

## Changing gender

*Fools rush in where angels fear to tread*

Review by **Peter Saunders**  
CMF Chief Executive

The government has launched a public consultation,<sup>1</sup> on how to make it easier for transgender people in England and Wales to change their legal gender on their birth certificates. A similar consultation closed in Scotland in March, but has not yet reported.<sup>2</sup>

Currently, under the Gender Recognition Act 2004 people need to be over 18, have been diagnosed with gender dysphoria, have lived in their new gender identity for two years and have obtained a certificate from a gender recognition panel before being able, legally, to change their gender.

However, a highly controversial 2016 report<sup>3</sup> by the Women and Equalities Committee of the House of Commons on Gender Equality, recommended reducing the age limit for hormone treatment and surgery to 16 and completely removing the process of gender recognition from its current medical and legal framework – basing gender change on self-declaration alone.

A consultation scheduled for autumn 2017 was first postponed but appeared to lose momentum<sup>4</sup> after chief proponent Justine Greening, then Equalities

Minister, lost her cabinet post in a New Year reshuffle.

But the proposals have now reappeared under the watch of new Equalities Minister Penny Mordaunt and with the backing of Prime Minister Theresa May. May has said that she wants ‘to see a process that is more streamlined and de-medicalised – because being trans should never be treated as an illness.’

The move is being justified by the results of the government’s LGBT survey – the largest national survey of its kind, with over 108,000 participants – which showed that many trans people find the current process overly bureaucratic and expensive.

The key question behind these proposals is what gender dysphoria actually is. Is a ‘trans woman’ really a woman trapped in a man’s body? Or is ‘she’ really just a man who has an unshakeable false belief that he is a woman? Is a biological male who has had female hormones and gender reassignment surgery really a woman, or is he just a feminised man?

As recently as 2013 this condition was called ‘gender identity disorder’.<sup>5</sup> But it was renamed ‘gender dysphoria’ in the DSM-V and will be reclassified as ‘gender incon-

gruence’ in the ICD-11 in 2020,<sup>6</sup> the implication being that it is only to be considered a mental disorder if it causes deep distress. This change appears to have been ideologically driven rather than evidence-based.

As Tom Goodfellow has written in a letter to *The Times*,<sup>7</sup> ‘Gender transition, by its nature, is a medicalised process involving powerful drugs, hormones and ultimately extensive plastic surgery... So, the call for this process to be “de-medicalised” is clearly nonsense... Transgenderism is a complex issue and needs careful management. Simply legislating to allow individuals legally to self-identify will not meaningfully address any of the problems and could actually prove harmful.’

### references

1. Reform of the Gender Recognition Act 2004 [bit.ly/2KGoASG](http://bit.ly/2KGoASG)
2. Scottish Government Review of the Gender Recognition Act [bit.ly/2zMtCLR](http://bit.ly/2zMtCLR)
3. Transgender Equality Inquiry [bit.ly/2kVsY6Y](http://bit.ly/2kVsY6Y)
4. Rethink over new law that would allow adults to swap gender without consulting a doctor after minister ‘gets cold feet’ *Daily Mail*, 25 December 2017. [dailymail.com/2MZDZy8](http://dailymail.com/2MZDZy8)
5. Gender Identity Disorder *CMF File* 25, 2004. [bit.ly/2KLS2uR](http://bit.ly/2KLS2uR)
6. Transgender no longer listed as disorder by World Health Organisation. *Center for Family and Human Rights* [bit.ly/2KS7FN2](http://bit.ly/2KS7FN2)
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## Medics on the frontline

*Medics are increasingly being targeted in war*

Review by **Steve Fouch**  
CMF Head of Communications

Events in the Middle East over the last few years have challenged the long-held belief that medical services are neutrals and not to be attacked by either side. In Syria, as the civil war has headed towards its climax, bombing of hospitals has become alarmingly frequent.<sup>1</sup> In Yemen, a nation facing the worst humanitarian crisis in the world today according to the UN,<sup>2</sup> ports and facilities being used to get essential aid, food and medical supplies to the most vulnerable have been selectively targeted by forces trying to contain the insurgency.<sup>3</sup> In a more individual context, the killing of a Palestinian nurse Razan al-Najar in Gaza as she sought to help the injured has generated much anger around the world.<sup>4</sup>

Christian medics, nurses and other health professionals are often working in unstable

countries, and facing this sort of danger is nothing new. Those working in mission hospitals in the Democratic Republic of Congo at the start of the civil war in the 90s are all too aware of how often Christian hospitals and health workers were brutally targeted by rebel forces. However, the latest violence has been increasingly at the hands of government forces, some of them from supposedly democratic, westernised nations.

The reality is that in war, especially one where a nation or a people perceive a real, existential threat, norms, conventions and niceties often get forgotten. We see human sinfulness at its most raw, particularly the willingness to sacrifice even deeply held values for the sake of security. A Christlike response in these situations is to continue to serve selflessly and to bear witness to the truth.

While we should protest against such flagrant disregard for the norms and international conventions that such attacks represent, we also need to pray for the many health workers, especially nationals, who do continue to offer the best care that they can in the face of such awful circumstances and threats to their own lives.

### references

1. Syria conflict: Deadly strike on Save the Children maternity hospital. *BBC News*, 26 July 2016. [bbc.in/2LTkcQC](http://bbc.in/2LTkcQC)
2. Cocker M, Schmitt E. Humanitarian Crisis Worsens in Yemen After Attack on Port. *New York Times*, 13 June 2018. [nyti.ms/2t50tZ5](http://nyti.ms/2t50tZ5)
3. Leiberman A, Chadwick V. Battle for Hodeida puts local aid workers in the crosshairs. *Devex*, 14 June 2018. [bit.ly/2yqHL3M](http://bit.ly/2yqHL3M)
4. Unarmed Palestinian nurse shot dead by Israeli forces. *News.com.au* 7 June 2018. [bit.ly/2JEPEKN](http://bit.ly/2JEPEKN)