



Pro-Life Groups Join Coalition to Make Sure Intl Law Doesn't Promote US Abortion

by Austin Ruse

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LifeNews.com Note: Austin Ruse writes for the [Catholic Family & Human Rights Institute](#), a pro-life organization that lobbies at the United Nations. This article originally appeared in their Friday Fax publication.

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Washington, DC (LifeNews.com) -- An unlikely coalition of policy groups has formed around a case of juvenile justice now being considered by the US Supreme Court. The coalition includes national security groups, libertarians and pro-life and pro-family social conservatives.

The case involves two individuals sentenced to life in prison for crimes they committed as juveniles.

In the state of Florida, Joe Harris Sullivan was convicted of raping an elderly woman when he was 13 years old, while Terrance Jamar Graham was found to have violated his probation by committing armed robbery when he was 17. For these crimes and for a high degree of recidivism, both were sentenced to life in prison. They appealed and lost and have now petitioned the Supreme Court.

A part of their claim to have their sentences changed and what has brought the unusual coalition together is based on the petitioners assertions of new international norms which are said to prohibit life sentences without parole for acts committed while under the age of majority.

In a brief filed with the court, Amnesty International asserts that the sentences must be thrown out since the US is bound by various non-binding UN resolutions, and comments by treaty monitoring bodies. Amnesty International also claims the US is bound by treaties the US has not ratified.

Specifically, Amnesty claims that the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its prohibition against life sentences without parole for juvenile acts binds because so many countries have ratified that document. They also claim that resolutions in each of the past three UN General Assemblies calling for banning such sentences has established a customary international law.

The brief filed by the Washington DC-based Sovereignty Network and the Atlanta-based Solidarity Center for Law and Justice denies there is any such customary international law on life sentences for juvenile acts and further argues that the US is not bound by a treaty the US has never ratified or that has even been considered for advice and consent by the US Senate.

Americans United for Life joined the brief along with the Center for Security Policy, Concerned Women for America, Hudson Institute, Competitive Enterprise Institute, Cato Institute and seven other groups [including Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute, publisher of the Friday Fax].

The coalition's brief makes clear the group does not take a position on whether the sentences of the two young men are wrong or draconian. The brief asserts that these decisions are best left to the people of Florida and to the states. The brief warns that by using "non-binding provisions of international human rights

treaties” that the Court “risks undermining the democratic process and the rule of law and creating uncertainty about a multitude of domestic laws.”

Responding to why a pro-life group would be concerned with such issues, William Saunders, Senior Vice President of Americans United for Life said, “AUL is committed to the rule of law and opposes the misuse of treaties and other international documents to advance policy positions through the federal courts under the pretense that they establish binding international norms.”

Wendy Wright, president of Concerned Women for America agreed, “Radicalists elevate and abuse the concept of international law for the express purpose of imposing their view of the world onto everyone else.”

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