for the most vulnerable refugees who cannot be supported effectively in their region of origin e.g. women and children at risk, people in severe need of medical care, and survivors of torture and violence.

Small acts of service will make a difference e.g. by befriending people, introducing them to a doctor or dentist, or providing food, household supplies and toys to help them start a new life.

We are in contact with specialist organisations – such as the Irish Refugee Council, Irish Red Cross and Embrace – which have been

registering offers of assistance and providing relevant information.

Even if peace returned in Syria in the coming months, it would take years for its displaced people to return home and decades for the country to return to normality. This crisis will be with us for the long term and we welcome commitments by the UK and Irish governments to resettle refugees – 20,000 and 4,000 respectively – over the next five years. Indeed, some refugees will build the rest of their lives here. As our response develops, we will consider how we can work collaboratively with charities, NGOs and Churches to meet effectively the humanitarian needs of our new neighbours through further advocacy, research, training and practical support.

Full text at - <http://ireland.anglican.org/news/6094>

Bishop MacDaid opens Door of Mercy at Saint Macartan's Cathedral as Jubilee begins

- Bishop MacDaid calls on people to be 'Missionaries of Mercy'

- Apostolic Nuncio Archbishop Charles Brown to open a special Door of Mercy at the Basilica on Lough Derg in 2016

In what was both an impressive and historic liturgy, a Holy Door – the Door of Mercy – was solemnly opened on Sunday afternoon last at Saint Macartan’s Cathedral in Monaghan. The Bishop of Clogher, Bishop Liam MacDaid presided and carried out the historic duty that has been mandated by Pope Francis to inaugurate the Jubilee Year of Mercy on that day in every diocese of the Catholic world. The liturgy, which consisted of five parts, was well attended by priests, religious and faithful from throughout the diocese.

In his homily, Bishop MacDaid spoke of the Church as the People of God, reaching out ‘humbly and earnestly to receive from Him the strength to overcome our weaknesses’. He said that he noted a great resolve on the part of many in the diocese to take up the challenge put forward by Jesus and of which Pope Francis has reminded us of: to forgive, to be compassionate to all and to seek and spread God’s mercy. Bishop MacDaid asked God to “smile on us with a mother’s love when we need to forgive

ourselves. Remind us of your forgiveness to us when we need to forgive others...help us to be missionaries of mercy in our homes, our parishes and our diocese”.

Due to weather conditions the opening part of the liturgy was transferred from the outside of the cathedral to the baptistry, where a reading from the Gospel of Saint Luke was proclaimed by the deacon, Rev Kevin Malcolmson. This was followed by Melinda Mooney, a lector in Tullycorbet parish, reading aloud the opening part of the *Bull of Indiction* by Pope Francis which proclaimed the Holy Year, setting out the core of what mercy is and calling all people to seek God’s mercy and be agents of mercy. Bishop MacDaid was then accompanied in procession by over fifty representatives of parishes – priests, religious and laity – to the Door of Mercy at the main entrance to the cathedral where, after reciting the words of Psalm 118 – ‘Open the gates of justice, we shall enter and give thanks to the Lord’, he solemnly opened the door.

Bishop MacDaid and the priests then processed to the sanctuary, accompanied by a revised musical setting of Psalm 95.

The active participation in the celebration of Eucharist gave a further expression of the diocesan nature of the event. Lectors and cantors as well as gift bearers were drawn from all ends of the diocese and different aspects of diocesan activity, giving a real sense of inclusiveness, while the music was led by the Cathedral Choir. The liturgy was planned and organised by both the Clogher Diocesan Liturgy Commission and the priests and people of the cathedral parish of Monaghan and Rackwallace. The opening of the Door of Mercy follows a series of Gatherings across the diocese to prepare for the Jubilee Year. These were organised by the Clogher Pastoral Support Group. The Gatherings were held at the level of the seven combined Pastoral Areas, groupings of parishes. Further such Gatherings are being planned for the early part of Lent 2016.

‘Magic Lantern’ collection fosters ecumenical links

Since 2012 and the launch of its Archive of the Month initiative, the RCB Library has been proactive in digitising and promoting lantern slides or ‘magic lanterns’. These slides consist of



'Magic Lantern' Collection Fosters Ecumenical Links

images from glass plates, where the photographic positive was fixed between two pieces of glass and then projected by using a lamp.

Some 96 magic lantern slides dating from the late 19th and early 20th centuries were recently recovered in 'a hidden corner' at Mariannella in

Rathgar, just around the corner from library. The building is the headquarters of the Redemptorist Order in Ireland and this collection fits into a similar genre as the Church of Ireland ones, and is also of exceptionally good quality.

The contents include scene views in counties Clare and Limerick, and the world travel and educational activities of the order. In the light of the RCB Library's experience, archival staff from the Redemptorist Library visited the library recently, and had their own collection digitised. In conjunction with posting a selection of their images online, the staff have now blogged about how they 'turned to the archivists in the Representative Church Body Library for help'. A warm acknowledgement of this collaboration and sharing of ideas is posted at this link: <http://tinyurl.com/h5sxxvpr>

To date, six online exhibits (including the current one for December 2015) have showcased a variety of lantern collections safely lodged in the RCB Library – all of which demonstrate what an important tool they provided for linking the church at home to the wider world of mission. These are permanently available on the links below:

1. Scenes from North India in the late 19th and early 20th centuries: <http://ireland.anglican.org/about/135>
2. Pictures from a tour in Palestine 100 years ago: <http://ireland.anglican.org/about/136>
3. Closing in on our Killaloe photographer: <http://ireland.anglican.org/about/174>
4. More magic lanterns connecting the Church of Ireland and the wider world of mission in the 1930s: <http://ireland.anglican.org/about/201>
5. Lantern slides from the Boer War and the First World War: <http://ireland.anglican.org/about/198>
6. More magic lantern slides – an eclectic collection found in Stillorgan parish, Dublin: <http://ireland.anglican.org/about/128>

With the advent of photography from the mid-19th century, lanterns were in common use – reaching the peak of their popularity about 1900 – and continuing until the 1950s (when they were gradually replaced by 35mm slides). As far as the churches and church organisations were concerned, magic lanterns provided an important

medium for clergy, educators and others to spread their message for a variety of charitable and educational purposes.

Apostle Paul would be 'horrified' by Vatican's position on Judaism, say Jews for Jesus

'Jews for Jesus' has slammed a document released by the Vatican last week that said Catholics don't need to convert Jewish people.

Executive director David Brickner said in a statement that the Vatican's position on the matter was "egregious, especially coming from an institution which seeks to represent a significant number of Christians in the world."

"How can the Vatican ignore the fact that the Great Commission of Jesus Christ mandates that his followers are to bring the gospel to all people?" Brickner added.

"Are they merely pandering to some leaders in the Jewish community who applaud being off the radar for evangelization by Catholics? If so, they need to be reminded that they first received that

gospel message from the lips of Jews who were for Jesus.

"The title of this new document, 'The Gifts and Calling of God are irrevocable,' is taken from Paul's words in Romans 11:29. We believe that the Apostle Paul, whose name is invoked frequently in the Vatican document, would be horrified at this repudiation of the words with which he started his letter in Romans: 'For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.'"

The Vatican's document clarified the relationship between the Catholic Church and Judaism, and condemned missionary work aimed at converting Jews.

"The Catholic Church neither conducts nor supports any specific institutional mission work directed towards the Jews," it said.

Jews are not excluded from salvation, it added, even though "they don't believe in Jesus Christ as the messiah of Israel and Son of God."

"The Church is therefore obliged to view evangelization to Jews, who believe in the one God, in a different manner from that to people of other religions and world views".

The document was released 50 years after the *Nostra Aetate* was published, which formalised a radical change in the way that the Catholic Church viewed Judaism. It officially exonerated Jews of any collective guilt for the death of Jesus and affirmed that God's covenant with them was intact.

Jews for Jesus is the largest Jewish mission agency in the world, with the specific mandate to share the gospel with Jewish people.

Media digest

Archbishops urge hope in their Christmas message

the Irish News

Catholic Archbishop Eamon Martin and his **Church of Ireland** counterpart, Archbishop Richard Clarke said "hope is indeed a rare commodity", ...

www.irishnews//news/2015/12/15/news/archbishops-urge-hope-in-their-christmas-message-355090/content.html

Full text of message at -
<http://ireland.anglican.org/news/6090>

Archbishop Jackson highlights hope in adversity

Irish Independent

The **Church of Ireland** Archbishop of Dublin has encouraged people to seek out ... as well as in homelessness, destitution, grief and poverty in Ireland.
<http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/archbishop-jackson-highlights-hope-in-adversity-34291551.html>

Full text of message at -
<http://dublin.anglican.org/news/2015/12/Christmas-Message-From-the-Archbishop-of-Dublin-the-Most-Rev-Dr-Michael-Jackson>

Bishop of Cashel, Ferns and Ossory's Christmas Message

From the Rt Revd Michael Burrows
<http://ireland.anglican.org/news/6092>

'Black Santa' appeal to help charities for the homeless

Irish Independent

Rev. Canon David Gillespie, Vicar of St Ann's **Church**, Dawson Street, Dublin, with caretaker Fred Deane (left) and pupils from Castleknock ...
<http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/black-santa-appeal-to-help-charities-for-the-homeless-34291553.html>

Muhammad Al-Hussaini: Why I am helping defend Pastor James McConnell

Irish Times

The fact is when the **Irish** or British governments fail to uphold free speech in the face of **religious** lobbying, to recognise that the house of Islam is a ...

<http://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/muhammad-al-hussaini-why-i-am-helping-defend-pastor-james-mcconnell-1.2465854>

FT

Investors want a trio of the world's largest miners to make greater disclosure of risks associated with climate change, after this month's Paris agreement to limit global warming. "Investors need to revisit their stewardship of companies and companies need to look hard at their business plans for climate change," said Edward Mason, head of Responsible Investment at the Church Commissioners. The CofE is one of the members of the Aiming for A group who are calling for the disclosures.

<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/43d0c116-a27b-11e5-bc70-7ff6d4fd203a.html#axzz3uSbYVUX7>

BBC

Report on the appointment of the next Bishop of Leicester, Martyn Snow.

churchnewsireland@gmail.com

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-leicestershire-35100548>

Inspire Magazine

The Archbishop of Canterbury has invited more young Christians to join the Community of St Anselm at Lambeth Palace. Now in its second year, the programme offers people aged 20-35 the opportunity to spend 'a year in God's time' as they live together as a community inspired by the monastic traditions.

<http://inspiremagazine.org.uk/Stories/Personal?storyaction=view&storyid=2076>

Comment

Express: Ann Widdecombe highlights the criticism of the Bishop of Gloucester over the amount of religious broadcasting on the BBC this Christmas.

<http://www.express.co.uk/comment/columnists/ann-widdecombe/627047/Indecisiveness-is-a-mark-of-government>

Independent: The Revd Jody Stowell writes on the vicar's reaction to people only appearing in church at Christmas.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/as-a-vicar-here-s-what-i-think-when-you-all-pile-in-at-christmas-after-a-year-of-church-avoidance-a6772871.html>