

Contents

Introduction 9

Chapter 1 – Situating the right to life within the system of fundamental rights 11

Section I – How the principle is formulated in conventions and constitutions 11

Section II – The nature of the right to life 14

1. A right rather than a freedom 14

2. An inherent right 15

3. A personal and a non-personal (legislatively established) right 15

4. A pre-eminent right, but one subject to exceptions 17

Chapter 2 – The scope of constitutional and international protection of the right to life 21

Section I – The question of the right to give life 21

 Relevant decision 22

 Commentary 22

Section II – Protection of life before birth 23

Introduction: the question of the embryo's status 23

1. Protection of the embryo *in vivo* 25

- A. The question of abortion 26
 - Relevant decisions 26
 - Commentary 32
 - The principles at stake 33
 - How constitutional courts assess proportionality 34
- B. Protection of the embryo *in vivo* under criminal law 35
 - Relevant decisions 35
 - Commentary 39
- 2. Protection of the embryo *in vitro* 40
 - Relevant decisions 40
 - Commentary 43
 - Destruction of spare embryos 43
 - Embryo research 44
- Section III – Protection of the life after birth 44**
 - 1. The prohibition on killing 44
 - A. The death penalty 45
 - Relevant decisions 45
 - Commentary 55
 - B. Violence by public authorities 57
 - Relevant decisions 57
 - Commentary 67
 - The nature of attacks on the right to life 67
 - Justifications for attacks on the right to life 68
 - Specific procedural safeguards 69
 - C. The question of euthanasia 70
 - Relevant decisions 71
 - Commentary 74
 - The right to refuse treatment: a right in conflict with the duty to protect life 74
 - Undue prolongation of life and the right not to have one's life treated as a commodity 76

The question of a right to have oneself killed	77
The question of the nature of consent	79
2. Protection against attacks on life	79
A. Protection against attacks by third parties	80
Relevant decisions	80
Commentary	85
B. Protection against attacks on the right to life under other countries' legal systems (i.e. extradition)	87
Relevant decisions	87
Commentary	93
3. The duty to create conditions – in terms of environment, health and housing – that promote the protection of life	95
Relevant decisions	95
Commentary	98
Chapter 3 – Convergence and divergence in the protection of life in Europe	101
Section I – Building a common body of European law	102
Section II – Controversial issues	105
1. The right to life before birth and as death approaches	106
A. The right to life before birth	106
a. The question of a right not to be born	107
b. The question of protecting the life of embryos <i>in vitro</i>	109
c. Embryo research	110
d. "Therapeutic" cloning	113
B. Euthanasia and the question of a right to death	114
2. The right to life and the concepts of dignity and freedom	119
Bibliography	123