
UK: abortion law discriminates against people with disabilities. Judges reopen debate on British legislation

London's Court of Appeal decided to reopen the case of 26-year-old Heidi Crowther, a woman with Down's syndrome, and Maire Lea-Wilson, 33, mother of 16-month-old Aidan who also has Down's syndrome, which was rejected by the UK High Court last September. The two women had argued before the court of last resort that abortion legislation in the UK discriminates against people with disabilities and violates the European Convention on Human Rights. Indeed at present in the UK, babies with disabilities can be aborted up to birth, while for healthy babies the time limit for abortion is 24 weeks. "This law tells that people with disabilities should not exist and violates their human rights", Heidi Crowther said. "I feel rejected by the society to which I belong". However, since the case had moral and ethical implications, the High Court decided that it should fall under the competence of Parliament, not judges. That stance, however, was reversed by the Court of Appeal that reopened the debate on the matter. A new hearing at the London's Court is expected to be held in November or December. If the two women win the case, the judges will require the government to review the abortion law, which will then return to Parliament. At that point, the government's action or the amendments proposed may lead to a change in the legislation.

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