



Written by [Bruce Walker](#) on August 31, 2012

## European Court of Human Rights Weakens Abortion Bans

[LifeSiteNews](#) reports that the European Court of Human Rights has found that an Italian law that prohibits genetic screening of in vitro embryos "...violates the right to respect for private and family life." Consequently, the court found that the Italian law violates Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights. The court criticized the "incoherence" of the law, which banned any pre-implantation genetic diagnosis of embryos, but which lets an unborn child suspected of being defective be aborted.



The ruling drew strong support from far-left politicians such as Nichi Vendola, a homosexual activist who called the decision a "wise judgment." Vendola, who has been a member of the Italian Communist Youth Federation since he was 14, is president of the southern Italian region Apulia. But Maurizio Sacconi, a former welfare minister in Italy who served in the center-right coalition, declared, "I'm sure that the Italian government will appeal against the judgment. The defense of a state law is a must in principle and in this case also justified on the merits. Italy cannot in any way, in the absence of conscious parliamentary will, surreptitiously take the path of genetic selection."

Italy has historically been one of Europe's most restrictive nations on abortion, reflecting the country's strong Catholic traditions. Pro-life activists warned that the European Court of Human Rights' ruling has nothing to do with human rights, but is rather an effort to push Italy along the path of totally unrestricted killing of unborn children.

Enzo Pennetta wrote on pro-life website *Libera e Persona*:

Something significant is happening here, once it is established that the two laws are inconsistent, you decide which of the two, without any explanation reflects a correct principle and what does not. In practice, what ... the European Court [does] is to determine which is to prevail over the law. ... In short, the Court finds that the embryo is not a person and therefore he should not be recognized as possessing human rights. But what is the scientific basis for this decision? There is simply none. Such statements are arbitrary [and] have no theoretical or experimental support.

The European Court of Human Rights is expected in a few days to hand down a report on the abortion laws of Ireland — one of the most religious nations in Europe, with the overwhelming majority of its citizens not only defining themselves as Catholic, but with a substantial percentage being active practitioners of their faith. (A [2012 survey](#) showed weekly church attendance in Ireland to be 46 percent, as opposed to only 12 percent in nominally Catholic France.) The Court is studying an Irish abortion law in light of a woman with cancer who alleged that she had to travel outside of Ireland to get an abortion. In 2010 the court found that the woman's human rights had been jeopardized by the abortion ban.

Liam Gibson, Northern Ireland spokesman for the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children, issued this warning:



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The decline in interest in religion in Ireland has serious implications for the pro-life movement in the country. It is not simply the loss of faith in Irish society which will affect the pro-life message but the change in the culture's view of human life which will be decisive.

Kathleen Lynch, Ireland's Minister of State at the Department of Health, claimed that the government may have no choice but to recommend legislation allowing abortion as part of its membership obligations to the European Union.

Archbishop Diarmuid Martin of Dublin reiterated the Roman Catholic Church's position: "The respect for human life from the moment of conception again is a fundamental part of Catholic teaching."

A WIN-Gallup global survey of 57 countries found that Ireland ranked 43rd in terms of the population considering itself religious, a 22-percentage drop since the question was last asked just seven years ago. During this period the number of self-identified atheists in the country nearly doubled. Religious faith in Italy is also much greater than in most European nations, according to a recent University of Chicago study, which showed belief in God weakest in those nations in north or central Europe, but highest in the peripheral regions such as Ireland, Cyprus, Portugal, and Malta.

Both Ireland and Italy are increasingly leaning on the eurozone and the European Union to prop up their economies. The so-called "PIIGS" nations include three of the most religious countries in Europe — Portugal, Ireland, and Italy — and until five years ago Portugal had one of the most restrictive abortion laws in Europe; now its law is more in line with other European nations.

The [European Court of Human Rights](#) in April of this year heard an unprecedented number of cases relating to abortion, and many of these came from traditionally Catholic nations. A Polish woman, for example, sued because of the difficulties she experienced in obtaining an abortion for her pregnant daughter.

*Photo: Court room of the European Court of Human Rights*



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