

# Ireland 'would have illegal abortion epidemic without access to UK terminations'



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[The Oireachtas Committee is taking evidence on the Eighth Amendment](#)

October 18 2017

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Ireland would have an "epidemic of illegal abortions" and a "massive increase" in maternal mortality" if women were unable to access abortion in the UK, a senior doctor has warned.

Dr Peter Boylan, of the Institute of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, said it is well-documented that in countries where abortion is banned, the rate of women dying "remains high".

Giving evidence to the Oireachtas Committee on the Eighth Amendment, Dr Boylan said around 70,000 women die each year from complications relating to unsafe abortion.

"It is equally well-documented that countries with liberal laws, and easy access to contraception, have lower rates of abortion than those with restrictive laws.

"Women in Ireland with financial resources have access to termination of pregnancy, primarily in the UK," he said.

Dr Boylan continued: "However, women who are poor, in the care of the state, or refugees for example, do not have such access.

"Without access to abortion in the UK it is inevitable that Ireland would have an epidemic of illegal abortions and a massive increase in maternal mortality."

The availability of abortion-inducing drugs online means that "the genie is out of the bottle," Dr Boylan said.

He warned that the grave concern for doctors is the potential for harm caused by the use of unregulated medication by Irish women and girls.

"If Ireland were to enact legislation in line with EU consensus, including termination without restriction up to 10 weeks, our law would be among the most conservative in Europe but would deal with the vast majority of circumstances in which women currently access services outside the State," added Dr Boylan.

Making abortion illegal only serves to promote illegal abortions, Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology Sabaratnam Arulkumaran told the committee.

Prof Arulkumaran, who wrote the report examining the death of Savita Halappanavar, said abortions can be life-saving in certain conditions.

He said: "If abortion is not made legal it will promote illegal abortion. Those women with influence and financial resources will get it performed in a safe environment. Those who are poor with less influence will resort to unsafe methods."

He added: "Ireland can and should provide first class sexual and reproductive health based on rights and public health perspectives. There are minimal ill effects to health with a well-informed safe abortion.

"Health advantages of avoiding or not having unwanted pregnancy need to be considered in addition to specific socio-cultural issues faced by the women."

The committee has been discussing what recommendations it will make on the position of the Eighth Amendment.

It is expected to vote on the issue in the next few weeks.

Several members of the committee submitted motions to recommend the repeal of the Eighth Amendment in a private session last week, rather than replacing or amending the article in the Constitution.

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