



## **Abortion Restrictions, A Namibian Nightmare.**

As parliamentary debates, public hearings, petitions, media reports and interviews covering the polarizing battle to decide whether termination of pregnancy should be made accessible on demand, an imperative detail needs to be at the center of all discussions – which is the lives of those directly affected by restrictive abortion laws.

The stakes are high for many people whose voices cannot be voiced in these debates and for many people whose stories cannot be told as the current restrictive laws silence them and the stigma around terminating pregnancy shames them. While there are very many facts, statistics and a plethora of research, as well as the number of medical professionals and activists who are working tirelessly to ensure that people with uteruses have the right to choose whether to see a pregnancy all the way through. A decision which could change the lives and the future of people for whom termination of pregnancy, in a safe and legal manner could literally mean life or death for those people who are predominantly women and gender diverse persons.

It is imperative that regardless of what your stance is that we all remember the stakes involved when restrictive abortion laws do not stop abortion but rather drive abortion underground and into back doors and back alleys in unsanitary conditions that could possibly lead to the death of those who are in need of termination of pregnancy either because the pregnancy has been a result of sexual violence or physical violence or because the pregnancy is simply something that is not financially feasible for the pregnant person or because the pregnancy threatens the life of the pregnant person or because the pregnancy could compromise the mental health of the pregnant person or because the pregnant person is either too young or too old to see a pregnancy to full term or simply - and very validly because the pregnant person simply does not want to be pregnant.

In 2017 it was reported that 7000 unsafe abortions took place in Namibia. As we stand on podiums, as we send our voices through the radio waves or TV broadcasts and write lengthy think pieces on this issue, we need to remember, the number, 7000 and counting. 7000+ unsafe abortions, 7000+ pregnant people left without a choice, 7000+ scared woman and

gender diverse persons, 7000+ pregnant people left without the right to access to information regarding health, 7000+ pregnant people left without the right to decide whether or not to have children or when to have children, 7000+ traumatizingly painful unsanitary-unsafe-life-risking desperate decisions, 7000+ people who don't have the luxury of traveling to South Africa or other countries where people have the right to access to safe termination of pregnancy and, 7000+ families affected, 7000+ nightmares for 7000+ people robbed of their right to choice. What's even more frightening, are probably 7000s more that nobody knows about, because the possibility that there are 7000+ unsafe abortions taking place in shame and silence because of restrictive abortion laws is very high. that is 7000 too much for a government that claims to care about the rights and freedoms and liberties that its people, specifically, women and gender diverse persons should have equally been granted access to on the 21st of March in 1990.