

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honor and a pleasure for me to speak briefly at this forum. I represent the Austrian independent initiative „Stoppt Leihmutterschaft (stop surrogacy) founded in 2016. I started working on my book "Kind auf Bestellung" (Child on demand) in 2013. I have had many interviews with experts, medical doctors, lawyers, midwives, sociologists, psychologists, surrogate mothers. My book was published two years later and soon thereafter was a call to create a broader initiative to fight against surrogacy. It is, by the way, a rather unique association, as we unite feminists, catholic, protestant and atheist people on the basis of human rights to fight surrogacy.

Our aim is to make the national ban in Austria even more secure and to campaign for an international ban. Education and clear information about the crimes against human rights connected to this improperly called “medical assisted reproduction” are also important to us. We often found out that there is a great deal of ignorance about what surrogacy actually means. There is a lot of glorification, with images of cute babies and happy parents. The terminology used to promote surrogacy is full of pseudo-modern lies and fairy tales, both hiding the reality. The dark sides are not so nice to accept.

It is very clear and simple: Surrogacy is a commercial form of exploitation of women, of women's bodies, often exploiting a social gap between a surrogate mother and so called intended parents.

I am not only journalist but also social worker. Now I work with girls who were taken out from their families. I have worked with orphans and disabled children in Israel and Palestine, for many years I have worked with refugees from all over the world and homeless people. So I know what a social gap means and what people are willing to do for money when they are poor and desperate. Face the reality: We have so much poverty in the world, so much injustice. I cannot take it seriously when it is said there are fair deals and win-win-situations in surrogacy.

Surrogacy is a violence against the dignity of women, because it turns the woman into nothing more than a vessel for the goods she is supposed to deliver, for which payment is made. Her body is under control of the intended parents and doctors. Her freedom of movement and personal life is restricted. She has to prevent a close relationship with the unborn, what is an illusion, of course. If the unborn is disabled, abortion or not is no free choice anymore, she has to abort. So this women's right is suspended, although feminists have been fighting for it since many, many years. The control continues with the birth, mostly a Caesarean section, no bonding. This is inhuman. Offers such as all-inclusive packages for 60,000 euros, with a so-called 100 percent baby guarantee, where intended parents can exchange unsuccessful surrogate mothers and egg donors as often as they like, hurt the dignity of the woman.

Statement von Eva Maria Bachinger als Vertreterin von „stoppt-leihmutterschaft“ in Genf beim Side-Event zur Sitzung des UN-Menschenrechtsausschuss am 18. Juni 2024.

The trade in human beings, in body parts, is prohibited, so the worldwide trade in babies from surrogacy should also be prohibited. Capitalism dominates all areas of life and we need ethical limits more than ever.

You will hear again and again that there are so many selfless surrogate mothers who are so keen to help unhappy, childless couples. Well, if there are such cases, they are absolute exceptions, but the question remains: How can we be sure that no money changes hands? And the child nevertheless becomes an object of a contract, with or without money.

Even in the 21st century with high-tech medicine, pregnancy and childbirth still pose a high risk to a woman's life and limb. No money in the world is worth jeopardising your own health and life.

We should use all our strength to improve the social situation of women, for educational opportunities, so that they can earn money with their skills and do not have to be objects for the wishes of other people.

Sorry, but there is definitely no right to a child. Children have a right to have parents. There are far too many children who grow up without reliable carers, there are so many opportunities to support and help children. Also, in view of the global population growth, very difficult crises like global warming and extinction of species, it should no longer be a question of producing children at any price.

One more point is important to me: Left-winged supporters of surrogacy must ask themselves how important for them are the human rights of women and children. Critics of surrogacy, especially religious, conservative ones, must ask themselves whether their picture of the ideal family - father, mother, children - also contributes to the pressure on women to become mothers. Because: What do we really think of a childless woman? Among conservative circles, there is no positive image of a childless woman unless she is a nun in convent. Due to this pressure to have a perfect family, women are trying every method of reproductive medicine, including surrogacy. The ideal image of women as mothers is also contrary to human dignity. A woman is a woman, regardless of whether she is a mother or not. Neither a surrogate mother nor any other woman can be reduced to her reproductive capacity.

Last but not least: It is important to bridge the gap between the conservative and progressive ideology in respect to the universal implementation of human rights.

Thank you very much for your attention!