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DOMESTIC TERRORISM IN ALABAMA
LEAVES ONE DEAD, TWO INJURED AT ABORTION CLINIC

Feminist Majority Foundation President Eleanor Smeal
Demands Zero Tolerance on this War of Attrition

Washington D.C.- Eleanor Smeal, national feminist leader and one of the nation's leading experts on anti-abortion terrorism, speaks out against the recent bombing at an abortion clinic in Alabama.

Smeal explained, "Public opinion supporting legal abortion in the United States is solidly pro-choice. Anti-abortion extremists are trying to win in the streets a battle that they can not win in the political arena. The strategy of the violent wing of the anti-abortion movement is a stealth '**war of attrition**' – extremists target one clinic, attempt to wipe it out or close it down, and then, move on to another. The fact that one-quarter of the women's health clinics in this country are battered day after day with violence, harassment, and intimidation is unconscionable. We must have **zero tolerance** for domestic terrorism."

The 1997 survey shows that in the first seven months of 1997, 24.8% of clinics experienced one or more forms of severe violence including blockades, invasions, bomb threats, and bombings, arson threats and arsons, chemical attacks, death threats, and stalking. This percentage is slightly down from 27.6% in 1996 and sharply down from its high mark 51.9% in 1994. **Severe violence still plagues about 25% of clinics nationwide, and is becoming more concentrated.**

Smeal continued, "We fear that neither the public nor the press fully comprehend the gravity of this war of attrition and will accept violence at abortion clinics as part of the normal landscape. In 1997 there were thirteen bombings or arsons at abortion clinics -- thirteen incidents of serious domestic terrorism including, for the first time, a second bomb aimed at law enforcement, which is a classic terrorism tactic. If this strategy wins on the abortion front, you bet these extremists will use it to attack the lesbian, gay, and civil rights communities and as we saw in Atlanta, the federal government itself."

The survey results also indicate that the percentage of clinics reporting "no violence" has nearly doubled from 33.3% of clinics in 1994 to 61.1% in 1997. The vigilance of the pro-choice community and the increased responsiveness of law enforcement coupled with the passage of the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act (FACE) has contributed to the dramatic decrease in levels of violence over the past five years.

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Once again, the 1997 National Clinic Violence Survey found a strong correlation between lower levels of violence and better law enforcement response. Of clinics that reported law enforcement response as "excellent" in 1997, only 7.5% experienced high levels of violence, compared with 35.7% of clinics that characterized local law enforcement as "poor."

Smeal explained, "We are encouraged by the impact of improved law enforcement response in reducing clinic violence. Working together, we have won major battles to protect clinics and have dramatically reduced the proportion of clinics that experience day to day violence and harassment. We call upon every law enforcement officer, every citizen, and every political organization to adopt a zero tolerance policy towards this stealth war of attrition, which is being waged against one quarter of our nation's abortion clinics."

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Editor's Note: Copies of the Feminist Majority's **1997 National Clinic Violence Survey Report: A Five Year Analysis of Anti-Abortion Violence Trends** are available by calling the Feminist Majority Foundation at 703-522-2214 or visiting the Feminist Majority Foundation Online at <http://www.feminist.org>. The Feminist Majority Foundation operates the National Clinic Access Project, the oldest clinic access project in the nation.