

BBC NEWS**EUROPE**

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Dutch abortion boat heads to Morocco

A Dutch "abortion boat" is en route to Morocco in its first trip to a Muslim country.

The procedure is illegal in Morocco, unless the mother's life is at risk.

The organisation, Women on Waves (WoW), provides abortions and contraception information outside territorial waters in countries where abortion is illegal.

Over the past 11 years, a Women on Waves ship has visited Ireland, Poland, Portugal and Spain, sparking protests from anti-abortion groups.

"The ship is on its way. We can't yet disclose the place and time of arrival... We expect it to stay for up to a week," Rebecca Gomperts, the founder of the Dutch non-profit organisation, told the AFP news agency by phone.

In cases of illegal abortions performed domestically, women expose themselves to grave health risks by resorting to dangerous methods, the organisation says.

The group says that, according to figures published by the Moroccan government, between 600 and 800 abortions take place every day in the north African kingdom.

"The problem is that only about 200 cases are done properly, by women who have money," said Ms Gomperts, a doctor.

The Dutch organisation says it was "invited" to Morocco by local youth group the Alternative Movement for Individual Liberties (Mali), to raise support for the legalisation of abortion in the country.

WoW will not carry out any abortion operation during its expected trip to Morocco, but will "promote the idea of a safe medication abortion", according to the Mali website.

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