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# The 2013 Irish legislation on abortion: turning-point or missed opportunity?

A critical analysis from a human rights perspective

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## **Abstract**

While Ireland is being targeted by a worldwide Amnesty International campaign on sexual and reproductive rights, a reflection on the Irish legal framework on abortion is deemed necessary. The present work assesses whether the Protection of Life During Pregnancy Act approved by the Irish Parliament in July 2013 represents a step forward or a missed opportunity for the protection of women's reproductive rights in Ireland. After illustrating the legal, political and social developments on the issue of abortion since the introduction of the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution in 1983, the focus will move to the analysis of the 2013 Act. The assessment will be twofold. On the one hand, at a national level, the alleged shortcomings of its practical impact will be illustrated. On the other hand, at the international level, the legislation will be evaluated in the light of its compliance with the Irish obligations under International Human Rights Law. Finally, it will be concluded that the Protection of Life During Pregnancy Act has to be welcomed, since it fills a thirty-year lasting legislative gap, but it falls short of human rights requirements and does not bring any major practical improvement in the majority of women's lives.

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