

Activists Are Using Robots to Send Abortion Pills to

Northern Ireland



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Photo: Women on Waves

Activists say they will use robots to deliver abortion pills to Northern Ireland, where abortion is only legal if the life of the woman is endangered. While it's illegal in the region for a pregnant woman to have a medical abortion in nearly all cases, the organizations operating the robots said on Wednesday that they are not breaking any laws because the robots will be operated abroad, from the Netherlands.

The initiative is the result of a collaboration between pro-choice nonprofit Women on Waves, online medical abortion service Women on Web, and socialist feminist movement ROSA Northern Ireland. The robots will not solve the region's restrictive abortion laws, but they serve as a signal to those watching that there are people fighting for stronger reproductive rights.

"The abortion robot will mark the different legal reality for Northern Irish women, who still have to rely on to rely on new technology, like telemedicine, drones and robots that use international legal loopholes to protect their rights," Women on Waves wrote in a news release.

Gizmodo has reached out to Women on Waves for more information regarding how the robots and pills will be delivered to Northern Ireland. The group plans to livestream deliveries on May 31 via Facebook.

The organization also noted in its press release that while it's illegal for women in Northern Ireland to have a medical abortion—rape, incest, and severe fetal abnormality aren't even exceptions—it's also a "severe violation of their human rights" for someone, such as the government, to force them to take a pregnancy test. It was just last month that Belfast City Council decriminalized women who have medical abortions. "A woman who has an abortion is not a criminal, nor are healthcare professionals who care for them, and the law should not treat them as such," the council's motion stated.

Women in Northern Ireland have to travel to other countries—such as England, Scotland, Wales, and now, the Republic of Ireland—to legally have an abortion. Abortion laws in Northern Ireland are similar to what the Republic of Ireland's were ahead of its referendum last week, in which citizens voted to repeal the abortion ban. That's due to the fact that the 1967 Abortion Act, which legalized

abortion access in the UK, wasn't enforced in Northern Ireland.

A doctor will remotely advise women in Belfast from their location in Amsterdam, according to Women on Waves. The organization also helped deliver abortion pills to Northern Ireland using a drone in 2016.

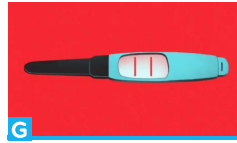
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