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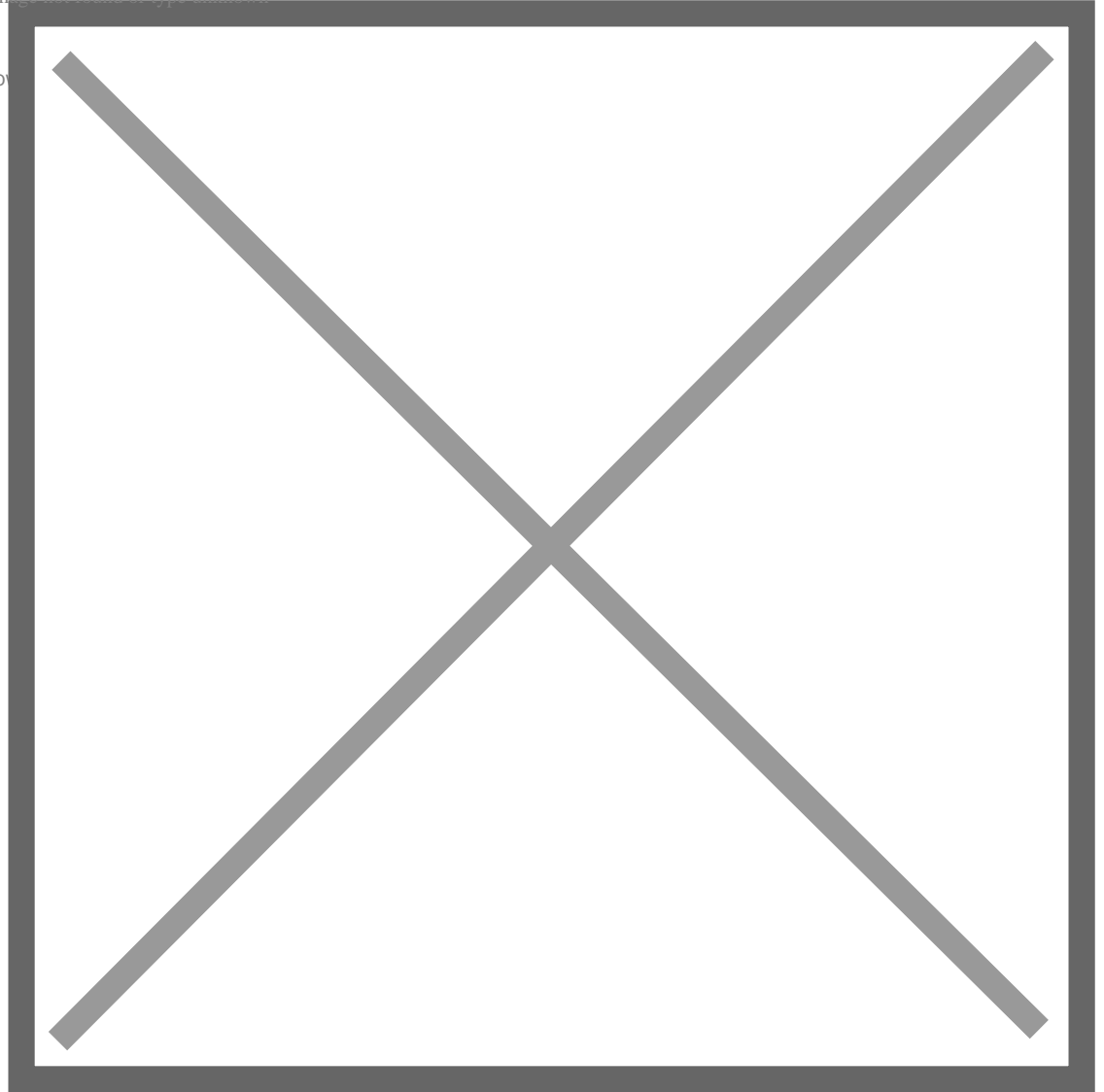
Shame on Scotland: 75-year-old pro-life activist arrested and abused

LIFE AND BIOETHICS

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The images in the video are disturbing: Rose Docherty, a 75-year-old woman, is arrested in Glasgow for allegedly violating the law that imposed buffer zones around the 30 Scottish clinics where abortions are performed. She is loaded, with notable difficulty, into the back of the police van, despite her mobility problems and two prosthetic hips, and you can see that she has to climb in on her knees. A disconcerting scene.

Saturday, 27 September, Rose stands alone on the pavement, at a distance from the entrance to the Queen Elizabeth University Hospital but still within the legally mandated 200-metre limit, wearing a sign around her neck that reads, "Coercion is an offence. I am here to talk only if you want me to". She doesn't stop anyone, she doesn't speak loudly to draw attention and she doesn't display any religious objects; she is simply there.

Yet just her mere presence prompted the intervention of no less than four police officers,

who at first asked her to move elsewhere. Upon her refusal, they arrested her for allegedly violating the Buffer Zone Act (Abortion Services Scotland Act, 2024). 'What part of the law have I violated?' Rose asks. The policeman diligently reads out loud: '...approaching someone to try to persuade them not to access abortion services, surrounding people as they try to enter or leave the clinic or hospital, distributing leaflets, religious preaching, and silent vigils'. Rose replies, "I wasn't approaching anyone. I wasn't distributing leaflets. I wasn't doing anything in contravention of your buffer zone." However, the police officer proceeded, stating, "I suspect that you have committed an offence, and I consider it necessary and proportionate to keep you in custody for the purpose of bringing you before a court or otherwise proceeding against you."

ADF International, which also distributed the video of her arrest, says that Rose Docherty was then detained for several hours by the police, thrown into a cell and even refused a chair despite her disability. This is shameful treatment by a police force that goes after the weak while being incapable of tackling real criminals. **Glasgow has the highest crime rate of any city in Scotland** (789 crimes per 10,000 inhabitants, compared to the Scottish average of 528 per 10,000 inhabitants), and this figure is also **higher than the averages for England and Wales** (670 and 750 crimes per 10,000 inhabitants, respectively). For comparison, the metropolis Milan in northern Italy, the city with the highest crime rate in Italy, recorded **710 crimes per 10,000 inhabitants** in 2024.

In other words, Glasgow has serious law and order problems, yet the authorities consider the presence of silent and helpless pro-lifers near abortion clinics to be a security emergency.

Moreover, Rose Docherty had already been arrested in the same place and in the same way on 19 February, but the Scottish authorities dismissed the case in August after an international campaign of protest, including a **post on X by the US State Department** urging Scotland to respect freedom of expression. This followed Vice President **J.D. Vance's speech at the Munich Security Conference** on 14 February, in which he criticised the persecution of pro-lifers in the UK. He cited the **case of Adam Smith Connor**, as well as the new Scottish legislation which warns citizens that 'even private prayers in their own homes may violate the law'.

However, this was not sufficient, and Rose Docherty is in trouble with the law again. Released on bail, she now faces a fine of up to £10,000. In the meantime, she has been banned from approaching abortion clinics beyond the legally mandated 200-metre

buffer zone.

'Although it has become commonplace to hear of police abuse and discrimination against pro-lifers,' Isabel Vaughan-Spruce, who has been stopped several times by British police for silent prayer, told the *Daily Compass*, 'I find this arrest particularly gruesome.' A 75-year-old grandmother with two prosthetic hips was arrested, searched, and abused by being made to climb into the back of a van on her hands and knees. And for what? Because she was stopped on a public street making herself available for consensual conversations. If it hadn't been caught on camera, it would be hard to believe!" 'When we trample on the dignity of unborn children, when we trample on the dignity of expectant mothers, it is not surprising that we also trample on the dignity of the elderly,' continued Isabel Vaughan Spruce.

After her release, Rose Docherty stated that 'everyone has the right to have consensual conversations'. I held my sign with compassion and love as an open invitation for anyone who wanted to speak, without accosting anyone. It's unfair to treat me like a criminal just because I'm willing to listen. Conversation is not forbidden on the streets of Glasgow, yet this is already the second time I have been arrested for it'.

This video is very worrying because it shows an increase in abuse and intimidation against pro-lifers in the UK. Not even an unjust and harsh law against them is enough. It is clear from the dialogue between the police officer and Docherty that she was not violating any of the conditions of the unjust buffer zone law. We are now in a state of pure arbitrariness, worthy of a police state.

This makes it 'urgent', as Isabel Vaughan-Spruce tells us, 'to address the issue of the persecution of pro-lifers, if our countries still want to be respected internationally'.