

# The Catholic Church, Abortion, and Elections in the Federal Republic (August 31, 1972)

## Abstract

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The Central Committee of the Catholic Church condemns what it perceived as the ongoing legal and moral decay of society, which it believed the state was doing too little to combat. This criticism was part of the campaign against a bill permitting abortions in the first trimester. With new elections in the offing, the governing parties criticized the church for intervening in political affairs in support of the CDU/CSU, which opposed the bill.

## Source

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### **The Central Committee of German Catholics Warns against Dirigiste Developments in Connection with the New Elections for the Bundestag; Critique from the SPD and FDP**

According to *Die Welt*, the executive board of the Central Committee of German Catholics, under the chairmanship of Bernhard Vogel (CDU), Minister of Culture for Rhineland-Palatinate, issued a statement on August 31 on the occasion of the early new elections to the German Bundestag. Among the points mentioned in the statement:

“The citizens of the FRG are to decide on the future composition of the German Bundestag before the end of this year. The date of the special election reflects the gravity of the situation in our country. [...] The Central Committee of German Catholics turns to the public and asks everyone to act in accordance with the critical situation in our country during the election campaign and then in the actual vote. The ties of our people to law and moral values must be reinforced. More and more, personal freedom is confused with subjective popularity. Increasing brutality, the glorification and use of violence, and attempts to deprive the unborn of legal protection are unmistakable signs of the extent to which socially damaging behavior determined by subjective popularity has progressed in our society. It is worrying that for some years now the state has done less and less to oppose this moral and legal degeneracy. Today, the German Bundestag will be presented with drafts to reform Section 218 of the German Penal Code; these [drafts] will deny any and all legal protection to human life in the first three months (so-called *Fristenlösung*, or term-limit regulation) or, by granting impunity for abortion for reasons of “general hardship,” as the draft bill by the government proposes, will *de facto* view the killing of human life as a means of fighting social hardship. The Central Committee has presented its unequivocal opinion on these issues and has called for constructive assistance.

Individual responsibility must not be sacrificed to dirigiste and provider-state developments. In recent years, there have been strengthened tendencies to expand state intervention in the economy and society and to make it harder for free social forces to fulfill public tasks. [...]”

The SPD press service has issued the following statement (excerpted):

In addition to ideas that one could agree with, this declaration contains largely one-sided elements that betray the handwriting of the CDU. Some parts are pure CDU jargon, and some passages bear a clear election-campaign character in favor of the Union parties. It shows no understanding for reforms generally recognized as necessary to benefit disadvantaged sections of the population and lacks [the suggestion of] any willingness to cooperate with other social and political groups that are striving for a

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more just order.

[...]

Source: “ZK der Deutschen Katholiken warnt vor dirigistischen Entwicklungen im Zusammenhang mit Bundestagsneuwahl; Kritik von SPD und FDP,” *Archiv der Gegenwart*, vol. 6, August 31, 1972, pp. 5767ff.

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Recommended Citation: The Catholic Church, Abortion, and Elections in the Federal Republic (August 31, 1972), published in: German History in Documents and Images, <<https://germanhistorydocs.org/en/two-germanies-1961-1989/ghdi:document-1102>> [March 10, 2026].