

Written Answers

Monday 6 February 2012

Abortion

Questions

6 Feb 2012 : Column WA3

Asked by Lord Lester of Herne Hill

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the right of the wounded and sick to comprehensive medical care, under the Geneva Conventions and the Convention Against Torture, includes a right for girls and women raped in situations of armed conflict to have access to safe abortion and other medical care and attention.[HL15040]

Baroness Northover: The UK does not consider that there is any general right to an abortion under international humanitarian law or international human rights law.

The Geneva Conventions contain a number of provisions for the provision of care for the wounded and sick in an armed conflict, which apply equally to women, men, girls and boys. The care to be provided will depend upon the facts of the individual case.

Article 14 (1) of the Convention Against Torture provides that states shall ensure in their legal systems that the victim of an act of torture obtains the means for "as full rehabilitation as possible". The means of rehabilitation and whether or not torture has taken place will depend on the facts of the individual case.

The Department for International Development's (DfID) position is that safe abortion reduces recourse to unsafe abortion and thus saves lives, and that women and adolescent girls must have the right to make their own decisions about their sexual and reproductive health and well-being. The July 2011 DfID practice paper clearly outlines the UK policy position on safe and unsafe abortion in developing countries.

Asked by Lord Lester of Herne Hill

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they will encourage the Government of the United States to withdraw the restriction on its foreign aid which prevents the provision of safe abortion and other medical care and attention to wounded and sick girls and women raped in situations of armed conflict.[HL15041]

Baroness Northover: The July 2011 the Department for International Development (DfID) practice paper clearly outlines the UK policy position on safe and unsafe abortion in developing countries. We are open to discussing our position with others who wish to learn more about or from our stance.

UK officials are engaged in regular working-level discussions with both US Government officials and non-government organisations who work to improve access to reproductive health.

6 Feb 2012 : Column WA4

27 Feb 2012 : Column WA187

Written Answers

Monday 27 February 2012

Abortion

Question

Asked by Lord Lester of Herne Hill

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Northover on 6 February (WA 3) which stated that "safe abortion reduces recourse to unsafe abortion and thus saves lives", whether their policy position is also that safe abortion is a suitable option to reduce the risk of physical and mental harm where a child has been conceived as a result of rape.[HL15542]

Baroness Northover: The Department for International Development's (DfID) position is that safe abortion reduces recourse to unsafe abortion and thus saves maternal lives. The July 2011 DfID practice paper clearly outlines the UK policy position on safe and unsafe abortion in developing countries. However, access to safe and legal abortion in the circumstances above depends on an individual country's legislation and policy.

18 Oct 2012 : Column WA475

Written Answers

Thursday 18 October 2012

Abortion

Questions

Asked by Lord Lester of Herne Hill

To ask Her Majesty's Government what procedures are in place to ensure that Department for International Development-funded medical services for women and girls impregnated by rape in armed conflict include the option of abortion services if medically necessary, in the light of Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions and Protocols.[HL2378]

Baroness Northover: The UK Government directly support the provision of non-discriminatory and comprehensive medical care to victims of rape in a range of countries, including those affected by conflict. One of the leading causes of maternal death is unsafe abortion. The UK policy recognises that provision of safe abortion services is important in reducing the number of women who die as a result of unsafe abortions.

UK aid without exception can be used to provide safe abortion care where necessary, and to the extent allowed by national laws, for victims of rape in conflict zones.

Asked by Lord Lester of Herne Hill

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether any of the humanitarian entities funded by the United Kingdom to provide medical services for victims of rape in armed conflict keep their United Kingdom funding segregated from their United States funding on the basis that the latter is subject to a ban on providing abortion services notwithstanding medical necessity.[HL2379]

Baroness Northover: The UK adheres to the internationally accepted principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence in its humanitarian action. UK humanitarian action is, and will continue to be, based on need. Although there are restrictions on US aid to finance abortions, these do not extend to funding provided by the UK. UK aid without exception can be used to provide safe abortion care, where necessary and to the extent allowed by national laws, for victims of rape in conflict zones.

18 Oct 2012 : Column WA482

Overseas Aid

Questions

Asked by Lord Lester of Herne Hill

To ask Her Majesty's Government how much funding annually is given by the United Kingdom to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to provide humanitarian services for wounded and

sick persons in armed conflict, and whether such funds are kept separate from United States funds to the ICRC which cannot be used to provide abortion services where medically necessary. [HL2380]

Baroness Northover: In 2011-12, the Department for International Development (DfID) has provided £40 million of core funding to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to ensure the needs of victims of armed conflict are met. In addition, DfID has provided additional funds to respond to specific country appeals. It is for ICRC to allocate its funds according to need. Although there are restrictions on US aid to finance abortions, these do not extend to funding provided by the UK. UK aid without exception can be used to provide safe abortion care, where necessary and to the extent allowed by national laws, for victims of rape in conflict zones.

Asked by Lord Lester of Herne Hill

To ask Her Majesty's Government what measures they take in funding humanitarian aid for women and girls raped in armed conflict to ensure that the funding complies with the non-discrimination standards on medical care for the wounded and sick in armed conflict in accordance with the Geneva Conventions Act 1957 as amended and the Joint Service Manual on the Law of Armed Conflict.[HL2381]

Baroness Northover: UK humanitarian action is, and will continue to be, based on need and need alone, autonomous from political, military, security or economic objectives. In armed conflict, where international humanitarian law takes precedence over national laws, UK aid can be used, without exception, to provide safe abortion care for victims of rape as part of non-discriminatory medical care.

18 Oct 2012 : Column WA484

Rape

Question

Asked by Lord Lester of Herne Hill

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they treat women and girls made pregnant through rape in armed conflict as victims of torture within the scope of the United Nations Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Punishment.[HL2382]

Baroness Northover: Article 14 (1) of the Convention Against Torture provides that states shall ensure in their legal systems that the victim of an act of torture obtains the means for "as full rehabilitation as possible". The means of rehabilitation and whether or not torture has taken place depends on the facts of the individual case.

The Department for International Development (DfID) directly supports the provision of non-discriminatory medical care to victims of rape in a range of countries, including those affected by conflict.

Overseas Aid

Questions

Asked by Lord Lester of Herne Hill

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have requested that the Government of the United States lifts its ban on United States humanitarian aid being provided to organisations which facilitate abortions for women and girls impregnated by rape in armed conflict.[HL2614]

Baroness Northover: The UK Government are clear that where international humanitarian law takes precedence over national laws, UK aid can be used, without exception, to provide safe abortion care for victims of rape as part of non-discriminatory medical care.

The UK Government have not requested the United States Government to change its policy.

21 Nov 2012 : Column WA394

Overseas Aid

Question

Asked by Lord Lester of Herne Hill

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Northover on 30 October (WA 125), whether they are working with the European Commission to ensure that the Commission adopts as policy the provision of humanitarian aid without exception to provide safe abortion care for victims of rape in armed conflict.[HL3248]

21 Nov 2012 : Column WA395

Baroness Northover: UK aid without exception can be used to provide safe abortion care where necessary, and to the extent allowed by national laws, for victims of rape in conflict zones. The UK Government are not working specifically with the European Commission to ensure the European Commission adopts this as policy.