America’s Abortion Theocracy
by Radhika Rao

Although the US purports to be a secular nation committed to the value of religious pluralism, recent developments in abortion law suggest that it is fast becoming a theocracy, which enshrines the contested views of a particular sect of Christianity into law. This paper will sketch out the positions of the major world religions on the difficult questions of when life begins and the morality of abortion. It will then map the US approach to abortion embodied in the recent Dobbs decision and the trigger laws that are now taking effect across the states, which prohibit abortion – with almost no exceptions – starting at conception, first signs of cardiac activity (6 weeks), emergence of gender/facial features (15 weeks), quickening (20 weeks), etc. The map of abortion laws across the US tracks the religious views of a powerful minority, which are now being imposed upon the majority by means of state laws, aided and abetted by a religiously-tilted Supreme Court. The lawsuit by a Jewish synagogue challenging Florida’s abortion law presents the pressing question – to what extent can a secular state impose its religious views of when life begins upon dissenters, including those whose religion provides a very different answer to these questions?

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