

# Down syndrome advocates vow to appeal British court ruling on abortion

LONDON (CNS) – Two women who challenged the U.K. government over a law that allows abortion up to birth for disabled babies have vowed to take their case to appeal after it was dismissed by the High Court.

Heidi Crowter, 26, who has Down syndrome, and Máire Lea-Wilson, whose 2-year-old son Aidan also has the condition, objected to a clause in the 1967 Abortion Act that extended the right to abortion beyond the 24-week upper limit when fetuses have disabilities.

They claimed the law breached the European Convention on Human Rights because it discriminated against disabled children, and they sought to have the clause removed from the act.

They made their case in a two-day hearing in July and learned Sept. 23 that their attempt had failed when the High Court ruled that the clause was not unlawful.

Afterward, Crowter said she would seek permission to take the case to the Court of Appeal.

“I am really upset not to win, but the fight is not over,” she said outside the Royal Courts of Justice in London.

“The judges might not think it discriminates against me, the government might not think it discriminates against me, but I am telling you that I do feel discriminated against,” she continued, “and the verdict doesn’t change how I and thousands in the Down syndrome community feel.”

She said: “We face discrimination every day in schools, in the workplace and in society. And now, thanks to this verdict, the

judges have upheld discrimination in the womb, too. This is a very sad day, but I will keep fighting.”

Lea-Wilson, 33, said she felt “incredibly sad and disappointed that the court has chosen not to recognize the value and worth of people with Down syndrome, like my son Aidan.”

“This ruling condones discrimination by cementing the belief in society that their lives are not as valuable as the lives of people without disabilities,” she added.