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An 11-year-old girl who was reportedly raped by her uncle can have an abortion in Romania on exceptional grounds, the country's government ruled yesterday. The girl, who claims she was raped by her 19-year-old relative, is 21 weeks pregnant - beyond the 14 weeks legal limit for abortion in her own country. At a meeting, Romanian government committee member Vlad Iliescu read out an emotive letter from the girl. It said: ‘I want to go to school and to play. If I can't do this, my life will be a nightmare.’ Mr. Iliescu said a 21-week-old foetus would have a 1 per cent chance of survival. He added that the girl’s mental health would be severely affected if she had a baby.’

‘Members had discussed the options of allowing the girl to travel to Britain for a termination or ruling she must continue with her pregnancy. We are talking about ... the rights of this child who was subjected to rape and incest,’ said Theodora Bertzi, a Labor Ministry official and who was sitting on the committee. But her father Florin insisted the family was coming to Britain, where abortions can be carried out up to 24 weeks.

‘Whatever is decided here in Romania it all takes too long even if they agree to a law change it will all take too long - and it’s putting my daughter’s life at risk in the meantime,’ he said before the ruling. A wealthy Romanian businesswoman living in London has spoken to the family and promised to make arrangements for the abortion and cover all the costs.

Mr. Vranceanu, 33, said: ‘We will take the UK offer and have arranged to fly out Tuesday. The clinic is already arranged.’ He said the family was prepared to defy its government to bring the 11-year-old to Britain. A government spokesman was not able to say whether there might be any move to stop them travelling.

Florina’s case has caused uproar in Romania, bitterly splitting the legal and medical communities, child rights groups and the public. Mr. Vranceanu said his daughter had been raped twice by a 19-year-old uncle in their village of Piatra Soimului, in eastern Romania. He added: [M]y daughter [was told by the 19-year-old uncle] that we would beat her if we found out what had happened, and that we would abandon her, so she kept quiet. We only found out four weeks ago after she complained of stomach pains.

Her mother took her to the hospital on June 2 and we discovered she was pregnant. ‘I wanted to kill him but he has gone on the run no one knows where he is.’ The discovery that their daughter was pregnant was only the start of the ordeal for the Vranceanus.

They expected an abortion would be simple to secure because of Florina’s age. But they were told the pregnancy was too far advanced for a termination under local law. ‘She was just a child herself and one who had been raped and betrayed by one of her own family,’ said a family friend. ‘How could anyone expect her to go through with the pregnancy and have the baby?’ Florina’s 26-year-old mother Lacramioara said: ‘Panel after panel, meeting after meeting. In the meantime, my poor girl gets more and more terrified. The last thing she needs is more talk. Thank God for the Romanian woman in Britain who has come to the rescue.’ Romania's National Child Protection Authority has said an abortion should be allowed because the girl is already traumatised by the experience of rape and pregnancy. The National Doctors Council, however, said the rights of the foetus should be considered and the pregnancy should go ahead. Twenty church groups yesterday said the government should stop Florina travelling to Britain.

1. Why is this case so controversial?
2. Which groups agree to abortion and which groups do not? Explain why you think it may be so.
3. What is your view regarding the above case?
4. How does this case relate to Fiji’s situation?