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## Amnesty prefers right to abortion over right to life

By [David Quinn](#)  
Friday July 31 2009

ON Monday night at the U2 concert Amnesty International honoured its best traditions when Bono announced that it was making Burmese opposition leader, Aung San Suu Kyi an 'Ambassador of Conscience'.

Amnesty was originally founded to fight for prisoners of conscience and Suu Kyi is nothing if she is not that. The very word 'amnesty' implies what the original core purpose of this organisation is and should remain.

Making Suu Kyi an Ambassador of Conscience, and campaigning on her behalf is controversial only to the military dictatorship in Burma. Everyone else will applaud Amnesty as it fights her cause.

Unfortunately, this venerable organisation, founded by a Catholic, is also betraying its best traditions because it has decided that campaigning for abortion and supporting gay marriage and adoption is now part of its brief.

On Tuesday night, Amnesty's Irish director, Colm O'Gorman, gave a speech in Belfast in which he came down firmly in favour of same-sex marriage and same-sex adoption. Abortion and gay marriage are extremely controversial topics, and on these Amnesty finds itself opposed not just by military dictatorships but by millions of people of goodwill worldwide. In his talk, O'Gorman tried to characterise all opposition to same-sex marriage and adoption as a form of bigotry -- a familiar tactic of the gay-rights lobby.

He said the Government was "cowardly" for introducing civil partnerships rather than marriage for same-sex couples, even though all that is missing from the proposed law is the right to adopt as a couple. What O'Gorman was saying, in effect, is that if you believe marriage should be between a man and a woman -- and that, where possible, children have a right to be raised by a mother and father -- then you are a bigot.

### **Bigot**

In that case Australia's Labour prime minister, Kevin Rudd, is a bigot. He opposes civil unions as well as marriage, although he does support certain rights for gay and lesbian couples. It would even make Barack Obama a bigot because he believes marriage should be between a man and a woman, although he also supports giving many marriage-like rights to same-sex couples.

O'Gorman says not allowing same-sex couples to adopt, undermines the rights of children. In fact, it protects the right of a child to be raised by a mother and father, where possible -- a fundamental right Amnesty clearly does not recognise anymore. But Amnesty's betrayal of its principles goes even further. The Civil Partnership Bill says that if a civil registrar does not facilitate a same-sex civil union, that person can be charged with an offence. What about conscientious objection? It doesn't count. Would Amnesty support such a person if they were charged with an offence? No they wouldn't.

Returning to the abortion issue, Amnesty International launched a major document this week criticising Nicaragua over its new anti-abortion law.

It claims Nicaragua is in breach of numerous UN conventions. However, not one single UN convention creates a right to abortion. Nicaragua's law is much like our own and our maternal death rate is the joint lowest in the world. Amnesty Ireland remains neutral on abortion. Amnesty International should have as well. It has chosen the "right" to abort over the right to life.

Unfortunately Amnesty has now changed so radically that no Catholic can in good conscience support it any longer, and nor can any orthodox-minded Protestant, Jew, Muslim, Hindu or Buddhist because all of these religions in their orthodox forms support traditional marriage, and most oppose abortion. It is no accident that Bono and U2 stay away from these issues in their concerts. They know they are extremely divisive and drive people away from the heart of their human rights work.

Amnesty ought to take a leaf out of Bono's book before it does itself irreparable damage. He is more true to the organisation's founding spirit than its current leadership.

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