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Italy to press UN on compulsory abortions

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Yesterday the Italian parliament, currently controlled by center-right parties, approved a resolution introduced by a close friend of the late Pope John Paul II to press the United Nations to condemn the use of compulsory abortions as part of population control programs.

The most commonly cited example of compulsory abortion in the world is usually China, where the country's one-child policy was strictly enforced as recently as the late 1990s, especially in urban areas. More recently, however, declining fertility and rapid aging have induced China to relax the policy somewhat.

From time to time, the prospect of compulsory abortion is floated elsewhere. In 2006, for example, Bulgaria's Minister of Health suggested a policy of mandatory abortions for pregnant girls under 18 who belong to the Roma people, more commonly known as "gypsies." Under pressure from international human rights groups, the idea was abandoned.

The Italian motion was sponsored by Rocco Buttiglione, a Christian Democrat politician and academic philosopher who often served as an informal advisor to John Paul II. Buttiglione is also a member of the "Communion and Liberation" movement in the Catholic church.

The motion reads: "The parliament commits the government to promote, seeking the necessary consensus, a resolution of the United Nations that condemns the use of abortion as an instrument of demographic control and affirms the right of every woman to not be compelled into abortion, favoring policies that help remove the economic and social causes of abortion."

Italy's center-left parties abstained from the vote in favor of Buttiglione's motion, after failing to insert language calling for the promotion of contraception.

Buttiglione argued that opposition to compulsory abortion bridges the normal pro-life and pro-choice divide.

"We all agree that abortion is an evil, but we're divided between those who are pro-life and those who are for choice," he said. "Now we can all stand together against those who are both anti-life and anti-choice."

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