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Abortion Rights Protesters Appear To Have Taken Abortion Pills In Front Of Police In Northern Ireland

"The law here is unworkable," a spokesperson for abortion rights campaign ROSA told BuzzFeed News.

Posted on May 31, 2018, at 5:35 p.m.



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David Young / PA Wire/PA Images

Women in Belfast have taken what they claim were abortion pills in front of police during a protest about Northern Ireland's strict abortion law.

Abortion is illegal in Northern Ireland in almost all circumstances, because the 1967 Act, which allows abortion in the rest of the UK, was never extended there.

Three women, who wish to remain anonymous for legal reasons, took the drug mifepristone, which is used in early medical abortion, outside Belfast Laganside Court on Thursday as part of a demonstration organised by abortion rights group ROSA (Reproductive Rights Against Oppression, Sexism and Austerity).

Taking abortion pills in Northern Ireland can carry a jail sentence of up to 14 years.



Women on Waves

@WomenOnWaves_

Tomorrow, abortion robots will deliver abortion pills to women in Belfast. Together with [@abortionpil](#) and [@RosaWomen](#) in Northern Ireland, we'd like to call attention to the restrictive abortion laws and the prosecution of women in the country. [#AbortionRobot](#) [#Bus4Choice](#)

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"The main purpose is to prove that the law here is unworkable," Cerys Falvey, a ROSA activist, told BuzzFeed News.

The pills were delivered to protesters by a robot supplied by Women on Waves, a charitable organisation who along with Women on Web deliver abortion pills to women in countries where they are not available legally.

Since last year, women from [Northern Ireland have been able to access NHS abortion services](#) in England free of charge, although many are thought to order abortion pills online in order to avoid expensive travel costs, and so that they can carry out the procedure at home.

"Women in Northern Ireland are accessing abortion pills online every single day," Falvey continued.

"The whole point is to say that they cannot ignore us anymore and they cannot brush us under the carpet. Women are doing this."

Falvey said that police took the demonstrators away for questioning and confiscated the pills, but that no arrests were made.

Since last week's [landslide vote to relax equally strict abortion laws in the Republic of Ireland](#), calls to extend abortion rights to Northern Ireland have been renewed.



Women on Waves
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Currently, outside of the Belfast Lagan side Court
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Prime Minister [Theresa May](#), however, has said that abortion is a devolved matter to be resolved by Northern Ireland's legislative assembly, but the assembly has not sat at Stormont since power-sharing talks collapsed in January 2017, leaving Northern Ireland without a government of its own.

"Women every day in Northern Ireland are using these pills – as long as we don't talk about it, as long as we act like it is a secret, politicians are not under pressure to legislate on this," ROSA activist Eleanor Crossey Malone [told Sky News' Darren McCaffrey](#), who was at the scene.

The abortion pill protest was one of a series of demonstrations by ROSA as they drove an abortion pill bus around Northern Ireland on Thursday. Several activists were dressed as handmaids from the TV adaptation of Margaret Atwood's dystopian novel about reproductive rights, *The Handmaid's Tale*.

In 2017, ROSA's branch in the Republic of Ireland [drove an abortion pill bus around the country](#) amidst calls for a referendum on relaxing Ireland's strict abortion law.

"These acts of civil disobedience supplied pregnant people with safe but illegal abortion pills, but they were also instrumental in shifting the debate on abortion," Socialist Party TD Ruth Coppinger, who has campaigned alongside ROSA and was in Belfast with the group on Thursday, said of their previous action.



ROSA #Repealthe8th

@RosaWomen

The #Bus4Choice is on the road! Follow @ROSABelfast for updates throughout the day

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Falvey said the group received a positive reaction from members of the public for their demonstrations on Thursday.

"Outside the court, people were cheering us on," she said. "Regardless of how you personally feel about this, it's happening anyway, so stop criminalising women."

On Saturday, abortion rights campaigners will march in solidarity with LGBT campaigners at the

March for Equality in Belfast. Same-sex marriage is also prohibited in Northern Ireland, despite being legal in the rest of the UK, and both groups are pushing for change on both issues.

"This is just the start of it," Falvey added. "We're not planning on backing down and this isn't a one-off."

CORRECTION

May 31, 2018, at 7:45 p.m.

Cerys Falvey's name was misspelled in a previous version of this post.

These Women Are Driving An "Abortion Pill Bus" Around Ireland To Protest Anti-Abortion Laws

Inside The Battle For Abortion Rights Spilling Out On To Ireland's Streets

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