

**Question for written answer E-004591/2014
to the Commission**

Rule 117

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Subject: Selective abortion in India

To this day, the birth of a girl is very often regarded as a veritable calamity in many parts of India. As in the past, therefore, it still often happens that baby girls are not allowed to live. People really believe that bringing up a girl is a waste of time and money. Women do not carry on the name of the family and do not contribute economically to its support.

The gender imbalance in India fell slightly in the late 1990s because of an improvement in the status of women. At around the same time, however, ultrasound made it possible to find out the sex of a foetus, leading to a reliance on the scourge of abortion.

Many Indians believe that the foetus has no soul until the second trimester of pregnancy and so they see abortion as morally acceptable. As a result, tests to find out the sex of an unborn child have become big business.

Posters in stations and leaflets handed out in hospitals advertise tests and ultrasound scans for pregnant women at prices that even the less well-off classes in society can afford. Many women still refuse to have ultrasounds in an attempt to hide the unborn child's sex and thus prevent the family from deciding whether it deserves to live or not.

The latest census shows that female infanticide is still a particularly widespread evil in India, contrary to the idea that a girl child can be an important resource for a country, which, paradoxically, once had a woman as prime minister. In that respect, can the Commission say what action has been taken to date and what the future guidelines will be as regards protecting women's and children's rights in India?